

**GOD'S  
HIDDEN  
ONES**

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

Version 1.0

*“God’s Hidden Ones”*

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## *Preface*

Over the past few years, I have been going through many trials that, I trust, have been working out something in my spirit. God has graciously opened up the Scriptures to me in a fresh way; and He has laid upon my heart a deep concern for our people, especially in the Last Days. I have had visions of the great storm that is coming. It will take everything that we have and the abundance of the grace of God to make it through.

In 1960, the Lord quickened to me the following passage from Zephaniah 2:1-3: *“Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD’S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger.”*

God is speaking of His coming judgment and explaining the conditions that must be met for Him to hide us. Because this scripture will soon be fulfilled, the Lord has brought it to my remembrance again and again over the years, giving me a determination to preach it, live it, and bring others into the blessing of being hidden.

Consequently, we have entitled this book *God’s Hidden Ones*. In these pages we will look at how we can qualify

to be preserved by God, gleaning insight from the lives of selected apostles of the faith, so that by His grace we may triumph in the tumultuous times ahead.

**PART I**

***GOD'S  
HIDDEN  
ONES***



# Chapter 1

## *THE LAST DAYS AND THE DARKNESS*

### A Time of Contrast

When we consider the Last Days, we must realize that there is a striking division—darkness for the world, and light for God’s people.

The Old Testament type for this division is found in Exodus 14:19-20, a passage that speaks of the children of Israel leaving Egypt: *“And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.”*

Isaiah 60:1-2 describes the conditions in the Last Days: *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”*

### Great Darkness

In the Last Days, great darkness must cover the earth. This is confirmed by Amos 5:20, where we read, *“Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?”*

As we study the writings of the prophets and apostles, we find that terrible things will happen in the Last Days.

### *Natural Disasters*

In Mark 13:8, Jesus spoke of the turbulence and natural disasters that will take place: *“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.”*

### *An Increase of Sin*

One aspect of the great darkness that must cover the earth appears in the form of sin increasing on every side. During this time, people will corrupt themselves through gross immorality of every kind that we could only term bestial. Many will be given over to strange flesh—homosexuality and the like—and they shall suffer, as did Sodom and Gomorrah, the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7).

The Lord spoke to a friend of mine that there is no pain on earth as great as the least pain felt in hell. Having experienced great pain on earth myself, I would plead with you to stay on course. There will be many, many people who are going to give up. Thus by the grace of God, we must do all we can to persuade His people to stay on course, in the path of righteousness, to hit the mark of God's high calling.

We are told that there will be a falling away, signifying a collapse of all law and order (2 Th. 2:3). In a certain sense, this could be a time like the Dark Ages, when the truth of the gospel was hid from mankind in Europe (and which was subsequently ended by the Reformation truth revealed to the friar Martin Luther – “*The just shall live by faith*” from Romans 1:17 and Habakkuk 2:4).

The Lord Himself makes it very clear in Matthew 24:12 that “...*because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*” In other words, there are many who are going to turn away. What we have experienced in these days is insignificant compared with what will happen in the days to come. Many will become “wandering stars,” not knowing their course (Jude 1:13).

One thing that we must know is our course; and we must stay on it. When the Lord brings us through times of darkness, and we cannot see our course clearly ahead of us, we have to trust in Him. In such times, we feel His hand upon us and His presence with us, and can take comfort from the fact that He is keeping us on His chosen path.

### *Widespread deception*

In such times of darkness, false prophets will arise and will deceive many. The Apostle Paul likewise in writing to Timothy states, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*”

(1 Tim. 4:1). People are deceived because the love of the truth is not in them (2 Th. 2:10).

*Widespread persecution and betrayal:*

There will be widespread persecution of Christians; and there will also be those who betray one another: *“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.... Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mk. 13: 9, 12-13).

*The Rise of the Antichrist:*

Thus we are presented with pictures of gloom concerning the Last Days. The prime problem is the Antichrist, who will manifest power, signs, and lying wonders (2 Th. 2:9). There will be deception on every hand, culminating in the person of the Antichrist.

In the Holy Place of the temple in Jerusalem (which will be built in the Last Days), there will be erected an image to the Antichrist. The False Prophet will cause this image to speak, spreading further deception among the nations. The False Prophet also does *“great wonders, so that he maketh*

*fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast...” (Rev. 13:13-14).*

During the reign of the Antichrist, many will be tempted to take the mark of the beast, without which one may not buy or sell. I understand (from visions others have had) that the attitude of many Christians will be this: “Oh, God is a merciful God; and He understands if I take the mark of the beast. He will surely forgive me.”

However, it is clear from Revelation 14:9-11 that there is no forgiveness for those who take the mark of the beast: *“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”*

We want to be very clear indeed that we must hold fast (Heb. 3:6) and endure to the end (Mt. 24:13), and that we cannot give up. There was a season in my recent physical trial when I had no rest day or night, and it was terrible; but

that is nothing compared to the torment that awaits those who take the mark of the beast.

In those dark times, the battles in prayer will intensify, even as Paul writes when he speaks of the great conflict that he had experienced for the Colossian Church and for the Laodicean Church, who had not even seen his face (Col. 2:1).

God, in these Last Days, will raise up whole armies of prayer warriors who will be the “Praying Hydes” of our generation. They will be like Praying Hyde, who through his intercessions for the Church in India actually so damaged his heart that it moved physically from its cavity. It became very enlarged and consequently very weak, as was our Saviour’s heart when He went to the cross. It may well be that in the Last Days, some will even be privileged to enter into the experience of Christ, who resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:4). Knowing that these times are coming, we must be prepared, and yet encouraged to know that our light will shine, and that the Gentiles shall come to the Church (Isa. 60:1-3)

# Chapter 2

## *THE INEVITABILITY OF JUDGMENT*

### **The Purpose of Judgment**

When God brings judgment, it is to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- For the punishment of past sins. An example of this is found in 2 Samuel 21:1: *“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.”*
- To purify the guilty, for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin (1 Pet. 4:1).
- To purify and refine our nature. Job 41:25 says, *“... by reason of breakings they purify themselves.”*

There are times when judgment is not meted out immediately. We find the reason for that in Ecclesiastes 8:11, which says: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”* Here, we see that certain things in people’s hearts are brought to light by a delay in the execution of judgment.

Another example of this is found in Matthew 24:48-51, where in speaking of His Second Coming, the Lord said, *“But and*

*if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

### **Judgments in the History of Israel**

Sir Winston Churchill, who won a Nobel Peace Prize in English History, said, “Study history. Study history. In history lies all the secrets of statecraft” (Humes, 1994, p. xv). He also said, “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” (*Quote Me*, 2009, p. 202).

We can learn many valuable lessons in life through studying history; and there is no greater historical book than the Bible. Holy Scripture teaches us the ways of God through the lives of men and women who lived across the span of time from Adam to the time of the Early Church.

In the history of the children of Israel, there are five major judgments that brought a siege against Jerusalem:

**Egypt:** The first one came during the reign of King Rehoboam, when he failed to walk in the ways of God. God therefore raised up against him, Shishak, the king of Egypt: *“And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because*

*they had transgressed against the LORD*” (2 Chr. 12:2). But when Rehoboam repented, God caused Shishak to leave Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

**Assyria:** The next great siege of Jerusalem came in the days of King Hezekiah, when God stirred up Sennacherib, King of Assyria, against His people. Here, it was because of the iniquity of prior generations that God determined judgment in the days of Hezekiah, a godly king. However, when Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed and cried out to God, He delivered the whole army of Sennacherib into the hands of an angel, who slew them (2 Chr. 32:21).

**Babylon:** The third siege of Jerusalem was when Babylon, under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, attacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Here, God had already given a prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11 that because the children of Israel refused to turn from their evil ways, the Lord would send them into Babylonian captivity for 70 years. Therefore, when the prophet Daniel read the prophecies of Jeremiah, he understood the timing, and he knew when the captivity was coming to an end (Dan. 9:2).

**Rome:** The fourth siege of Jerusalem was foretold by the Lord Himself in Luke 21:24, and was fulfilled when the Roman armies devastated Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**The Last Siege of Jerusalem:** But according to Scripture there remains one further siege of Jerusalem; and it is very important indeed, especially in the days in which we live.

This event may be clearly seen in Joel and Zechariah. It will take place just prior to the coming of the Lord when He stands with His feet upon the Mount of Olives. (I have had the privilege of witnessing this in a vision.) The coming judgment is a continuation of the manifestation of God's anger against Israel for her sinfulness.

An account of the final siege of Jerusalem is found in Zechariah 14:1-4, *“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”*

I saw a vision of this final siege in 1973 when I was on the Mount of Olives just before the Yom Kippur War broke out. At that time, the Lord was speaking to me about things He was going to do in Israel; and in the vision, I saw the Arab armies covering the Mount of Olives. They attacked and overcame the north side of Jerusalem. That section of Jerusalem fell to them, and many prisoners

were taken. However, the Arab armies did not succeed in taking the southern side of Jerusalem, which is where Zion is located.

Then I saw Christ descending upon the Mount of Olives. I would like to emphasize the conversation between Christ and the Jewish defenders of Zion when He comes at that time which are found in the two scriptures that follow.

*In Deuteronomy 32:39-41, we have the Lord coming with His sword; and He says, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me."*

Then we have to turn to Isaiah to fully understand why He said that. In Isaiah 25:9, the defenders of Zion say, *"...Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

There are essentially three principal appearances of Christ in the end times:

1. First, He comes for His loved ones in the air. This is described in Matthew 24:31: *"And he shall*

*send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”* Moreover, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

2. Second, He appears at the Battle of Armageddon. Revelation 19:11-21 contains the account of Christ defeating the heathen armies that are headed by the Antichrist and the false prophet.
3. Third, He descends upon the Mount of Olives to aid the Jewish defenders of Jerusalem at the last siege of Jerusalem.

### **The Importance of Waiting**

When the Lord descends with His sword on the Mount of Olives at the very last moment, saying, “I am He that liveth forevermore,” the defenders of Zion cry out, “We have waited for You.” The whole key in the Last Days is to wait for God to move; we must learn to be holy “waiters.” In other words, we are going to wait for God, believing His Word and His promises.

On the issue of waiting, one of the most difficult parts of a trial is *not knowing when that trial will end*. In this physical trial that I am going through, a pastor's wife received the following word from the Lord: "Occupy till I come." However, that does not tell us *when* God is coming.

Each morning I get up and face another day of trial, saying, "How long, Lord?" The Lord has indicated that He is dealing with things through the trial; and until they are done, I will not get healed. I try to accept that cheerfully. There are things that have to be changed if God is to walk in our midst.

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God to move.**

At other times, God chooses to reveal the length of the trial. For example, in the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Lord revealed to His people that their time of captivity in Babylon would be a period of 70 years.

Through this trial, I have realized the frailty of man, and how there is a tendency in a trial to give up and say, "I am finished. I cannot take it any more." As I contemplated the difficult times ahead that the Church would face, I said to the Lord, "I do not know how many believers You will have in the end, because man is weak."

Then the Lord began to flood my mind with all kinds of scriptures on the Last Days before His coming. In

Revelation 12:6, for example, He makes us to understand that the Antichrist is there for 1,260 days: *“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”*

In Daniel 12:12, there is a further indication of a time frame: *“Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”* That indicates the end, when the Lord descends upon the Mount of Olives.

We have seen that things are going to be so serious in the Last Days that God has given a number of time frames in order to encourage His people to hold on; otherwise they would not make it through the Great Tribulation. Each time frame is an encouragement for the children of God who will be persecuted and hunted. They will be counting off the days, knowing when the trial will end. Just as Daniel was given the understanding of the prophetic 70 years of Babylonian Captivity, the Church will be given understanding in the Last Days concerning how to apply the numbering of days that God has given prophetically.

We have to wait on God for His timing. We cannot tell God what to do. There is a scripture in the English King James Version, Isaiah 45:11, which says, *“Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.”* At first glance, it appears to suggest that we can command God; but in actuality, there is a question

mark missing. The true meaning is better rendered, “Are you commanding Me and telling Me what to do?”

The key word I get for the times in which we are living is “Wait.” God has His timing, and by the grace of God we must wait. As Isaiah 64:4 says, *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”* That is the key. The blessings of God are given unto those that wait.

### **The Importance of Enduring Until the End**

We need to understand what lies ahead so that we can care for our congregations, seeking to encourage and strengthen them so that they will not give up or turn aside. We have seen in Matthew 24:12 that the love of many shall grow cold and that many shall give up. One of the prime ministries of the church is to establish the congregations by speaking the truth so that, by the grace of God, Christians are able to stand in the Last Days. Then the Lord continues in Matthew 24:13: *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”*

The Lord has been dealing with me about enduring. He said to me, “All that I intend to accomplish through the trials you have been going through for the last five years will be annulled if you give up. You must endure until the end.” James 5:11 says, *“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”* In

other words, we have to go through the trial and wait until God finishes it.

A common view (and one held by Job's friends) is that if one is in a trial, there is something wrong with that person, and that he is not right with God. However, we see the opposite in Isaiah 50:10: *"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."*

Here, the one who is going through the trial is one who is upright and fears the Lord. Yet the verse that follows brings out the point that there is a great temptation to create our own way out when we go through trials: *"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow"* (Isa. 50:11).

The lesson here is that we have to trust God in these trials. If we try to get out of the trial, we are only going to have sorrow from God's hands. We must not try to get out of God's "pressure cooker." At times, the pain that I have experienced has been insufferable. I have cried out to the Lord for His mercy to relieve the pain, and He has done so, for which I am very thankful. We have to go through what God ordains for us, for He longs in these times to give us His spiritual treasures that can only be acquired in times of darkness (Isa. 45:3).

Another scripture that flooded my soul was that concerning the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They said, concerning Christ, *“But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done”* (Lk. 24:21). Then the Lord said to them, *“...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”* (Lk. 24:25-26).

On the issue of suffering, the Lord has been speaking to me from Colossians 1:24, about filling up my sufferings for His Body’s sake, even as the Apostle Paul said, *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”* I count it an honour to do so, although at times, my body thinks otherwise.

After talking about those who have turned aside, Jude gives us this wonderful promise: *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy...”* (Jude 1:24).

In other words, Jude finishes with that tremendous hope that God is able to keep us. The Apostle Peter says he was “kept by the power of God” (1 Pet. 1:5); and I must confess that I have been crying out to God to keep me so that I will be able to endure until the end. I do not want to give up.

There is great darkness before us that we will have to endure. We have to teach our people that Christianity is not to be taken lightly or treated as optional, or merely entertainment; to the contrary, it is extremely serious. We have to have the work of God done in our hearts so that we are indeed made worthy to receive God's promises. As we learn to endure and wait on God, then all the wonderful promises of God will be ours.

# Chapter 3

## *MEEKNESS*

Recently I said to God, “We were created to please You. What do You want us to do to please You? What are You seeking for?” The word “*Meekness*” came in bright lights before me.

Meekness is an essentiality to be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger (Zeph. 2:3). We are beginning to see the manifestation of that anger in many parts of the world; and my desire is that you be hidden during those times. We need to hear what God is saying. We are to seek God for meekness.

This is what God wants us to seek, because His terrible judgment is about to come upon the nations. There has been trouble in different parts of the world, especially in the Middle East; and we are certainly going to have trouble in the USA.

### **What Is Meekness?**

What is meekness? In the Greek, it is *praus*, meaning “tamed.” The word is used to refer to a horse or a dog that has been tamed, one that will sit until it is beckoned. Meekness is also associated with the thought of the horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. These horses do not move until the charioteer gives the signal to move forward. One

definition of meekness is to have a submissive, trusting spirit, and to be completely willing and happy to do the will of the master.

Another aspect of meekness is not reacting to conditions (or words that people speak) that can provoke one's spirit. It is so important that we learn to control ourselves. It is typified by the lamb, which before its shearers is dumb. It opens not its mouth. The prophet Isaiah said of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"* (Isa. 53:7).

It is so important that we watch what we speak, for the Word of God says, *"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God"* (Ps. 50:23). We are absolutely dependent on God to preserve us; and it is our conversation (and manner of life, NKJV) which will determine that.

Meekness also means that we learn to accept situations with a holy attitude of joy, knowing that God works all things for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). When I was making frequent trips to the hospital, the Lord kept saying to me, "You must accept this." We must seek the Lord for His meekness.

## The Importance of Meekness

Only two men in Scripture were called meek. Moses was called the meekest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3). In Matthew 11:29, the Lord Jesus Christ said of Himself, “I am meek and lowly.” Meekness is a perfume that is very important to the Godhead.

We see this in the Song of Solomon. The Shulamite (symbolic of the Bride of Christ) has invited the Lord to come into her garden. In Song of Songs 5:1, He says, *“I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice...”* The Lord seeks first for myrrh; and myrrh is a symbol of meekness. We know this from examining the lists of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and the fruit or herbs listed in Song of Solomon 4:14, that myrrh corresponds to meekness.

We see here how precious meekness is to the Godhead. Peter makes its value to God very clear in 1 Peter 3:3-4 when he speaks to the wives, saying, *“Whose adorning ... let it be...the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”*

A number of years ago I was in Israel visiting the garden tomb. I went in alone and said to the Lord, “What do You want to be known as?” Right across the place where His body lay, in flaming white letters was the word “Meekness.” It is something that He desires above everything else.

Meekness is also linked very closely to entering into our inheritance. Matthew 5:5 says, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*" In Numbers 20:1-13, Moses' spirit was provoked; and the result was that he did not enter the Promised Land. Many have lost their inheritance because they could not control themselves. As we shall see, Paul and Barnabas allowed their tempers to flare up, and they ended up parting ways.

**The lack of meekness can  
cost us our inheritance.**

When one is an employee, it is important for one to obey the manager or owner. Consider how many "stiff-necked" employees have missed promotions, while others have lost their jobs because they have just walked off instead of demonstrating meekness.

James 1:21 says, "...*Receive with meekness the engrafted word...*" When someone says to you, "I feel God says that you are to do such and such," it is important not to reject that word without seeking the Lord. It is the spirit of meekness that can receive the Word of the Lord. So many cannot receive the Word of the Lord because they lack meekness. After a time, God takes them out of the way and as a result, they lose their inheritance. An example of this is found in 2 Chronicles 35:20-24 when Josiah, the king

of Judah, refused to heed the warning of the Lord not to go to war because that warning came through an unlikely source—a heathen king. The result was that he died in battle and failed to enter into God’s best for his life.

In Proverbs 5:12-14, we see someone in the house of God who says, “...*How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*” John Wesley made the point that we must never underestimate sin in the house of God. We have seen it in recent years when those who have not received instruction have been most evil; and the result is that they have lost their inheritance.

## **How Meekness Is Produced**

How is this precious quality of meekness produced? The answer is found in Song of Songs 3:6: “*Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?*” It is in the wilderness that we find myrrh and frankincense; and that is where meekness is developed, with faith (represented by frankincense).

A wilderness experience is generally illustrated and experienced when the believer has a “dry” time, filled with temptations and apparent failures. Nonetheless, wilderness times are seasons through which a loving God passes

Christians, because He desires to develop the qualities of faith and meekness in their spirits that can be produced in no other way (see also James 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7).

The Lord spoke of Himself in Matthew 11:29, saying, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”* When we are yoked to the Lord Jesus Christ, He bears the burden of the larger yoke, and our little yoke is very small and light indeed. This quality of meekness is greatly valued by the Lord Jesus, and it is to be paramount in our lives. Meekness allows us to experience unity with the Lord, as we take His yoke upon us; and we experience rest in our souls, as we cease from striving in our own strength.

We must understand that meekness is developed progressively, with each choice we make. Our attitude in difficult circumstances is vitally important. This fruit of meekness comes at a great price. It comes down to acknowledging that God is in control, and choosing to believe the truth of Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”* May we walk through trials and bitter experiences, choosing to accept that God is in control and has designed these very circumstances in order to produce this beautiful quality in our lives.

### **Meekness as Our Root Desire**

When my wife and I were living in a parsonage in the western part of the USA, God spoke to us, saying, “Everyone is

searching for the same thing— happiness. However, people think they will find it in many different areas. For example, some look for it in marriage or fame or a good job, and so on.” The question that I feel God is challenging us with is this: “What do you really desire in life?” In other words, where are your roots— what is the “root desire” in your life? For some who are entering the ministry, the desire is to build a large, thriving church and thereby obtain fame and fortune. They think that being in the ministry is the way to obtain these goals.

It is important to know what our root desire is and ask the Lord to place it in Him. We have seen so many Christians falter and turn back in spite of the new light and revelation God has given because their root desire was not in Him.

One problem that we face when praying for people for deliverance is that there are some who are set free, but they later turn back. They return to their captivity because they have not given up their root desire after they have been delivered.

There was a pastor who shared with me, “We are returning to our roots.” By this, he simply meant that he and his church were returning to the original denomination with the old truths upon which they had built this church. They were returning to their old ways, which they had previously left for new truths and new vision.

Many Christians have received, by the grace of God, new revelation, but they prefer the old. As Jesus said in Luke 5:39, *“No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth*

*new: for he saith, The old is better.*” A certain lady woke up to find that her husband had passed away during the night. When the wife sought the Lord, He impressed upon her that her husband would never have gone further spiritually, and therefore He had taken him. We do not want that to be said of us. We want God to lengthen our lives so that we have the opportunity of going further in Him.

There are Christians who are still holding on to roots of worldly sins to which they return in times of trials. There are some whose roots are in the pleasures of this life. I remember that many years ago, I was at a convention of young people in England, where virtually everybody was unmarried. This was at a time when England was in an economic downturn. Things were rationed and difficult to get. At this convention the young people were asked, “What do you want in life?” I was astonished when one young girl said, “I want silk stockings.” That was her goal. Sadly, she ended up by dying at a young age with cancer. We have to be very careful what our goals are. Well is it written: “*And he [the Lord] gave them the desire of their heart but sent leanness to their souls*” (Ps. 106:15).

There are others who have roots in blessings and prosperity. Lot was a righteous man. However, his heart desire was in prosperity, and he lost everything because he chose to pitch his tents near wealthy Sodom and Gomorrah. He wanted the rich, fertile ground of Sodom and Gomorrah, and considered the worldly riches of more importance than the wickedness and immorality of its inhabitants.

Our outcome in life depends upon where our roots are placed. We want our roots to be forever embedded in the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 15). We want our root desires to be meekness, holiness, and righteousness, because these will hold us. We do not want to be those who seem to be blessed on the outside, but have rottenness on the inside because of leading a double life. Let us remember that there is one Person from whom we cannot hide our true condition—and that is the Lord.

While I believe that most of us desire to be righteous and upright, that is only half of it. We have to seek the Lord for the quality of meekness, which is essential for the Last Days. Let us therefore cultivate the root desires of meekness and righteousness, so that we may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.



# Chapter 4

## *RIGHTEOUSNESS*

### What Is Righteousness?

Righteousness is another main virtue that one has to attain to in order to be hidden in time of judgment.

Righteousness is “doing the things that are right” in the sight of God. It is very important that we love righteousness and hate wickedness (Ps. 45:7). We must remember what the Lord says in Proverbs 21:3: “*To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*” Also, Psalm 11:7 says that the righteous God loves those who do righteousness. As we walk righteously, then the path of the righteous is as a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

There are righteous acts and wicked acts; and in Ezekiel 18:5-9, we have 17 aspects of righteousness that give us an idea of what is expected of a righteous man:

- 1) Just,
- 2) Does that which is lawful and right,
- 3) Does not eat upon the mountains, (referring to the idolatry that they were practising),
- 4) Does not lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel,
- 5) Does not defile his neighbour’s wife,
- 6) Does not come near to a menstruous woman,

- 7) Does not oppress others,
- 8) Restores to the debtor his pledge,
- 9) Does not spoil others by violence,
- 10) Gives his bread to the hungry,
- 11) Clothes the naked with a garment,
- 12) Does not give forth upon usury, (not taking unfair advantage of others to enrich oneself by lending money to fellow Christians and charging interest),
- 13) Does not take any increase, (again, not taking unfair advantage of others to enrich oneself),
- 14) Withdraws his hand from iniquity,
- 15) Executes true judgment between man and man,
- 16) Walks in the statutes of the Lord,
- 17) Keeps God's judgments and deals truly.

The Lord says of such a man that that he is just and he shall surely live. We can meditate on that passage and ask the Lord, "Am I fulfilling this?" When He taught on the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord said, "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt. 5:20). He was warning against an outward righteousness without a heart transformation.

As the prophet Isaiah points out in Isaiah 64:6, our own righteousness is as filthy rags: "*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind,*

*have taken us away.*” Likewise, the Apostle Paul said that while he was blameless concerning the outward observance of the law, all those things were of no value compared to winning Christ, and being found in Him, not having his own righteousness but the righteousness of God which is by faith (Phil. 3:8-9).

## **Progression in Righteousness**

### *Imputed Righteousness*

First of all, when we believe on the Lord Jesus who rose from the dead for our sins, we have the righteousness of God imputed to us and we are counted righteous (Rom. 4:24). The difference between self righteousness and God’s righteousness is found in Philippians 3:9, where Paul said, “...*Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*” Thus when we start our Christian life with faith in Christ, righteousness is imputed to us. We are counted righteous because of His righteousness imputed to us, but we are not actually righteous ourselves.

### *Acts of Righteousness*

Secondly, there are acts of righteousness. In other words, when God asks us to do something, we must do it by faith, because our obedience is an expression of righteousness. Faith comes from hearing God speak (Rom. 10:17). There is a progression in faith, and it is linked with righteousness, for

Romans 1:17 says, *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* Righteousness is therefore developed, just as meekness is developed, from one right choice to another.

Thus when we fulfil an ordinance of God, such as submitting to water baptism, we are fulfilling an act of righteousness, because it is a step of obedience. In Matthew 3:15, we see the link between acts and faith. When Jesus was coming to be baptized, John said that he himself needed to be baptized by Jesus. *“And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”* Water baptism is an act of righteousness. There must not only be faith to believe that we need to be baptized in water, we must also follow through to be baptized in water. This is a very important aspect of life.

Another example of an act of righteousness can be found in the life of Abraham, the father of the faithful. We know that when he had no children, the Lord led him out of the tent one night to look at the stars, saying, *“So shall thy seed be.”* Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Rom. 4:3). But Abraham did not just stop at believing. In James 2:21, the Apostle James said, *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”* Thus James makes it clear that Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar. Faith is made perfect by works. In actuality, if a person has faith, then we are to see the works of righteousness (Jas. 2:24).

Likewise in Hebrews 11, those heroes of the faith were told by God to do certain things; and when they *believed* God and *did* those things, it was accounted as righteousness to them.

As our eyes are opened to fresh truth, and we step onto that platform of the fresh truth by *appropriating* and *doing* it, the righteousness of God is progressively worked out in us. It is so very important to not just acknowledge what the Word of God says, but to put it into practice. Just giving lip service to the Word of God will get us nowhere. We have to identify ourselves with what it says.

For example, the Word of God tells us, “*Husbands love your wives*” (Col. 3:19), and this is something that husbands need to communicate to their wives regularly. My wife had a perennially short memory; and she would say to me, “Did you tell me today that you love me?” and I would say, “Honey, it was only an hour ago that I told you.” Then she would say, “My memory is a little short. Would you repeat it please?” and so I did.

Once when I was in the land of Greece, a pastor’s wife said to me, “I do not know if my husband loves me.” Being very young at that time, I said to her, “Ask him.” The pastor’s reply was very interesting. He said, “I love your soul.” What an answer—that was cold love!

The Lord Himself brings out this truth of faith and acts of righteous obedience in Matthew 5:19, when commenting on teachers of righteousness. He said, “*Whosoever therefore*

*shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

Habakkuk 2:4 says, "*The just shall live by his faith.*" When God speaks, and we obey in faith, it produces righteousness. As we live the true Christian life and teach others God's ways, we will shine as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

### *Walking in the Faith of Christ*

Then there is another step up from acts of righteousness. In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul says, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Therefore, there is a progression from specific acts of righteousness to walking by the faith of the Son of God, seeking to hear from Him and to obey Him daily.

In Romans 14:23, Paul swings to the negative and says, "*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*" Therefore, in our lives, we must walk in faith so that the things we do are done by the faith of the Son of God. Obviously, the Lord will not give faith for the things that He has not ordained for us to do. Thus we have the thought of living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). As we are obedient, then the righteousness of God is counted to us.

### *Filled with Righteousness*

Then there is a further step of righteousness. In Matthew 5:6, the Lord said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” We want to be filled with the righteousness of God, and we must hunger and thirst for that.

This is accomplished by prayer asking God for righteousness and also by memorizing Scriptures that pertain to righteousness. In so doing, a hunger and thirst will be created in us for His righteousness.

### **The Rewards of Righteousness**

The Apostle Paul spoke of the fact that at the end of his days, a crown of righteousness was awaiting him because he had done those things that God had ordained for his life: “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Thus we see that we can partake of this same expectation if we qualify for it.

Now there are other rewards in the form of the *fruit* of righteousness, such as peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The fact that righteousness is linked to the joy of the Lord is clear from Psalm 45:7. Speaking of Christ, it says, “*Thou*

*lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”*

Isaiah speaks of the fact that the result of righteousness is peace: *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever”* (Isa. 32:17). He likens this peace to a river, speaking of abundance (Isa. 48:18). James, in speaking of the wisdom from above, also makes this connection, saying, *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”* (Jas. 3:18) Righteousness and peace go together.

The Lord has taught me that when we have a choice to make, and we make the right choice, we shall enjoy the fruit of that choice. There is always fruit for everything we do. If, however, we make the wrong choice, we may confess our sins and be purified from them; but we will still suffer the consequences of our actions.

From the vantage point of one who is old and experienced, I would plead with you to listen to your godly leaders, for they have experience. I know of people who had been warned repeatedly and chose not listen, with the result that they suffered the consequences of their disobedience. The way of the backslider is hard.

Having walked with and outlived many, I have seen them begin and end their lives. I have seen Christians fall because they have failed in this area of righteousness. They have

done things that are not right, and have failed to put them right; and as a result, there is great sadness at the end of their lives. How I grieve for them. My burden is that you finish your life not in sorrow, but triumphantly.

## Righteousness and Leadership

Then there is an important aspect of righteousness in the realm of leadership. When we are given the responsibility of caring for other people, we would do well to remember what God spoke to King David in 2 Samuel 23:3, *“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”*

One thing that Job said was, *“If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?”* (Job 31:13-14). We want to be like Job. If anyone had a problem, a cause, or a complaint, Job listened to the needs of these people and cared for them. As leaders, we must listen to our people, consider wisely, and rule justly.

**People are  
important. We  
must not run  
over them.**

People are very important. We must not run over them, no matter how insignificant their problems appear to be.

We must care for one another and always do to one another that which is right in the sight of God. When the leader is not upright, those who are under him suffer. A project must take second place to the needs of people. That project will pass away, but the people will not. We must care for the people, from the greatest of them to the most humble.

### **Do Not Be Deceived**

Many are deceived in this area of righteousness. The Apostle John warns in 1 John 3:7, "*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*" The point that I want to bring out here is that Satan is the arch deceiver—and he works to deceive in the realm of righteousness.

The scribes and Pharisees were completely deceived. They felt that because they were descended from Abraham, they would be all right. That is why John the Baptist said in Luke 3:7-8, "*...O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*"

Apparently, certain Jewish writings suggested that if a very wicked Israelite appeared to be heading for hell, he would be saved because Father Abraham would be standing at the

mouth of hell ready to catch him and put him into paradise, as one of his children. They were absolutely deceived.

Sadly, there are people who are deceived in the Church, too. I have spoken to leaders who have fallen into sin and then covered their sin; and I have asked them, “Why?” The answer I often get is: “Well, we thought we were special. We thought that because we were doing His work, God would understand and overlook our little dalliances and streaks of wickedness.” But God does not. With Him, there is no respect of persons (Acts 10:34).

Many years ago, my wife and I were travelling in the southern United States when I had a vision of a woman. I did not really see her face, but it seemed to me that we were going to meet this woman. We went to a church that we had not been to before, and I was amazed. There was a woman preacher who was admonishing the congregation not to correct others for their lifestyle. She held out her hand and said, “If you accuse somebody else, there are three more fingers pointing back at yourself.” The pastor was saying, “Amen!” However, that is so very wrong.

We were sitting in the pew when the service finished when we saw the fruit of her teaching. I recognized the lady from the vision; and she said to us, “Oh, I love this church. I was with the Assemblies of God; but this church is so different. At this church it does not matter how you live. They accept you anyway.” She (along with many others in the church) was completely deceived.

The fact that we are in a good church or that we have received excellent teaching does not give us the latitude to lead a double life. God will expose sin and root it out.

## **Righteousness Leading to Holiness**

When we continue, by the grace of God, to walk on the pathway of righteousness, being obedient to God—that pathway should lead to holiness.

Righteousness is not the same as holiness. Revelation 22:11 makes this distinction between righteousness and holiness clear: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”* God is righteous, but He is also holy.

We have a classic example in the life of Lot. The Apostle Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man. He was vexed with the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:7-8). Yet he was not holy.

What is the difference between a righteous man and a holy man? Essentially a righteous man loves righteousness and does that which is right, as Lot was doing. However, the meaning of holiness is different; it is separation from iniquity and being set apart to God, which is described in Psalm 1:1, *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”* God is a holy and righteous God. He

is separate from iniquity. This is where Lot failed. He could not separate himself from Sodom; and that is why he lost all. We must surpass Lot; being righteous is not sufficient. If we hate those things that are wrong and sinful but choose not to separate ourselves from them, we are not holy.

Separation is essential, because who we walk with will determine the outcome of our life. Of course this is especially important in the area of marriage. I can think of time after time in my own life when people asked me why I did not marry a certain girl. But God had not spoken to me to do so. He said, “If you marry that girl, you will be limited. You will not go on to what I have for you.” She was a very nice and godly girl, but she had her limitations, which would have limited me.

Then God gave me a wife from the USA. She had received a prophecy that she would marry a man of like vision as herself. That is what we want—a spouse of like vision. It is so important not only who you marry but who you walk with. We can be married to the right person, but if we walk with people who are not godly, they can influence us and take us out of God’s path.

In the nineteenth century, when people travelled using a horse and carriage, a certain lady lived on a mountain. From that mountain to the village, there was a path that wound around the mountain and overlooked a terrible gorge. There came a time when her coach driver resigned, and she was looking for another one. There were three men who came to

be interviewed by her. Her main concern was the danger of the gorge.

She said to the first one, "How close can you get to the gorge without falling over?" He said, "Such and such distance." The next one said, "I am so good, I can run my wheels along the edge of the gorge and not topple over." The third one said, "Madam, I never seek to get close to the gorge. I seek to get as far away from it as possible." She hired the third driver.

We have to treat sin just as that wise driver treated the gorge. We cannot play with it; rather, we have to get as far away from sin as possible. My mother-in-law had a friend who had married a drunkard. This lady had two boys. After the death of their father, she warned her sons against touching alcohol, because they would run the risk of becoming a drunkard like their father had been. One of them did not believe his mother and said, "One little drink will not hurt!" He took that one little drink, and in a deadly progression became addicted to alcohol. The other son listened to his mother. The result was that the first son ended up in terrible circumstances, while the other son walked with the Lord and had a happy family life. Let us remember that sin is a deceiver. If we flirt with sin, we are very foolish; and it will lead to our downfall.

The awesome thing about this question of righteousness is simply that we are on probation with God. Over the years, I have seen people play with sin, lead a double life and think they will be fine. However, later on, they become snared by that sin.

God will not permit the wicked to remain in the congregation of the righteous forever. Psalm 1:5-6 says, *“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”* In my experience, I have seen this scripture fulfilled. If we refuse to listen to what God is saying, there can well come a time when God says, “That is enough. You are out.”

One of the solemn lessons that God taught me when I was young in the faith was that not everyone can come to church. I had a vision one night of the church that I used to attend in London. As I walked into the church foyer, I saw an angel; and that angel was deciding who could go into the church and who could not.

As a pastor, I have had to warn young girls in the congregation who were in sin. God prophesied through me, saying, “You may think that once you leave, you can always come back. That is not so.” Unfortunately, they did not take any notice of what I said. As a result, they are now out in the world. According to the prophetic word, these particular girls can never come back.

We are dealing with a holy God. God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). Therefore, we do not want to see how close we can come to the “edge of the gorge,” but how far we can get away from it. The Church can no longer have double standards. We have to have people who are cleansed and genuine. We want to be purged, so that we are a meek,

righteous, and holy people, who are qualifying to be hidden and protected by God in the coming darkness.

# Chapter 5

## *GOD'S HIDDEN ONES*

In this chapter, we will look at the theme of “God’s hidden ones,” explaining from the Scriptures what that means. Then we will consider the goal of being one of His hidden ones in times of great judgment.

In World War II, there was a demonstration of being hidden, as many hid the Jews during the time of Nazi oppression. This was recounted and developed into a book called *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom. Essentially that is what God is offering us—the opportunity to be hidden in a time of His anger.

### **Examples from Scripture**

Throughout the Word of God there is the thought of being hidden. This is seen especially in the life of King David, who often cried out to God concerning his desire to be hidden. For example, in Psalm 17:8 he says, “*Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.*” Also, in Psalm 91:1, he says, “*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*”

David cried out to be hidden in times of trouble. In Psalm 27:5, he says, “*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*” This desire and cry to be

hidden must come forth in our spirits. Also, in Psalm 32:7, David says, *“Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.”* In other words, when the wicked come, we want God to hide and preserve us.

Then there were times when David cried out to God to be hidden from the afflictions caused by the wicked. Psalm 31:19-20 says, *“How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.”* Here, the “secret of Thy presence” refers to the Holy of Holies. Then Psalm 64:2 says: *“Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.”* The thought here is that there are all kinds of afflictions coming, but we are to cry out to God for Him to hide us.

I have experienced being hidden by God in situations where I have had the wicked before me. It was as though the Lord brought down a sheet of plate glass between us, and their words bounced off this sheet of glass without touching or affecting me.

It is so important for us to understand that God is on the throne. I have noticed that the wicked are only there for a certain given time and then God removes them. But during their reign, that is the time when we need to cry out to

God to be hidden and protected by Him. We see this in Proverbs 28:12, 28, which says, *“When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden... When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.”* Thus when wickedness arises, the righteous are hidden from the scourge of the wicked ones.

In fact, the Lord throughout Scripture gives us that admonition to hide ourselves. In Isaiah 26:20, He says, *“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.”* It is an encouragement and an admonition from God for us when times are dark to cry unto Him; and He will hide us from these things. Being hidden by God is a definite doctrinal message that runs through the Word of God. God Himself says, *“Call unto Me to hide you during this time.”*

There is a ministry of God that is manifested in hiding His people. It is not just recorded in a few random psalms, but it flows through the Word of God that He wants to hide us in the time of trouble.

### **Examples from Israel's History in Scripture**

In Psalm 83:3, we have the words that have been chosen as the title for our book: *“They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.”* This speaks of the enemies taking crafty counsel.

### *Hidden from Jezebel*

As we look into the history of the children of Israel, the wicked kings often sought to slay the prophets of God. One such example was wicked Queen Jezebel (the wife of King Ahab) who sought to slay the godly prophets. In that situation, Obadiah, the governor of the king's house, hid one hundred of the Lord's prophets (1 Ki. 18:4).

### *Hidden from Jehoiakim*

Another example is found in Jeremiah 36, when wicked King Jehoiakim was upon the throne of Judah. He sought the life of the prophet Jeremiah (and also Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe): *"But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them"* (Jer. 36:26). They could not find them.

Thus, even in a time of great vengeance and wickedness, God provides the righteous with the possibility of being hidden. May this be engrafted into our spirits, that though the days are going to get bleak, God has made a way of escape, saying, "I want you to be one of My hidden ones."

### *Hidden from the Babylonians*

We see another example of God hiding His people in the time of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem. The Babylonian

armies had surrounded Jerusalem, and they were going to slay those in the city: *“He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar”* (Ezek. 9:1-2). It is evident that in these trials, it is not just the visible enemy that we are dealing with. We are dealing with those appointed by God to slay the wicked. They are angels.

Then the account continues: *“And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”* (Ezek. 9:3-4).

Here, one of the most terrible judgments in the city of Jerusalem was about to be executed. Nebuchadnezzar with his army was going to annihilate a large portion of the population. Yet we see that it is the Lord who says to the angels, “Go through the city and slay, but spare those that have the mark.” It is all under the control of God.

When there is a disaster, we have a tendency to think that one person has randomly escaped and another has been killed. That is not true. Nothing is by chance. These things have been pre-determined by God. This is seen in Revelation 6:9-11, in the description of the opening of the seals leading to judgment in the Last Days: *“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”*

Therefore even in the Last Days, in the times of the Book of Revelation, nothing is going to be an accident or a mistake. There will be those godly men and women who will be martyred in the ordination of God. Then there will also be those who qualify to be preserved, even as we see from Ezekiel 9:3-4, when God caused a mark to be placed on the foreheads of some and preserved them from the onslaught of the Babylonian armies. The Lord has told us to watch and pray that we might be counted worthy to escape; thus, He holds out before us that possibility of being able to escape the things that are coming upon this earth.

In Ezekiel 9:5, we are told that those who were preserved were those who *“sighed and cried for all the abominations around them.”* Our attitude towards what is happening in the Church

today is going to be a great factor in determining what God has for us. If we sigh and cry about the churches whose services seem little better than nightclubs, and we grieve for them, we will qualify to be spared in the time of God's judgment.

Therefore, there is a possibility of being spared and hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, whereas others are going to be slain because of their evil. Such was the case during the Babylonian invasion when Ezekiel said, "*...Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?*" and the Lord responded "*...mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head*" (Ezek. 9:8, 10). The land will be filled with blood; and we must have worked out in our spirit the thought that God is offering to us a hiding place to be protected during the days of judgment.

**Let us watch and pray that we may  
be counted worthy to escape  
the coming judgments.**

One of the worst aspects of a trial is that we often do not know its length. It is comforting to know that God has delineated specific time lines for the Last Days; otherwise nobody would be able to hold on. However, during the time of waiting, one has to be hidden from the Antichrist and the wicked; and it is God who is our hiding place.

## **Other Examples of Being Hidden**

It is very interesting indeed how the Lord hides His people. Colonel Hal Oxley was a friend of ours. Many years ago, when he was a pastor in a church in Melbourne, Australia, he wanted to reach out to the Russian Christians. Therefore, his church made audio tapes to take to the Russian believers so that they could play them and listen to the services and teachings. As his evangelistic team was preparing to leave for Russia, Pastor Oxley said, "Bring all the tapes here and we will pray over them." Then he prayed, "Lord, blind the eyes and ears of the immigration officials so that they will not discover what is in these tapes."

When they landed in Russia and appeared before the immigration officials with their luggage, one of the recorders was turned on by accident. Out came the voice of Pastor Oxley praying for protection from these officials! With much trembling, the team looked at the officer, but he merely said, "That is all right." He shut their suitcases and sent them away. The Lord had shut the eyes and ears of those in authority, and as a result, the team was able to bring their tapes to the desired haven. God can do these things.

I am also reminded of the time of the victory celebrations in England when those in Buckingham palace were acknowledging the adulation of the crowd. The two princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, wanted to mingle with the crowd. The palace officials objected on the ground that everyone would know who they were, and it would be difficult to

protect them. However, Princess Elizabeth pleaded with her father, who finally agreed to let them go. Both princesses went out amongst the crowd; and they were not recognized at all. Sometimes one can look at a person and not know who that person is, even when one has known that person before.

That can and does happen in the angelic kingdom. In one account, an angel was escorting a believer through hell. There, this Christian saw Satan and his cohorts planning an expedition against the saints. Satan was on one side, while the holy angel and the believer were on the other side. The angel said to him, "Do not worry. He cannot see us, by the command of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can hear him and we know all his plans, and yet he does not know that we are listening in." God is able to do these things. That is why I want to encourage you to consider the ability of God to hide us.

God is well able to hide us; and He invites us to call unto Him to hide us in the coming judgment. To qualify to be hidden, we are to seek meekness and righteousness, and to press in to the Holy of Holies. We are to watch and pray that we might be found worthy to escape; and we are to grieve over sin in the Church. On the other hand, there will also be those ordained of God for martyrdom. These things do not just happen at random, but God has His plans and purposes.

### **The Message of the Last Days**

In going through the recent trials in my life, the Lord has been opening my eyes to the darkness and the terrible judgments

that will be coming upon the earth. In the Last Days, we will see the polarization of two distinct groups—the wicked and the righteous. As Jude 1:4 says, the wicked are of old ordained for judgment. They are estranged from the womb (Ps. 58:3). The wicked will seek our lives; but God can hide us. He can close the eyes and ears of people when we are passing through from place to place.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in speaking of His Second Coming and the terrible trials that shall come to pass, gives an exhortation in Luke 21:36, *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”* Here we have the thought of the Lord Himself saying, “Yes there is going to be great trouble and judgment everywhere, but watch and seek Me diligently, praying always that you may be accounted worthy to escape.”

The question we should ask ourselves is whether we qualify to be hidden in the time of the Lord's anger. Psalm 17 refers to the shadow of His wings, speaking of being hidden in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding in His presence as before the Mercy Seat. Therefore, being hidden also entails pressing in to the Holy of Holies and all that this part of the Tabernacle implies.

The message then of the Last Days is to cry out to God that we may be *counted worthy* to be hidden in the time of His judgment. Just belonging to a good church does not qualify us. We need to live the life and hide the commandments of

God in our heart (Prov. 2:1). The Word of God is not written for the wicked; they do not read it. It is for believers—for our encouragement, our edification, and as a warning to us that we should walk in the pathway of righteousness. We need to pray for our children, bringing them up in the ways of God, so that they, too, would be found worthy. In so doing, we are qualifying ourselves for protection and for entrance into His hiding place.

It is so important to understand that this ministry of God of hiding His people is something that we have not touched on before, because the time was not yet ripe. However, the time is becoming ripe; and we want to be among the company of His hidden ones. It is my deep concern that we put forth this truth to you—preparing for the coming judgments by seeking meekness and righteousness so that each of us can be one of God's hidden ones, qualifying to stand before the Lord of glory.



**PART II**

*LESSONS FROM  
THE LIFE MESSAGES  
OF  
SELECTED APOSTLES*



# Chapter 6

## *THE APOSTLE PAUL*

We have seen that in the coming darkness, God offers the possibility of being hidden to those who qualify. Until such time when He chooses to hide us, we will need great spiritual strength to hold steady, for the pressure will be great. Thus it is vitally important in this time of preparation that we allow the Lord to develop His strength in our lives.

It is with this in mind that we have chosen to include a study of the lives of selected apostles, focusing on their positive qualities as well as their flaws. These qualities will either help or hinder us in remaining faithful and steadfast, and thus qualifying to be hidden. May we learn from their lives so that we will be more than conquerors in Christ. This is a very important subject indeed, because so many Christians are having difficulties understanding what is happening to them in life.

We begin by looking at the life of the Apostle Paul, his specific life message, and how God worked that out in his life. By studying Paul's life, we can better understand the Lord's dealings in our own lives.

I have met many precious saints who have been privileged to have been taken, in visions of the night, to heaven. They have said that in heaven, there are many flowers. These flowers represent various truths that God chooses to form and manifest in each of us. When we compare the plants in Song of Songs 4:13-14 with

the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22- 23 in the order named, the spiritual interpretation of each plant is revealed. We find that the plant *saffron* corresponds to the fruit of *longsuffering*; and it is a very precious fruit.

In the case of the Apostle Paul, he was chosen by God to manifest the quality of longsuffering (suffering for a very long time), as he said in 1 Timothy 1:16, *“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”* Also, after Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus and was stricken blind, the Lord said to the devout and pious disciple Ananias, *“...Go thy way: for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake”* (Acts 9:15-16).

### **Paul's Early Life**

Why was Paul chosen to manifest and become a pattern of this particular fruit of longsuffering? The reason lies in his formative years; and understanding this “cause and effect” or “sowing and reaping” concept will also help us understand how the Lord is working in our own lives.

Acts 8:3 says that Paul (then known as Saul) *“... made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”* Then again in Acts 9:2, we see that he desired letters of the high priest, stating that if

he found any Christians—whether men or women – he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Paul called himself “the least of all the saints” in Ephesians 3:8 because in his early years, he persecuted the Church of Jesus Christ. He tortured the members of the Church, causing some to blaspheme, and others to renounce their faith in Christ. Persecution of the Church, and causing others to suffer was a lifestyle with Paul. Thus when he was converted, suffering was going to be his way of life.

When we reflect on our past experiences, we begin to understand why certain things happen, because what we sow, we also reap. For example, Jacob was a deceiver, and he reaped deception. He was deceived by his own sons; and the result was that for a period of about 20 years, he believed erroneously that his son Joseph was dead, before meeting him in Egypt.

### **Paul, a Pattern of Longsuffering**

God had given Paul to the Church to be a pattern of longsuffering. The only way one can be a pattern of something is to experience that very thing. Let us look at a few scriptures in which Paul speaks about this theme.

In 2 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul is writing of the things that he has suffered. In verse 23 he says, “*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*” He is saying, “They may have

suffered, but it does not compare with the sufferings that I went through.”

Paul continues in verses 24 and 25, *“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.”* But I wonder how many stripes and stonings he had ordered for some of those dear Christians.

Then he says in verse 26, *“In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.”* Paul went through all this. Moreover, we have to remember that if we are called upon to be a pattern of longsuffering, these are some of the things that we may have to endure.

Throughout Paul’s epistles, he is consistently speaking of suffering, which is his main message. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, 9, he speaks of the sufferings of Christ which abound in him and about his having the sentence of death. Then in 1 Corinthians 4:11-13, he tells of hunger and thirst, and being reviled and persecuted.

I would like to bring out a very important truth here. We should ask ourselves, “When I am preaching or speaking, what do I focus on the most? What is the main theme that comes out consistently?” As you reflect on this, you will begin to understand who you are, and what God wants from you.

It was actually justice on God's part in allowing Paul to endure all these things. I have often pictured the Great White Throne judgment, when Paul will be exalted above all the other apostles, perhaps with the exception of Peter. (In fact, I understand that Paul has a beautiful throne in heaven.) Yet there will be those who will look on and say, "This is the man who caused me to suffer." At that point, God can turn round and say, "Yes, I know; but because of that I caused him to suffer much." There is no injustice with God.



**What we choose to focus on most in speaking often reveals our life message.**

### **Paul's Attitude in Becoming the Message**

Paul wrote in the Book of Philippians, *"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death"* (Phil. 3:10). That was one of the things that Paul wanted to know—the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Therefore, he could say in Romans 5:3 that he gloried in tribulation because it brought him into a deeper intimacy with Christ. Paul gloried in the message that God had given him. In the same way, we are to glory in the message that God has given to us.

Another amazing thing about the Apostle Paul is his attitude of rejoicing when suffering. We read that he was, "...

*chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:9-10).*

We also know that he was “...troubled on every side, yet not distressed; ... perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

In Colossians 1:24, he said, “... [I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”

The thought of suffering with joy is again seen in Colossians 1:11: “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Joy had to be included in his message, for it is the joy of the Lord that gives us strength to endure the suffering (Neh. 8:10).

Paul knew that he was going through all this because he had persecuted others. Yet he was cheerful through all the suffering. I marvel at how Paul could undergo these things with joy. Throughout the generations, there are those who suffer vicariously for the Church, yet they do it with joy. We, too, are to rejoice over the message that God is making us.

When I first came to the USA, I asked the Lord, “What have I come for?” and He said, “To be crucified.” I have had about 30 years of very difficult times, firstly with my wife's illness and now with my own illness. For a period of time, I was in great pain; but the Lord has mercifully taken away the pain.

Even in this situation, I am very aware that my condition and the spiritual oppression that I experience are because of what others are doing. However, I am keeping my eyes on Jesus and saying to Him, “If You choose to bring me through, that would be wonderful. But if not, I am ready to go to heaven.” I am a happy man. At the same time, I feel that I must be healed for the sake of others who have prayed.

Then, too, there have been times when others have done things that are unkind. I have to help people who have been wronged in certain areas; and my advice has been for them to take their eyes off the offence and to place their eyes on Jesus. That is *the key to being happy and joyful when difficulties and offences arise*. We look past them and look to the Lord, asking Him how He sees the situation and seeking Him for the necessary grace, comfort, and holy forgetfulness of the hurt. I have found joy in practising this. Most of the time I cannot even remember the wrongs that people have done to me.

If, on the other hand, we choose to take up the offences of others or become offended at the difficulties that come in life, then we will lose out. Once when the Lord was taking someone into hell and showing this person certain people in hell, He came to a particular lady who was consistently reading the Bible and preaching in hell. The Lord then revealed that this lady was responsible for sending about 500 people into heaven. The question was asked, “Lord, if she sent 500 people into heaven, why is she not in heaven?” The Lord said, “She was married, and her husband committed adultery.

She could not forgive her husband or Me for permitting him to commit adultery; and because of her unforgiveness, she herself is in hell.” Let us therefore look to the Lord for grace to be joyful in every situation through which we pass. *As we learn to conquer bitterness and offences, we will grow in meekness and qualify to be His hidden ones.*

### **Paul Was a Good Steward**

The Apostle Paul was a good steward of what the Lord had given to him. He said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”* While he laboured more than others, he recognized that it was done not in his own strength but by God’s grace.

There are various callings in life. God has not created us all the same (or equally gifted). However, it is not what we *have* that matters as much as what we *do with what God has given us*.

I have learnt much through watching people in life; and there is one lesson that I would like to impart to you in particular. When I was a young student, we had a series of teachers in school, many of whom were very talented. In fact, I did not realize what a privilege it was to have the teachers we had until years later when I met my old headmaster, who told me that after the faculty broke up, many of its members secured very good positions elsewhere.

However, brilliant as they were, those teachers had not made as deep an impression on me as a certain lady teacher. At that time, she must have been between 35 and 40 years of age. She was not brilliant, but was only moderate in intelligence. It was from this lady teacher that I learnt something that I practise to this very day. In class, she would dictate the history lesson to us, and she would also write down what she had dictated. I understood that she was preparing for the coming years, thinking that later in life, her mind might not be as sharp. Then she could refer to these notes in teaching her classes.

The thought came to me about the little conies in Proverbs 30:26: *“The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.”* The lady teacher was not endowed with many talents, but she had the wisdom to maximize the use of what she had.

Another person who maximized what he had been given was Gordon Lindsay, the founder of Christ for the Nations Bible School. When he died, his son said that his father had very little talent, but what he had, he utilized to build the school, and to write a few books.

My history teacher might not have been as intelligent as the other faculty members; but she was diligent to use what she had been given. Gordon Lindsay was not brilliant, according to his son; but he was faithful in the little things, and he also was diligent. It is not a question of comparing ourselves with others. Rather, we should ask, “What am I doing with what God has given me?”

## The Dangers of Imbalance

I would like to turn to a passage that has confounded theologians over the years concerning Paul. In Acts 21, Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, despite repeated warnings that trouble awaited him there. To culminate all of these warnings, the Lord gave a strong prophetic word through Agabus. We read, *“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles”* (Acts 21:10-11).

Here one of the major prophets of the Early Church is saying to Paul that if he goes up to Jerusalem, the Jews would bind him and hand him over to the Gentiles powers (the Romans). The account continues: *“And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem”* (Acts 21:12). That surely was right. The Holy Ghost was giving Paul a warning through a respected prophet. Yet Paul answers, *“...What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done”* (Acts 21:13-14).

Sometimes, our greatest strengths can become our greatest weaknesses, but for the grace of God. Paul had been so

imbued with the message of longsuffering that all he was interested in was suffering. At this time he refused to listen to wisdom, and in so doing, he was making a major mistake. As a result, he ended up in a Roman prison for years, when he could have been more effective elsewhere. When God's work establishes certain things in our lives, and we have our message, we must be careful also to keep our ears open to His warnings.

### **A Flawless Message**

Another area we have to watch is the issue of flaws. We must allow the Lord to deal with flaws in our lives; otherwise people will see the flaws and not the message, thus marring the message.

If we have a certain flaw, God is going to spend a lot of time dealing with that flaw so that it will not spoil the glorious light that He wants to shine through us in eternity. Jacob, for example, was a deceiver; thus he reaped deception. It was through the things that he suffered that God straightened him until he became a prince with God and was called "Jeshurun"—one who is straight with God. We are to pay attention to flaws, because unless they are dealt with, we will come crashing down.

I have seen so many who have had a wonderful array of talents given to them by God. They may have done many good things, but I have seen a flaw bring them down. We have seen this in the example of the lady preacher in hell who had

lost her own salvation because of one flaw—unforgiveness. Let us seek the Lord and ask Him to show us any salient flaws in our lives that could bring us down; and let us allow Him to deal with them so that the message that we are to manifest through our lives can be presented flawlessly.

## **Being Prepared for Heaven**

Isaiah 51:16 says, *“And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”* There are two things mentioned here—planting the heavens and laying the foundation of the earth.

We have, by the grace of God, sought as a fellowship of churches to lay a foundation in many lands with the teachings of Zion—a vision of God’s high calling. God has said to us that He wants a Zion Bible college in every land. We have established about 100 Bible colleges throughout the world; and in some countries, the Lord has enabled us to establish many colleges. We are also raising up teachers of righteousness so that when revival comes, we will be ready and able to teach people the ways of God. In so doing, we are laying a foundation on the earth.

However, we also want to “plant the heavens” with souls that have been won through God’s spoken or written words. One of the things that the Lord has laid upon my heart is to prepare His people for heaven so that when they arrive,

they are ready to assume that position that He has for them. Thus it is so important for us to reflect on our own lives and seek the Lord on these questions, “What is His purpose for my life, and what is my life message? What is it in my background that causes Him to mould and use me in a certain way? What is His purpose for me in heaven?” For Paul, it was the message of longsuffering. His background prepared him to be the one who bore the mantle of longsuffering.

Then, too, we have to deal with flaws. When we know what we are to manifest in His kingdom, this will help us understand how God is dealing with us, because He is perfecting and honing us into that message that He wants us to be. As we *become* our message, we are being prepared for heaven above, so that when we step into heaven’s tableland, we will be just what God wants us to be.



# Chapter 7

## *THE APOSTLE JOHN*

We have seen that one's character is often revealed through one's writings, as was the case with the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John. The Apostle John is known for being the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn. 21:7). In fact, throughout his writings (whether in the Gospel of John, his epistles, or the Book of Revelation) we see him revealing the love of God. Those seeking to be hidden should major in love. It is interesting that John, the Apostle of love, was protected from being questioned when Jesus was arrested (Jn. 18:16-17).

Love is the bond of perfection; and as such, it should be the primary fruit of the Spirit that we should seek to develop.

### **The Proof of Love**

One may ask, "How can I love the Lord?" John's gospel is very explicit indeed on this point. We find that Jesus makes it clear when He says this in John 14:15, "*If you love me, keep my commandments.*" Then He also says in John 14:21, "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth*

**The key to  
loving the Lord  
is keeping His  
commandments.**

*me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”* Thus we see that the key to loving the Lord (as well as the proof that we love Him) is that we keep His commandments. It is very practical and clear cut.

John was the one who recorded the New Commandment on several occasions. In John 13:34 for example, Jesus said: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”* That is why John said in 1 John 4:20, *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”*

## **How Love Is Developed**

Let us now look at the thought of how we develop love, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. In John 15:5, the Lord reveals to us how the fruit of the Spirit is produced, saying, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

He also points out the process through which fruit is increased, as He says, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (Jn. 15:1-2). Here we have the thought of the process of purging or pruning through which “more fruit” is produced. Then John 15:5 speaks of “much fruit.” The thought of “much fruit” is

also seen in John 15:8, where the Lord says, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*

It is very interesting that Amy Carmichael once wrote, “Others may, you cannot.” In purging, God may say to us, “These things are lawful and others may do them; but you cannot, because I want to develop fruit in your life. My desire for you is for you to bear much fruit” (see also 1 Cor. 6:12).

Many years ago I was in Bible school in the county of Derbyshire in England. A group of us students were invited to the country house of a retired army captain who was a Christian. He said to us, “I want you to come with me, and I will show you something.” On a wall surrounding his garden there was a vine. As he picked up the little branches of this vine, he said, “I want you to take note of this very carefully indeed. It is the branch that grows the *nearest* to the vine that produces the *best* fruit.” The key to producing much fruit is to live closest to the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ.

How do we do that? Again, the Gospel of John gives us very practical keys. In John 15: 4, 7, 10, the Lord says, *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me...If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you...If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”*

Here, we see that the branches must be connected to the Vine in order to bear fruit. Thus, we must, as branches, abide in Christ the Vine by *keeping His commandments* in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Yet abiding is not enough. In the natural, there may be branches that are abiding in the main trunk, but are not receiving the sap to enable them to produce fruit. Spiritually, there is also a need to receive Christ's life-giving "sap." The "sap" refers to His words that are abiding in us (Jn. 15:7). To understand this, let us turn to the temptation of Jesus (found in Matthew 4:4). There, Jesus said to Satan, "... *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*"

It is not just sufficient to keep His commandments; we have to be in such communication with Him that we hear what He is saying to us. If you are in leadership, you must constantly hear from God, because you have to lead people, give them counsel, and guide a church or fellowship. It is not just sufficient to say, "Praise the Lord. I am keeping the commandments." We must have the Word of God flowing through us from the Vine so that His words abide in us. Those two things are very important indeed and I cannot over emphasize them.

Moving back to the fruit of love, in John 15:12, the Lord gave the commandment that we should love one another as He has loved us. That is the perfection of love. It is therefore essential that we bear the fruit of love. Remember, the

nearer we are to the Vine, the more fruit we produce. It is so important that we bring forth not just fruit, or more fruit, but much fruit. This idea of different degrees of fruitfulness is analogous to the truth found in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. Some ground brought forth thirtyfold in the harvest, some sixtyfold and some, an hundredfold. We want to be “hundredfold Christians” and abound in bringing forth fruit for His glory.

### **The Nature of Love**

What is the nature of love? Let us turn to 1 Corinthians 13, where the Apostle Paul describes the nature of love and the primary virtues that flow from it. He begins by saying that love suffers long and is kind.

I have often meditated on that. When my wife was very ill and we were looking after her, she was enduring suffering; and we, too, had to suffer. We all suffered for a long time. This is one of the things I have found in the Word of God—the trials of God are rarely quick, and they have to run their course in order for God to accomplish His purposes in us.

On one occasion when my wife was in the hospital for a surgery, the cardiologist said that they could not release her after the surgery because she still had to have 42 days of treatment, and not a day less. In the same way, in our lives, certain trials take a specified time before they can accomplish the work in us that they were intended to do.

I must confess that I have found the trials that I have been through in the last five years to be very difficult indeed. One is always looking for the light at the end of the tunnel; and many times one cannot see it. So often I have cried out from the hospital bed, "How long, Lord? When are You going to release me? When are things going to change?" In some situations, I experienced excruciating pain that I thought was impossible for me to bear, although it is nothing compared to what some others experience. I would cry out, "O God, please take the pain away;" and He was very gracious to do so. The Lord has made it clear that there is a perfect time for the final healing and for the release from this situation.

My wife used to say from her wheelchair to my sister-in-law and me, "I see love as I have never seen it before." I see love in my spiritual daughter, Suzette, who takes care of me constantly, not knowing what my condition might be from one hour to another. When one is dealing with a sick person, the most important thing is one's touch. Suzette has got a beautiful touch; and I can feel that love going through her for me. On the other hand, I have encountered some of the nurses in the hospital who did not have that and were quite rough. Love suffers long and is kind.

Then there follows a series of what love is not:

- *Love does not envy.* We have to ask God to purge us from all kinds of envy.
- *Love does not vaunt or lift itself up.* It is not boastful.

- *Love does not act unseemly.* How one behaves is very important indeed. It is embarrassing to watch how some people act when they scream in anger.
- *Love seeks not her own.* It is only concerned with the needs of others.
- *Love is not easily provoked.* Some people are so sensitive and easily offended that when you are near them, it is as if you are walking on ice that could crack any moment. We want to ask ourselves, “Am I easily provoked?” Moses, who was the meekest man on earth, was provoked by the children of Israel; and he lost the opportunity of entering the Promised Land (Num. 20:7-12). If you are easily provoked by what someone says, you are not a candidate for leadership. In leadership, one must not take offence or be provoked by the comments that many people will make.
- *Love thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity but in the truth.* It fills a heart such that one has no evil desire towards one’s neighbour.
- *Love bears all things.* This passage concludes with something very similar to the opening statement about longsuffering—“Love bears all things.” I have been meditating on that truth. In

our fellowship we are currently going through a very difficult period in a certain field; and there are times when I approach exasperation when I see how various individuals are acting. When I think, "Something has got to change!" the thought comes back to me that love has to bear all things.

- *Love believes all things.* In other words, when God speaks, we believe what God says. Love also hopes all things. As 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*"
- *Love endures all things.* We see again that one of the main attributes of love is that it suffers, bears, and endures all things. In other words, it is able to carry burdens faithfully.

## **Who Are We to Love?**

Having looked at the nature of love, we then ask, "Who are we to love?" I would like to look at four aspects of this question:

Firstly, we are to *love the Lord*. That is manifested by keeping His commandments.

Secondly, we are to *love our neighbour* as ourselves. We are to care for our neighbour; and what we would do for ourselves, we must do for our neighbour.

Thirdly, we are to *love our enemy*. Love for my enemies has been developing in my own life through this bout of illness. Being in a situation of suffering in my body for a very long time and feeling the intensity of pain has only worked for good with respect to my attitude towards my enemies. The result of suffering is that while I have no problem with God's chastening my enemies here on earth, I cannot wish for any of them to perish and go down into the pit.

God has graciously given me visions, including many visions of hell. The torments of hell are described in Revelation 14:9-11. When you have been through great pain, and realize that it is only a touch of what people suffer in hell for all of eternity, you would not wish it even on those who have wronged you greatly. Rather, you have one desire, and that is for their salvation. I will do anything to bring my enemies back to the Lord. Although I have had visions of some of them going down to hell, I have had no desire for that to happen. Suffering has given me a love for my enemies, so that if I see them again, I would have no difficulty in embracing and loving them and saying, "Please, I wish you no harm. I want God to preserve you for His eternal kingdom."

Fourthly, we are to *love one another*. We must love one another. If we do not, our love is not perfected; and we are only going to suffer for it.

One of the keys to loving one another is abiding in Christ, for in so doing, the fruit of divine love is produced (not just a human love). The Lord Jesus spoke about this divine

love when He prayed just before His betrayal: *“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them”* (Jn. 17:25-26).

I would like to encourage you to meditate on these things. My desire is for each one of us to become the flower that Jesus has ordained for us to be, so that we may plant the heavens. It is so important that we ask God, “Lord what little plant am I? What fruit do you want me to bear? Do I bear the fruit of longsuffering? Meekness? Love? Joy?”

The reason it is so important to know which fruit He wants us to bear is that God deals with us according to the fruit He is developing in our lives. It is a very practical issue. It is possible that He could be cultivating two or three fruits at the same time. On the other hand, God may develop a certain truth in your life during a certain season, and then in another season in your life, He may work out another fruit. Thus you have to cooperate and walk together with Him through each process.

Another lesson that we learn is that plants differ and bring forth various kinds of fruit. It is God who causes us to be different. In fact, the Apostle Paul said, *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* (1 Cor. 4:7).

In studying the life of the Apostle Paul, we have found that he is a pattern of longsuffering. His life reveals this fruit—and it is because of his roots and background. He persecuted the Church; and as a result, he became one who suffered for the Church. John, on the other hand, was beloved of the Lord—and he is the apostle of love. John was not called upon to have a life of longsuffering; Paul was. John was the very fountain of love; and because of it, his epistles and gospel speak highly of love.

**God has made us to differ, and  
you are not going to be the same  
as another person.**

Even as plants differ, we, too, are different. Paul was not the same as John, and John was not the same as Peter. In the same way, you are not going to be the same as another person, because God has made us to differ. It is therefore not wise to compare ourselves with others. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:12, *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

The fruit that symbolizes love is the pomegranate. The pomegranate fruit is very interesting. Its juice helps heal the heart, but in order to get the juice out of the pomegranate,

it has to be pierced. When Simeon spoke to Mary at the dedication of Jesus as an infant, he said, “... *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*” (Lk. 2:34-35). If we are to be a pomegranate, manifesting God’s love, then our hearts will be pierced, and we will know sorrow.

In the Last Days, love will be a rare quality, for the love of many will grow cold because iniquity will abound (Mt. 24:12). However, those who have allowed the Lord to bring to maturity the fruit of love in their lives will be strong, for love is as strong as death (Song 8:6). Let us, above all, love God, love our neighbour, love our enemies, and love one another.

# Chapter 8

## *THE APOSTLE PETER*

In this chapter, we turn to the life message of the Apostle Peter. At the beginning of his life, Peter was extremely unstable. He had a life of mixture. He walked upon water miraculously, and was chosen by the Lord to be the first apostle and to receive the keys of the kingdom. Yet he was also the one who betrayed the Lord by denying Him three times.

### **Peter—Made Strong in His Area of Weakness**

We are going to develop the theme that where Peter was weak (his weakest point: his instability), later he became strong (his strongest point: his stability and steadfastness). Let us not forget that Peter started out being most unstable, and yet he became one of the rocks or pillars of the Church, able to instruct others.

Truly God can turn our weakest area into our strongest area. Paul, who was the persecutor of the Church, became the most jealous guardian of the doctrine and of the conduct of the Church. At one point, John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans who did not receive Jesus and His disciples. However, later this “son of thunder” (Mk. 3:17) became the apostle of love, beloved of the Lord.

Flowing through Peter’s epistles is the theme of being “established and strengthened.” For example, he writes in

1 Peter 5:10: *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”* Then again, in 2 Peter 1:10, he says, *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”*

### **Eight Steps to Preservation**

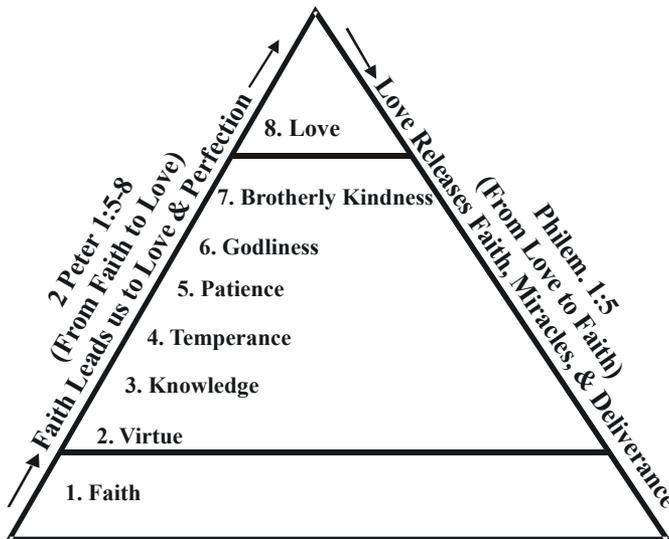
We are to be established in a certain path. The Apostle Peter sets the direction for us when he says that God has called us to “glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3) *Glory* can be interpreted as the fullness of the character and fruit of the Lord Jesus. *Virtue* can be interpreted as pleasantness or moral purity. However, not only do we need to determine that we are going in the right direction, but we also need to know *how* to get to our destination or goal.

We continue by looking at the eight steps delineated by Peter in 2 Peter 1:5-7; and the purpose of these eight steps is that we shall never fall: *“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”*

Peter was one who fell when he denied the Lord; thus his burden is to establish the saints, giving them keys so that they do not fall as he did. This is something that we must consider well. We do not want to fall or be tarnished with

an experience like the one Peter had; nor do we want to fall in the coming storm at the end of the age. Let us therefore examine Peter's remedy that will keep us from falling.

## Eight Steps to Preservation



The eight steps are preceded in 2 Peter 1:5 with a little phrase, “*and besides this, giving all diligence.*” We achieve nothing in life unless we are diligent. We have to constantly pursue the Lord, follow Him, and stay on the path. The quality of diligence is one of the characteristics of all those who succeed; they are diligent in what they are doing. For example, in learning a trade, the one who succeeds is the one who is diligent—the one who perseveres and seeks to know everything about that trade.

Likewise, we as Christians want to be diligent and seek to know all that we can about how to walk with the Lord and how to please Him. After all, it is so important that we do not fall, especially in the Last Days, of which the Apostle Paul spoke in 1 Timothy 4:1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”*

I was very grieved when I watched a service of a new church in a certain country in Asia on television. There were many people there, but they were completely deluded and heeding other spirits. I wanted to listen to it to discern what it was that was leading them astray, and found that basically it was the spirit of sensuality. When I went to bed after watching the service, I was awakened at least twice when a spirit hit me—and it was the spirit from that church. Sadly, the deception extends not only to the people in that church but to people in other countries who are looking to that church. My concern is that we do not become deluded, that we do not turn aside. We must keep on the path! An important key is being diligent to apply ourselves to this “staircase” that leads to success.

The first step in this staircase to success is *faith*. The word “faith” in Greek can be translated in two ways—“faith” or “steadfastness.” Faith is a progressive experience in God. It starts with accepting Christ by faith as our Saviour (Rom. 4:24) and by progressive acts of faith, the righteousness of God is revealed in our lives such that we come to the place where we live by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20), and that which is not of faith is truly sinful to us (Rom. 14:23).

Then we are to add to our faith, *virtue*. Virtue can be translated to mean being pleasant. *How* a word is used in another language and *the context* in which it is used is often helpful in shedding light on its meaning. The philosophers used this word in the context of speaking of a pleasant person. We want to be pleasant people. I am amazed that some people have very few friends. One reason may be that they are not pleasant people. Another way in which this word was used (in particular by Socrates) was in the sense of moral purity. After witnessing the sensuality in the aforementioned church, I am inclined to think that this is the more important interpretation.

We are to add to moral purity, *knowledge*. The prophet Isaiah said that wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of our times (Isa. 33:6). We are now in the Last Days, when the words of the prophet Daniel are being fulfilled: “*But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*” (Dan. 12:4). We will go nowhere, no matter what trade or profession we are in, unless we increase in the knowledge of what we have to do in that trade or profession. For example, pastors and teachers have to constantly study the Word so that they can give God’s people something fresh. In the context of 2 Peter, we are to grow in the knowledge of God.

Then we are to add to our knowledge, *temperance*. This deals with the ability to control ourselves. Having temperance means that I allow myself to do certain things, but not to

excess. In other words, the things that I permit myself to do (or to have) must not dominate me.

Once when we were passing by some golf courses on a very cold afternoon, we saw people out playing golf. Golf is a sport that can become such an addiction that some individuals practice it at every opportunity. The potential for addiction applies to everything. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, "Does this thing dominate me or do I have dominion over it?" For example, do the things that I eat dominate me or do I dominate them? Does coffee dominate me or can I choose when to drink coffee? That is the key to temperance. We should only be dominated by the Lord. If we are dominated by other things, we are in bondage.

Then we are to add to temperance, *patience*. Patience is "perseverance in circumstances." In life, we are always going to have difficulties and obstacles in the way; and we have to persevere in dealing with these difficulties. I have a little chorus with the title "*I Will Never Give Up*." Every obstacle gives us the opportunity to persevere or to give up. I acknowledge that during the past five years when I have been in and out of hospital, without the encouragement of Suzette, my faithful nurse and secretary, I could have easily given up at times.

The next step up from patience is *godliness*. Godliness can be translated as "goodness." We find that in Exodus 33:18-19: "*And he [Moses] said, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.'*" *And he [the Lord] said, 'I will make all my goodness pass*

*before thee....*” The theme of godliness is goodness. We want to be very good to one another.

Following the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the emperor of Japan made a broadcast and said, “Let us help one another.” Apparently, the Japanese are a very disciplined people. Their goal is to help one another. That is goodness.

We are to add to goodness, *brotherly kindness*. Goodness is different from brotherly kindness in that goodness expresses our attitude towards our fellow man, while brotherly kindness is in reality the fulfilment of the Lord’s eleventh commandment to love one another in the congregation (Jn. 13:34). Someone said to me, “I can love someone afar off but to love someone who is near at hand is difficult.” What Jesus is referring to is not someone who is far off, but those who are near at hand.

**While it may be easier to love those afar off, Jesus commands that we also love those near at hand.**

Finally, we are to add to brotherly kindness, *love*. This refers to divine love or *agape* love (God’s love). The difference between human love and divine love is simply that divine love surpasses all our understanding. It can manifest itself when human love has absolutely failed (1 Cor. 13:8).

Peter goes on to say, *“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”* (2 Pet. 1:8-9). There have been many prayer meetings for my healing in different parts of the world. In one meeting, someone had a vision of a bough of a tree. Although it had broken, it was being righted; and then it became intensely fruitful. I was very encouraged, because if I become fruitful, it will impact others, too.

The best fruit is the fruit that we bring forth in our old age. At the wedding feast of Cana, it was said that they had kept the best until the last (Jn. 2:10). When I was nine years of age, an angel of the Lord said to me while I was in my father's garden, *“In your old age, the Lord will use you. You will be fruitful.”* God is still working with me; and I am grateful for it. We all want to be fruitful in old age. That is one of the callings of Zion Fellowship, that as we get older, we will become more fruitful; and I rejoice in that.

Then he continues in 2 Peter 1:10-11: *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

This was the theme in the teaching of the Apostle Peter. He had denied the Lord and had fallen from the faith, but

when he was restored, this was his main theme—keeping others from failing. Thus he says in verse 12, *“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.”* In so doing, he was fulfilling the commandment that the Lord had given him in Luke 22:32: *“When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”* There, Jesus was actually giving that commandment to one who He knew would fail.

### **Peter the Pillar**

Peter was so wonderfully restored that when the Apostle Paul came to Jerusalem and met Peter, James, and John, he called them the “pillars of the Church” (Gal. 2:9).

Pillars hold up a building. In like manner, pillars hold up the Church. We have a beautiful example of pillars in 1 Kings 7: 15, 21. This scripture speaks of the two pillars between which the pious Jew had to pass to enter the Temple of Solomon.

In 1 Kings 7:18-19, there is a description of these pillars: *“And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapterer. And the chapiters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily work in the porch, four cubits.”* At the top, they were decorated with pomegranates, which are the symbol of love. Thus one of the conditions for being a pillar in God’s

house is that we have to be filled with the love of God in our minds. Then verse 19 speaks of lily work forming part of the pillars. Lilies are the symbol of moral purity, and that is very important. Love must be cradled in purity. Some people who preach love become involved in all kinds of sensuality. Pomegranates have to be “cradled in lilies” (moral purity).

One of these pillars was named *Jachin*, which means “established.” How we need to be established! We become established by taking those eight steps from faith to love (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

The Word of God is very simple. Let us remember that the Word of God was written for people with very little education in former days. God intended for the Scriptures to be understood. The Israelites did not each own a copy of Scripture; they had to listen to the priest who read the Scriptures to them. It had to be very simple indeed. That is why we have those eight steps. If we fulfil them, we will come to the top of the pillar—love.

The other pillar in the Temple of Solomon was called *Boaz*, which means “strength.” Those are two things that are required in life. When you are young, you want to be able to look at an older person and say, “That person has been in the church for many years and has not wavered in the faith. I can go to that person and have strength imparted to me.” Such was the case with Peter. He had been so changed and transformed in his weakest area that it had become his area of greatest strength. The Lord had told him to go strengthen

his brethren; and he could not do that unless he had been strengthened himself. Thus he had been established and strengthened by the Lord so that he could strengthen others. In other words, when you are speaking and ministering to someone, what you are is imparted to them.

Like the New Testament Church with its turbulent beginning, the Church today needs pillars to sustain and hold it up. These pillars are men and women who have been tried and tested, and who have become unmovable like trees that have passed through centuries of storms and have remained. I remember being taken by my cousin to see a tree in his garden that was about 900 years old, and it was an awesome sight. So, too (as we learn from Peter), must the lives and testimonies of faithful saints be pillars, to remind others in the Church of the immovability of the strength of God in times of need.

Peter had to be transformed from the wavering man who was fearful as he walked on the water and saw the wind. He cried out as he began to sink, “Lord help me.” The Lord stretched forth His hand and pulled him out and said, “...*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*” (Mt. 14:31). In other words, He was saying to Peter that he lacked steadfastness. Now, however, Peter had become one of the three pillars of the church in Jerusalem.

## **God Can Transform Our Weakest Point**

While we are studying the life of Peter, it would be wise for us to ask the Lord, “What is my weakest point?” This point

of weakness, different in each of us, can bring potential failure in our lives; nevertheless, this is also the very point that the Lord will seek to work on and make into our great strength. For example, if you vacillate, the Lord will seek to make you strong and of one mind with Him. If you are lazy, the Lord will seek to make you diligent. Is there a point on which you have been warned again and again by the Lord and by other saints? You have got to deal with this in your life; otherwise it will bring you down.

Peter was a man who was indeed very frail in some aspects; and yet at the end, he received a ministry to others in the area that had been his *weakest* point. I have noticed that people who have a weakness (for example, in the area of moral failures), and who allow God to deal with them, become strong in that same area, and have a powerful message worked out in their lives through the Lord's dealing in that area of former weakness.

**When we yield to God's dealings, He can transform our weakest point into an area of strength and ministry.**

My wife and I were travelling in Italy down the coastal region, and we passed by Pisa. There at the leaning tower of Pisa, one pillar was off centre. No one can go up that tower, as there is a risk that it might come tumbling down. The Italians are doing all that they can to bring this leaning tower back to being

perfectly straight; and that is what God wants for us in our lives. It is encouraging for us to know that God can make our weakest point into our strongest point.

When I was about eight years old, the headmaster of our school came in and said, “Son, you are the laziest person I know.” That stuck with me; and I realized that I had to overcome laziness. That is why I seek to always be working. At this time, the work that I can do is writing. I have found that God will not let me rest until I finish a book; and before I know it, I become inspired for another one. I constantly have to write, because the Lord is dealing with this sin of laziness. If it had not been dealt with, I would have done nothing of value in life.

Long ago I asked, “Lord, let me write a book that would be a blessing to the Church.” I wanted to leave behind me a book that would continue ministering to the saints after I go to heaven. The Lord has graciously given me over 60 books. I also had the desire to write a chorus that would bless the Church, and He has given me three of them.

What I have accomplished is a result of allowing God to deal with laziness in my life, which was clearly discerned by the headmaster when I was eight years old. I have always remembered that to be my failing point; therefore, I must work on it, even to the very end. I cannot give up.

God transformed Peter’s weakest point to become his strongest point; and that is exactly what God can do for you.

Where you failed, He can make you victorious. Let us say to the Lord, “Work in me the ‘Peter principle,’ dear Lord. Transform this weakness in me so that I will be strong and fruitful.” Peter became strong and fruitful, and he in turn strengthened his brethren. Praise the Lord!

I would like to close this section with a testimony. As a Bible school student, I used to go to a church that was primarily composed of men. They were very eager to give their testimonies when the pastor gave them an opportunity to do so. One would jump up and say, “The Lord delivered me from alcohol. Praise the Lord!” However, after a number of such testimonies, one brother got up and said, “I have got a better testimony than you all. God has delivered me so that I did not fall.”

At another Bible college, where I was on the faculty, we had some drug addicts who would eagerly give their testimony. Some of the other students became very despondent because they thought that they did not have a compelling testimony, since they had not taken drugs. Then the Lord’s presence came very near to them, and He said, “Neither did I.”

It is a far greater testimony to have been preserved from falling than to fall and be restored. Let us ask the Lord that we might be preserved from falling, and that we might not have a blemish on our record. Remember the truths that I have brought out from 2 Peter 1:5-11, because if these things be in you and abound, you will be fruitful, and you will not fall.

# Chapter 9

## *THE APOSTLE BARNABAS*

While the Apostle Barnabas was a man with very positive traits, he also had terrible flaws that we want to avoid in our own lives.

### **Held In High Esteem**

Barnabas was a man held in high esteem by the Early Church. In Acts 11:24, we are told that he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost. He was probably one of the 70 disciples sent forth by the Lord during His earthly ministry; therefore, he would have known and experienced firsthand the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His actual name was Joseph (Joses), and he is first mentioned in Acts 4. We read here of the believers, *“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need”* (Acts 4:34-35).

Barnabas was one of those who sold land and used the proceeds to meet the needs of others: *“And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the*

*country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36-37).*

Here, we are told that the apostles renamed him "Barnabas" meaning "son of consolation." As the Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, we can only console others to the degree that we have received consolation from God: "*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*" Thus as we suffer with Christ, so too we receive His consolation. From this, we can understand that Barnabas must have experienced much suffering to be able to console others.

Barnabas was also called "the beloved" (Acts 15:25), being a man full of love. When Paul first became converted, no one wanted to approach him because of his reputation as a persecutor of the Church. It was Barnabas who sought him out and brought him to the apostles in Jerusalem, assuring them of the genuineness of Paul's conversion, and convincing them that Paul was no longer a persecutor, but had become a builder of the Church (Acts 9:26-27). Here we are presented with an excellent character in Barnabas.

**As we suffer  
with Christ,  
we receive His  
consolation.**

## **Barnabas Ministers with Paul**

Paul and Barnabas had a long ministry together, travelling from country to country, and performing miracles. In the early part of their joint ministry, Barnabas started out being the leader and prime apostle. We know this because his name was mentioned before Paul's.

Then a problem arose between them concerning John Mark. Colossians 4:10 says of John Mark that he was: "*Marcus (Mark), sister's son to Barnabas.*" In other words, Mark was the nephew of Barnabas.

In Acts 12:25, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark left on a missionary journey. Mark ministered to the two older apostles. However, in Acts 13:13, he decided to leave Paul and Barnabas at Perga in Pamphylia. Despite this, Paul and Barnabas continued with their missionary journey, going through some very hard times together before returning to Jerusalem.

Time passed, and in Acts 15:36, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go and visit the churches that we have already visited and strengthen them." Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with him, and we see Paul's response: "*But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work*" (Acts 15:38). The contention was so great between the two of them, that these two friends parted ways.

Here we learn a lesson of tremendous importance. Barnabas, the “son of consolation,” parted from Paul because of Mark, his nephew. We have to be very careful indeed that family does not come before the will of God. We are told that “blood (speaking of family relations) is thicker than water.” While that may well be the case, Christ must come first when we are serving the Lord.

Barnabas should have yielded to Paul, saying, “If you do not want to take John Mark, we shall leave him here,” but he would not. Instead, he left the Apostle Paul, took John Mark, and went to Cyprus. Paul brought in Silas in place of Barnabas, and continued the ministry. Thereafter, Luke only records the missionary journeys of Paul and Silas. Barnabas paid a tremendous price for that decision. The unity that should have been manifested between Paul and Barnabas was no longer there.

John Mark later joined the Apostle Peter. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter calls him his “son in the faith.” Also, Paul reunited with John Mark in 2 Timothy 4:11, when at the end of his life, he gave instructions to Timothy to bring John Mark to him. John Mark became the writer of the Gospel of Mark, which is also called Peter’s gospel because it is based on the recollections of Peter that Mark had recorded.

Paul continued his missionary journeys with Silas. Together, they ministered in Turkey and in various cities of Asia Minor, eventually coming to Macedonia. From there, they travelled down the Greek peninsular to Athens and then to Corinth.

They stayed in Corinth for about 18 months before coming to Philippi. There in Philippi, messengers from Corinth met them with all kinds of questions; and as a result, Paul wrote the first Corinthian epistle. There, in 1 Corinthians 9:6, Paul mentioned Barnabas again, suggesting that after a lapse of time following the split, Barnabas had reunited with Paul. However, their relationship was no longer on the same level—a price had been paid.

If only Paul and Barnabas had remained united, John Mark could have been restored a little later on, and Barnabas would not have ended up losing his crown to Silas and taking a lower level of ministry than he did.

### **The Importance of Unity**

God is speaking to us about the great importance of unity. Just prior to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, John's gospel records that He gave the eleventh commandment. This eleventh commandment is very important for us to understand: *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (Jn. 13:34).

In Mark 12, Jesus was asked the following question by a scribe: "Which is the most important commandment?" He answered, *"...The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is*

*the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”* (Mk. 12:29-31). Also, elsewhere in His teachings, He said, “Love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44).

However, there is a difference between the new commandment of loving one another and the second commandment of loving one's neighbour. A neighbour is basically someone who lives outside, someone you might see from time to time but who is not in close proximity to you. You are to love that neighbour. That is emphasized in the Old and New Testaments.

The new commandment is different; it speaks of loving one's brother or sister in the Church; and this is where problems often arise. There are Christians who have something against a brother or sister and it is very displeasing to God.

## **Unity At Home**

Another area where problems can arise is in the area of the family, when the attitudes of husband and wife toward one another are less than desirable. It is heartbreaking. We cannot tolerate negative attitudes between husband and wife because it is not godly, scriptural, or Christ-like. If we are Christians, there must be love flowing between husband and wife. On some occasions, I have been appalled at the cruelty of some of the things that have been spoken by husbands towards their wives. If they do not repent, they stand in danger of losing their salvation.

We have a saying in England: “Charity (or love) begins at home.” If you cannot love your spouse, please do not speak of loving God. Your spouse is a minister, enabling you to work out things in your life so that you may come to perfection.

The Apostle John made this point in 1 John 4:20, “*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*” It is clear that one who loves God will also love his brother.

We knew a friend whose wife had asked him for a new dress, and he had told her, “No.” Then the Lord spoke to him and said, “How you treat your wife is the way that I will treat you.” After that, she received the dress very quickly. God will treat us the way we treat our wives or husbands.

The root issue comes down to this—what do you really want in life? Do you want to be a minister, pastor, elder, or a deacon? Those are not my goals. My personal goal is that I want to be holy. I want to be the same person in this pulpit as outside the pulpit. I want to be genuine, so that I live the truths that I preach. I am more concerned with *living* the Word of God than *preaching* it; and I cannot bear it to be otherwise. We cannot have double standards in the Church.

## **The Way to Unity**

How do we arrive at unity in the Body of Christ? Psalm 133 (the psalm of unity) says, “*Behold, how good and how*

*pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."*  
 God commands the blessing where there is unity.

Let us examine the constituents of that ointment that was poured forth, for they provide keys to unity. In Exodus 30, we have enumerated for us the various spices that go into this ointment.

### *Meekness*

Exodus 30:23 says, *"Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels..."* We know that myrrh is a type of meekness. Meekness does not respond to provocation. It is so important that when someone at home says a cruel thing to you, you do not respond. Then the fire will go out.

I have observed that a wife is often very dependent upon her husband. Some wives will say, "If only my husband would compliment me, or show kindness and thankfulness to me." A wife yearns for the approbation of her husband because her life is joined to his. He is everything to her, and he should realize that. A husband should commend and compliment his wife, justly of course (Prov. 31:28). For example, he could compliment her on how she looks, or perhaps on the quality

of the meals she has served for him, or for her faithfulness in caring for the household and children.

A wife actually waits upon her husband and cares for him. A husband should never respond with cruelty. Words are like daggers and can be worse than a slap in the face. Unfortunately, some husbands can be cruel in their words, and their wives react in anger. While this does not help, and they should not do so, I understand why they do. A meek person does not respond, and the fire eventually goes out.

### *Goodness*

The next ingredient of this ointment is cinnamon: “... *and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels...*” (Ex. 30:23). Cinnamon speaks of goodness. Once when I met the Lord, He said, “Touch Me; I am altogether goodness.” We want to be exactly like that. Goodness means that one is incapable of doing evil to another, either in thought, word, or deed.

### *Gentleness*

This is followed by calamus, which speaks of gentleness: “...*and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels*” (Ex. 30:23). I have seen this quality of gentleness in my spiritual daughter, Suzette. Throughout the time of my illness, she has come in at night to check on me, gently arranging my pillow to help me sleep better. Gentleness is part of unity.

How we speak to one another is very important indeed. This applies not only to husband and wife, but to all relationships in the Church.

### *Humility*

Then the next ingredient is cassia: *“And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary...”* (Ex. 30:24). Cassia symbolizes humility in that it is a tree of small stature. King Saul was commended by God when, in the beginning of his reign, he was little in his own eyes.

The Apostle Paul warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we should (Rom. 12:3). After all, in writing to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 4:7, he says, *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* Let us esteem others more highly than ourselves, and we will be preserved from a proud spirit.

### *Peace*

The final ingredient of this ointment is olive oil, which speaks of peace: *“... and of oil olive an hin”* (Ex. 30:24). The wife is the mistress of the house. As such, she is responsible for the atmosphere of the house and for bringing in peace. However, if her husband does not treat her well, what kind of atmosphere can she establish in the house? There must be harmony in the home so that peace can rule.

It is the peace of God which is our umpire. It is when we feel His peace in our hearts that we know that the decision we have made is the right one.

## **The Price of Unity and Disunity**

During this time of illness, the Lord spoke to me that it is His pleasure to bruise me in order to bring unity into the church. We must have unity in the church in order for God to move.

On the other hand, there is a price paid for disunity. For example, Barnabas paid the price when he lost his crown to Silas, although he was later reinstated with Paul. I am not saying that Paul was perfect; and we are not told what words passed between them. However, we do realize that Barnabas dropped out of the picture in Luke's account, and that Silas replaced him. How much better it would have been if Barnabas had yielded to Paul, thereby preserving the union they had at the beginning.

May God grant that we learn from these lessons in the life of Barnabas. Certainly in the Last Days, many shall be offended and turn away from the truth (Mt. 24:10). Bearing in mind that it is meekness that helps us qualify to be hidden, we must so live until it becomes a way of life to triumph over offences.

As the Psalmist said in Psalm 50:23, "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation [behaviour and speech] aright will I shew the salvation of*

*God.*” We do not want to have barren periods in our lives, and miss what God has for us because of our attitudes towards other people. If there is anyone in the church that you have not forgiven, you must forgive, otherwise you will not be forgiven. You will be a much happier person when you put things right. Then God will bring His presence and His healing. When we are in one accord, it paves the way for God to move afresh.

# Chapter 10

## *THE APOSTLE JAMES THE JUST*

In studying the lives of the apostles, we see why they developed certain messages. This gives us an understanding of what God is doing in our own lives. Moreover, as we reflect on our lives, we realize how God has faithfully led and guided us; and from this, we gain an understanding of how He will lead and develop us in times to come.

In the next part of this series, we will study the life of the Apostle James, who was also known as “James the Just.” James was the half brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he was brought up by the side of the One who is the epitome of *wisdom* and *perfection*. It is interesting that those very qualities are the two major messages of James.

### **Receiving Wisdom from Above**

Wisdom and knowledge are so important that they shall be our strength in the days to come: “*And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation...*” (Isa. 33:6).

Let us have a look first of all at his message on wisdom, as James, in his epistle, gives an invitation to ask for wisdom: “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*” (Jas. 1:5).

It is very important what we desire and what we choose to set our eyes upon. As a father, King David consistently taught his son Solomon that the principal thing in life was wisdom, saying, *“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”* (Prov. 4:7). That is why Solomon was a wise man. When the Lord appeared unto Solomon and said, “Ask what I shall give you,” Solomon had been so imbued with the teaching of King David that immediately he asked for wisdom; and his request was granted in full measure (1 Ki. 3:5-14).

I would like to consider a few aspects of wisdom. Proverbs 3:16 says concerning wisdom, *“Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.”* In other words, a long life is promised for those who seek wisdom. Thus if we desire a long life, we have to cry out to God for wisdom. In the left hand of Wisdom, there are riches and honour.

Wisdom is also a very important quality in the Last Days, when there will be great turbulence. As we have seen, the prophet Isaiah spoke of these times, saying, *“...Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure”* (Isa. 33:6). Thus we need to ask God for wisdom.

It is interesting that while wisdom is what will preserve us, so many people despise wisdom. In Proverbs 5:12-14, the foolish one says, *“...How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the*

*voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*” Some people choose not to obey the voice of their teachers, and they leave the path of righteousness.

While we can ask God for wisdom, wisdom is given to those who please God. Ecclesiastes 2:26 says, *“For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* Some people have no joy. Often the problem can be something in their hearts that is stopping God from giving them those precious gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and joy.

## **The Seven Pillars of Wisdom**

In Proverbs 9:1, there is the thought of the seven pillars of wisdom: *“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.”* These pillars are enumerated for us in James 3:17. The wisdom that is from above is:

- 1) Pure,
- 2) Peaceable,
- 3) Gentle,
- 4) Easy to be intreated,
- 5) Full of mercy and good fruits,
- 6) Without partiality,
- 7) Without hypocrisy.

We have a balcony in our sanctuary which is supported by strong pillars so that it is stable and does not move. In like manner, these pillars of wisdom hold up our lives, our families, and the Church.

### *Pure*

The first pillar pertains to purity. I have seen many tragedies occur because the people concerned did not have this pillar of purity erected in their lives. As a result, they have all fallen. Moral purity is the first pillar in our lives; and if we do not have moral purity, sooner or later there will come a temptation that will draw us away from the pathway of righteousness and into immorality, as we have seen time after time.

God has given me a long life; and what I have learnt over the years is that when people fall, there is a reason. On one occasion, my wife was saying to the Lord, "How sad that so and so has just fallen into sin." The Lord corrected her and said, "No one just falls into sin. If I see people on the pathway of righteousness and they are not dealing with an area in their lives, I speak to them from My Word. If they will not hear from My Word, I raise up friends who warn them again and again. People do not just fall into sin; it is their way of life."

Often, people say of those who fall into sin, "We thought that this person had a very good life." The truth is that the person did not; he or she had a "double life." God can see

the problem, but sometimes He chooses to hide a situation from our eyes. He tolerates it for perhaps a season, and then when the person will not listen, God permits him to be overcome with that temptation.

I do not condemn, but I do warn; and I have warned generations of young people. Some listen; others do not. Those who refuse to listen often end up in tragic marriages or a life of sin. Mark my words, wisdom is first pure. We must allow the Lord to work purity in our lives.

### *Peaceable*

The next pillar is the quality of being peaceable. I never knew my mother-in-law because she had passed away, but before our marriage, my wife would talk so much about her mother that I thought, “If I marry Audrey, I will get someone like her mother.” I did, and my wife was a very wonderful person.

This is what she told me about her mother: Her father had an executive position that required him to entertain other executives in his home. Without fail, they would remark, “What peace you have in this home.”

The wise woman is described in Proverbs 14:1: *“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.”* It is the wise woman who builds her house. One of the important pillars she establishes is this pillar of being peaceable.

My father-in-law came home to an atmosphere of peace. He had a very difficult time in his work. It was during the Great Depression, when people would line up as he walked along the street, asking him for an hour's work so that they could feed their children. Although he was a man of great compassion, he explained to his wife, "I cannot hire them. It is not my money." To avoid disappointing so many needy people, he would ask her to drive him to work by a side street so that he would avoid these poor people. He had to deal with many problems because of the Great Depression; but when he came home, he came to an atmosphere of peace. It is the wife who is instrumental in building this pillar. She can either make the home a place of peace, calmness, and tranquillity or a place of uproar.

**Gentleness attracts people to us and induces loyalty to that gentle one.**

### *Gentle*

The next pillar is gentleness. Gentleness comes through our speech, our touch, our every expression, and our whole demeanour. I appreciate the gentleness shown by my spiritual daughter Suzette in caring for me during my illness. Her gentleness soothes my whole being.

King David said, “*Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great*” (2 Sam. 22:36). The quality of gentleness attracts people to us and induces loyalty to that gentle one.

### *Easy to be Entreated*

Here is another pillar of wisdom—easy to be entreated. There are so many things in life that do not matter. On these issues, I yield; but there are important issues on which I do not yield. We do not change, for example, on points of doctrine.

God intended for the wife to be the helpmeet. Assuming that the marriage was of the Lord, it is important for husbands to listen to and consider what their wives say. I avoided a number of pitfalls because I listened to my wife. She was very gentle and sweet. When I said to her that I would go in a certain direction, she would say, “Dear, have you perhaps considered this alternative?” I would listen, pray and think about it, and often realize it was better, and switch.

As leaders who are responsible for many people, it is important for us to listen to them. One person wants to handle a situation this way, and another person wants to handle it a different way. Why not discuss the issue and see what is best? A person who is easy to be entreated does not insist on having his own way.

I saw the epitome of hypocrisy in England when I was invited to a certain person’s house. The purpose of that visit was to

help a particular couple. The wife wanted her own way; so she waited until there was a lull in the conversation, and then she started crying. While there were some who were taken in by her tears, I was not. The thought of manipulating others by crying is very foolish and hypocritical. The values of this world are very different compared to the values in heaven. With worldly values you may score well here on earth, but not in heaven.

Women have to be very careful not to be led by their emotions. There is a difference between a man and a woman. A man's brain can separate logic and emotions. A woman's brain does not always do so; her logic can, at times, be wrapped around her emotions. Many times, women may stand firm when they should yield, and yield when they should stand firm. This is seen particularly in political leaders, when they have excelled for a time and then have crashed because of inflexibility on minor issues. For example, Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, would not yield on the poll tax; and that contributed to her downfall. Therefore, women in leadership should have the proper covering and wise counsellors.

It is a solemn truth that God deals with us according to our attitude. Psalm 18:26 says of the Lord, "*With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward [false, crooked] thou wilt shew thyself froward.*" God will protect those who are genuine and who please Him (Eccl. 7:26).

### *Full of Mercy and Good Fruits*

The next pillar is being full of mercy and good fruits. God loves mercy. Good fruits refer to the fruit of the Spirit enumerated for us in Galatians: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”* (Gal. 5:22-23). We want those fruits developed in our lives, and we want to be covered with mercy. Let us be those who exercise mercy by forgiving when we have been wronged.

### *Without Partiality*

The next pillar is being without partiality. We must deal with everybody in the same way. Many leaders, for example, have had favourites. The result is that they have severely damaged their own reputation, and have compromised the accomplishments of their team. A certain local basketball coach had a favourite player whom he would use on every occasion, even though he was not the best player on the team. The result was that the team often lost because this favourite was always asked to play instead of another player of better calibre.

I commend these seven pillars of heavenly wisdom to you, because when they are established in your life, they will produce length of days, and will cause you to receive wisdom, knowledge, and joy, even in the midst of trials and suffering. Although I am going through a very difficult time, I am nonetheless very happy.

## Christian Perfection

The other life message that James taught was Christian perfection. This is seen in his epistle when he said, *“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body”* (Jas. 3:2).

### *Our Tongue*

Here is one aspect of perfection; it lies in our tongue. Proverbs 10:19, says, *“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”* Also, Proverbs 17:28 says, *“Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”* We would do well, therefore, to watch our tongue.

There is an interesting difference between men and women when they talk amongst themselves in a group. It is not uncommon to see women in a group speaking at the same time. However, with a group of men, you often see only one talking, while the rest are listening to what he has to say.

The tongue can get us into all kinds of trouble. Let us therefore learn to watch our tongue very carefully, for Jesus said that we shall have to give an account for every idle word (Mt. 12:36). We will find that life will be much better for us when we learn to be good listeners, rather than talkers.

## *Patience*

There is another aspect of Christian perfection that is very difficult. It is found in James 1:3-4: *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* Patience (which can also be interpreted as endurance) and perfection are joined together here in this verse.

While going through a very difficult time in this trial of illness, I must confess that I have found it difficult to endure to the end, especially when I do not know when the end may be. The Lord quickened to me the following scriptures:

*“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy”* (Jas. 5:11).

*“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mt. 24:13).

The Lord then said to me, “You must endure until the end of the trial. If you do not, the purpose for which you have suffered will be wiped out.” Therefore, we cannot give up in our trials, but we must continue to trust Him and allow Him to work out His purposes. We must remember that a trial does not work out God’s purposes unless we endure to the end (and until we endure to the end).

The Lord has been making it very clear indeed that His focus is not as much my healing, as on what He wants to do through these sufferings. He desires to cleanse our fellowship of churches, and my healing is predicated on people putting their lives right. I do not resent the situation. I count it an honour to go through this trial, but it is not easy. God has great things for the Church, but He is going to make sure that His people are purified.

During this time, the Lord has also been revealing to me what will happen in the Last Days and how difficult it will be. It is so important that we have these qualities of wisdom and perfection worked out in our lives because they will hold us. As we endure patiently, continuing on the path and not giving up, we shall not fail; and there will be an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven for us.

Coming back to James the Just, his life message was that of wisdom and perfection because he was brought up at the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, his Elder Brother, who epitomized these two qualities. He was also one who was most respected. He was called “camel knees” because his knees were so calloused from constant kneeling to pray, speaking with his Elder Brother. Let us, too, by the grace of God, seek Him for wisdom, for self-control over our tongues, and for patience, so that we might endure the trials that He is pleased to take us through—because that is the way to Christian perfection.

# Chapter 11

## *THE APOSTLE JUDE*

We are first introduced to the Apostle Jude in Matthew 13:55, where in speaking of Jesus, the people said, “*Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas [Jude]?*” Jude comes after James the Just; and in his epistle, he introduces himself by saying, “*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James.*” He was one of the younger brothers of Jesus, and he must have constantly heard the warnings of Jesus concerning those who did not heed the message of repentance, turning from their wicked ways. Thus was his spirit filled with the divine anger of Jesus concerning their wickedness and refusal to repent, as well as an urgency in exhorting the people not to turn back in walking with God.

### **Sanctified, Preserved, and Called**

Jude begins by speaking of certain important experiences of the believer: “*...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called*” (Jude 1:1).

Here, he mentions being *sanctified*, meaning being set apart for the service of God. We want to have that experience of knowing that we have been set apart for His service.

Then we are *preserved*; and that is very important because we are kept, as the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 1:5, by the

power of God. It is very clear indeed that we cannot preserve or keep ourselves; it is the grace of God that keeps and preserves us. There are qualifications for receiving this grace. These include humbling ourselves, obeying our superiors, and ordering our conversation aright so that God will show us His great salvation (Jas. 4:6; Ps. 50:23). If we consider that we are kept by the power of God, it should send the fear of God into our lives. We should realize how important it is for us to walk with God.

Then there is the experience of being *called* of God. Many are called, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14). We are chosen in the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10). In going through the fires of suffering, our attitude determines whether or not we are chosen for higher experiences.

### **Mercy, Peace, and Love**

Then Jude continues, saying, "*Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied*" (Jude 1:2). Let us not forget that this is the brother of the Lord Jesus who is speaking; therefore, his words are of the utmost importance. Why does Jude select these three virtues to be multiplied to us?

#### *Mercy*

We are absolutely dependent on the mercy of God, for it is mercy that carries us through. I have been living for about 86 years now. When I look back at those who fell on the right and on the left, I realize that it was only

because I had received mercy of God, which kept me from falling.

The Lord says, “...*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (Rom. 9:15). We must be a candidate to receive the mercy of God. If we exercise mercy, we will receive mercy (Mt. 5:7). According to Psalm 32:10, “...*he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*”

### *Peace*

The next virtue is peace. We have peace *with* God when we set things right in our lives (Rom. 5:1). However, there is something higher, and that is the peace of God which does not depend on circumstances and which passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7). As we are entering into times of darkness in the Last Days, we need to have not only peace with God but the peace of God.

The peace of God is our umpire. There was a particular situation for which we had to give counsel. As we prayed and sought the will of the Lord before acting, the peace of God enveloped me, and I felt assured that we were on the right road. It is a wonderful thing to have peace.

When I was a student in Bible school, God said to me, “I will give you My peace.” I was in my twenties, and it did not mean much then, but as I have advanced in years, I see what a precious treasure that is. Others are tormented but I have had His peace.

## Love

Then we have the virtue of love, which is the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14) and the highest of all virtues according to 1 Corinthians 13:13. We should remember that God is love and from Him flows all the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—that together, compose love.

We need to meditate on these three qualities—mercy, peace, and love—and say, “Lord please give us these three virtues.”

### **The Warning Against Turning Away**

Another theme of Jude’s epistle is the awesome warning against starting on God’s narrow path and then turning away. This is our deep concern, especially amongst the young people. As we have mentioned in the chapter on the Last Days, there will be a great falling away. Let us therefore strengthen one another, and as the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:13, *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

Jude begins by describing the problem that the Church was then facing: *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and*

*denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jude 1:4). In other words, there were ungodly people slipping into the Church, turning the grace of God into permission or license for immorality. One of the keys to being kept by the Lord (and keeping our feet on the paths of righteousness) in the Last Days is purity.

Then in Jude 1:5, he says concerning the children of Israel, *“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.”* Here, he brings out very clearly indeed that the children of Israel, having been once saved out of Egypt, were still destroyed by the Lord afterwards. There is no such thing as “once saved, always saved.” Rather, we need to walk with God carefully day by day.

Then he continues in verse 6, *“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”* When you meet these fallen angels, you see the tragedy of their rebellion. I have met them on occasion, and I have had experiences in dealing with people who have had visitations from these fallen angels.

Back in the 1950s, a young girl in Germany asked me for help. She said, “Every night, there are demons and angels that come to me, asking me to preach the gospel to them, but I cannot make them believe in Jesus Christ.” I said,

“You have to know the Scriptures. Christ did not die for angels. There is no hope for them whatsoever.” I led her to Hebrews 2:16, which says, *“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.”* Then I said, “If they come tonight, give them that scripture, and they will not trouble you any more.” Later, this girl told me that they had not troubled her since. The fallen angels and demons had hoped, in vain, for some kind of salvation, until she told them the truth. That is the situation in hell—there are no grounds for hope.

I remember an account of someone who was taken by the Lord through hell. They saw a lady there who said to Him, “Oh, I knew You would come. I want to change my life and serve You. You knew that when I was on earth, I said to You that I would serve You later. I have always hoped that You would save me.” This lady had been killed in a car accident and had gone down into hell. The Lord looked at her with such sadness in His whole demeanour and said, “The judgment is decreed.” Hebrews 9:27 says, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* God has His timetable; and if we do not act in His time, we miss opportunities.

Then Jude moves on to the example of Sodom and Gomorrha in Jude 1:7: *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire...”* Sodom and Gomorrah were engaged in fornication and

homosexuality, and they suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. Fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

On the thought of being consumed, I want to make it very clear that the passions, immoral actions, and diseases that plague sinners on earth follow them to hell. What you were on earth, you are in hell. People say concerning a loved one who had cancer and who dies without Christ, “He is free from his cancer.” The truth is that he is not free from his cancer; he takes that down into hell. Those (such as homosexuals and lesbians) who have led an immoral lifestyle take their passions down into hell and burn within themselves. They suffer the terrible torment of sulphur and brimstone. I have a very low tolerance of pain; and I can empathize with anyone who has pain. I have seen people being tormented in hell, and it is awful.

When people choose to live a life of immorality, it affects their mind. In Colossians 1:21, there is a reference to having one’s mind alienated by wicked works. When a mind is alienated, it means that it is set against God. The result is that these people are against God, and they “*despise dominion and speak evil of dignities*” (Jude 1:8). There is one thing we must learn in the Christian life: we must give deference to authority.

Then in verse 9, Jude speaks of Michael the archangel, who did not bring any railing accusation against Satan when contending with him over the body of Moses. The reason was that he knew that he had been preserved by the grace

and mercy of God during the rebellion of Satan and those angels who fell with him. However, Jude contrasts this with the actions of the ungodly, saying of them in verse 10, *“But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”*

### **Negative Examples of Cain, Balaam, and Korah**

In the verses that follow, Jude gives three examples of men throughout history who turned away from God. The first one is Cain: *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain...”* (Jude 1:11). The way of Cain is explained in 1 John 3:12. Cain hated his brother Abel because his own ways were evil and his brother’s ways were good and righteous. The evil hate the righteous.

The Word of God says in Proverbs 23:23, *“Buy the truth and sell it not...”* Sometimes we have to pay the price to obtain truth. On one occasion, when I was awake all night, the Lord began to reveal to me truths concerning the way of Cain and its connection with the Parable of the Tares in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40. He said to me, “Do you want to know who the wheat and the tares are? Those that do evil against the righteous are the tares. Why is it that some so-called Christians do evil to others? It is because they are tares.”

The Lord then took me through my life, bringing to remembrance the various people I had known. I recalled some who had come to Christian camps, disobeyed authority, and

created all kinds of commotion; and I have also seen these same people later in life, discarded by God. The difference between the wheat and the tares is this—the tares remain rigidly straight, being defiant to authority, but the wheat bends, exhibiting humility and submission to the Lord and the authority He places over them. We must be very careful which group of people we choose to associate with. Some are content to “follow the crowd,” but in so doing, they follow them into eternal damnation.

Then the whole of my being was warmed by the presence of God, and He said, “Now you know how to discern between the wheat and the tares. Those who cause trouble and inflict some kind of pain and difficulty on others are the tares. Do not touch them. I will remove them in due time.” (See also Mt. 13:29-30). The reason why we are not to touch the tares is because they are wrapped around some of the wheat (speaking of good people who lack discernment). If we touch the tares, we will also uproot some of the wheat.

There were altogether seven parables of the Kingdom (from the Parable of the Sower to the Parable of the Net). I had often wondered why the disciples chose to ask Jesus about the Parable of the Tares. It was because Jesus wanted to warn us that there are two seeds in the world that must be separated one from another. Although they dwell together, they will be divided on the day of judgment. It is a very solemn thought.

Then we come to the error of Balaam: “*Woe unto them! for they... ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward...*”

(Jude 1:11). Balaam loved money, riches, and gifts. The result was that Balaam said that he would see the Lord in heaven but he would not be near to Him (Num. 24:17).

The other negative example was Korah: *“Woe unto them! for they have....perished in the gainsaying of Core [Korah].”* He was one who rebelled against leadership. Leadership is ordained by God. Those who rise up against their leaders, generally speaking, do so out of jealousy or coveting a position that has not been given to them. However, they are in effect rising up against God Himself.

**Those who rebel against their leaders are in effect rising up against God Himself.**

### **Characteristics of the Workers of Iniquity**

Jude then goes into the characteristics of the workers of iniquity: *“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear...”* (Jude 1:12).

We could add here the warnings from the Apostle Peter. In 2 Peter 2:1, he speaks of false teachers bringing in damnable heresies. In Acts 20, when the Apostle Paul came to Miletus, he called for the elders of Ephesus.

(Previously he had spent about three years in Ephesus teaching the believers.) When the elders had gathered in Miletus, he said to them, *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:29-30). We have got to be careful who comes into our midst.

*“Of your own selves shall men arise...”* One of the hardest things to bear in the ministry is to see people whom we have trained, perhaps for years, turn away from God. While we would love to see them return to church, they cannot do so unless God permits.

It is God who is sovereign. He determines who enters a church and who does not go in. He places restraints on those who have crossed certain boundaries. You may plead with people to repent, but they cannot unless God gives them the spirit of repentance.

This is clear when we read 2 Timothy 2:24-25, where the Apostle Paul says, *“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”*

Jude likens the workers of iniquity to clouds without water and trees without fruit: *“...These clouds they are*

*without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*” (Jude 1:12). In other words, these workers of iniquity bring no refreshing when they speak. My wife wrote an article entitled *Fruit, Not Leaves*. God desires spiritual fruit, and not just the lush growth of leaves (giving the appearance of fruitfulness) without the fruit.

Then he continues, describing them as *“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever”* (Jude 1:13).

In times past, man navigated by checking the position of the stars. By the position of the stars, he would know where he was and where he was going. He was able to do this because a star's position is constant. A star holds its position in relationship with the other stars. In the same way, those who are teachers of righteousness are likened to stars: *“...they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”* (Dan. 12:3).

Thus, in contrast to the teachers of righteousness, there are the ungodly who are likened to “wandering” stars. Yes they are “stars,” but they do not remain in formation with the other stars, and are therefore useless for aid in navigation. One may attempt to get one's course from these wandering stars, but it is virtually impossible because the star is in one place one night, and another place another night. (The ancients called the planets wandering stars because

they wandered through the constellations and could not be depended on for direction or navigation.) There are many people—teachers, preachers, and those sitting in the pews—who are one thing one day, and another thing another day. One never knows where one is with them. We must be different—a star that stays on course, so that those looking at our lives will see constancy. Then they can take directions from our lives regarding how they should live and where they should go.

Spiritually, those who are “wandering stars” spend their eternity in hell—in the blackness of darkness forever. I have been in that specific place in hell, and it is a terrible place. The darkness is so thick that one cannot see at all; yet I have met some of the most distinguished people of past generations there.

About two or three years ago, I received one of the highest compliments I have been given. A pastor came up to me and said, “You have always had a straight bat.” When he said that, it did not mean much to me, but God has since brought it back to my remembrance. The expression of “having a straight bat” is used in the context of a cricket game, and speaks of one who does not go for flash experiences, but is constant. It is like the opening bat in the cricket game when the player is to remain in position and hold up his end to the last.

One of those who had the straightest bat in cricket was Sir Leonard Hutton and was emphasized in his epic innings of

364 runs not out. This was achieved in 1938 by Sir Leonard in the test match against the Australians at the Oval Ground in London. He was at the crease for just over 13 hours, a mammoth achievement. We, as founding pastors, want to be those who remain at the crease of church life for possibly the duration of our lives. These notable pastors have a steady grip on life and play with straight bats, avoiding turning to the right or to the left.

God said to me, “That is what I want. I want you to hold up your end to the last. What you were 30 years ago, I want you to be now—that is, walking on the straight and narrow path of righteousness.”

When I was working as a hotel director in times past, I went to the top hotel directors to learn from them. We want to learn from those who have persevered over the years. We do not want to learn from those who are wandering stars—here today, and gone tomorrow.

We are not to listen to those who say, “We will go our own way and act according to our own wisdom;” but when the Lord comes, He will execute judgment upon all the ungodly sinners. Jude quotes Enoch, a prophet who foretold the coming of the Lord: “... *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*” (Jude 1:14-15).

Another characteristic of these workers of iniquity is that they murmur and complain: *“These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage”* (Jude 1:16).

We have to learn that we are in the hands of the Lord, and that we can cry out to Him for grace to triumph in whatever trials He chooses to bring us through. With his grace, we will be at peace during these trying times and not be consumed by murmuring and complaining.

In the realm of education, one gets to select the courses that one takes. However, in the spiritual life, we do not get to choose our course or the type of trial that is ordained for our learning. That is chosen by Almighty God. We have to cry out to Him, *“Give me grace to accept Your choice for my life.”* Let me assure you that He will be faithful and give you what you need, for it says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*

### **Qualifying to be Kept by God**

Jude 1:18-19 says that there will be mockers in the Last Days who will walk after their own ungodly lusts, separating themselves from the church and “going their own way” so that they may practice all kinds of sensuality.

Then Jude gives us a very important exhortation. He says, *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”* (Jude 1:20-21). We are to build ourselves up by praying in the Spirit and praying also in our native tongue. However, for these prayers to be effective, our life has to be one of obedience to God, otherwise those prayers are useless.

Then too, we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. One thing we have to watch while going through trials is that we do not allow bitterness to come into our hearts. When going through various trials, some people resent the trial instead of asking the Lord for grace. They look at someone else, and say, “Look, he does not have to go through this. He has an easy life, unlike me.” But it is God who chooses our “spiritual university course.”

In verses 22-23, Jude continues, *“And of some have compassion, making a difference. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”* It is so important in life and in the ministry that we ask God to reveal who a person is. There are some who are very defiant in their youth and subsequently become castaways. Others, however, change for the better later in life. For example, we had a famous king in England whose name was Henry V. He was a terrible drunkard when he was a teenager, but when he became king, he changed completely and became a very good king. Only God knows who will change for the better, and who we should invest in.

Jude 1:24-25 is such a beautiful verse of hope after hearing about these groups of evil people: *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour; be glory and majesty, dominion and power; both now and ever. Amen.”* God is able to keep us from falling. As we have seen, it is a far greater testimony to be kept from falling than to be lifted up after falling. I want to encourage you, young ones, that God can keep you, preserve you, and present you faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.

There are people who seek your soul, but God will preserve you from them if you please Him. Ecclesiastes 7:26 says, *“And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.”* One of the saddest moments in life is when one marries the wrong person. However, if we please God, we shall escape.

We please God when we order our conversation aright, obey those in authority, and choose to be with the “wheat” (and not the tares). If we do that, God will preserve us and keep us on course. We will qualify to be hidden or to be given grace to suffer according to the will of God, like the Apostle Paul; and He will see that we have a glorious and triumphant entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.



# Chapter 12

## *THE APOSTLE APOLLOS*

In this chapter, we will study the life of one who is not well known but who was a powerful figure in his day, namely the Apostle Apollos. Acts 18:24-28 tells us a few facts concerning Apollos: *“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”*

Some of the apostles we have looked at earlier such as Peter, James, John, and Paul were somewhat unique; and it is impossible for us to attain to their positions. “The twelve” were the apostles of the Lamb; and Paul, of course, was the apostle born out of time (1 Cor. 15:8).

However, in the Word of God, we find that there were many other apostles. Some were apostles of note, and surely that

would apply to Apollos. In this chapter, we will look at the character, ability, and productivity of this man. When the Lord was speaking to me about Apollos, it came to me very strongly that he is a type of the apostle we will see arise in the Church of the Last Days. I want to emphasize that what Apollos did is attainable (in contrast with the role of the Twelve and the Apostle Paul), and that what Apollos could do, you can do, too.

### **Apollos Was Eloquent**

We are told in Acts 18:24 that Apollos was an eloquent man. In other words, his speech was graceful, pleasing, and persuasive. In considering the quality of eloquence, our initial response may be to say that we cannot speak like that.

When Sir Winston Churchill was very young, he was a deplorable speaker. But he persisted, continually practising his public speaking. In time, he became one of the most eloquent speakers in English history. I listened to him once in the Duke of Marlborough's grounds where he spoke to some 60,000 people, and he spoke very eloquently indeed. He could move the crowds.

Then there was King George, the father of Queen Elizabeth. In his younger days, he had great difficulty in speaking. But through perseverance and listening to his teachers, he became a very good speaker. During the war years, everyone tuned in to the radio when the king was speaking because he was an excellent speaker.

We want to believe that God can change us and make us eloquent speakers. Adam Clark was the one who took over from John Wesley when he passed away, becoming the head of the Methodist movement during his lifetime. When Adam was a boy, his teacher said, “Adam, you are hopeless. You will never attain unto anything.” That did something to Adam. Suffice it to say that he became an expert in many languages, and also wrote many books and commentaries on the Bible. In fact, he was so brilliant that the British government asked him to interpret documents which others had difficulty in interpreting.

### **Apollos Was Mighty in the Scriptures**

Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures; he knew them very well indeed. We too can study and take courses on the Scriptures, so that we have a very good knowledge of them. If we have the determination to acquire these abilities, we will acquire them. Like Apollos, we will become eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures.

There is a famous saying: “Anyone who dares to teach must never dare to stop studying.” This is the essence of life; we must always progress. There is always something fresh to learn; and we learn by listening, not by talking.

Winston Churchill did not have Christ. As a result, he said, “I am bored with it all” (Gale, 1996, p. 251). However, in Christ, we are always to move on. The Word of God tells us that in the ages to come, God will be revealing His great grace

towards us (Eph. 2:7). In heaven, there are many schools and universities where some will be teaching and others learning. But even the teachers will be students, because there is so much fresh truth to learn.

Thomas Aquinas had an experience with God, after which he stopped writing, saying that he could write no more because all he had written seemed to him like straw compared to what had been revealed to him (Chesterton, 1956, p. 116).

As a young man, I went to three Bible colleges. When I had finished my third, I was sad, because I thought that there was not much else to learn. I then joined a “shop front” church—and after listening to the elderly lady pastor preach, I realized that I knew nothing. There was still so much more to learn!

### **Apollos Was Instructed in God's Ways**

Acts 18:25 says that Apollos was instructed in the ways of the Lord. The children of Israel saw the miracles God did, but Moses knew the ways of God. In other words, he knew why God did certain things (Ps. 103:7). One of God's ways, for example, is that He chooses us in the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10).

I have not been able to sleep normally for months, with the exception of snatches of sleep from time to time. During the night hours I have been lying in my bed and thinking, “What is important in our lives?” In 2 Timothy 2:12, Paul says, “*If*

*we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.*” Thus we see that suffering is one of the most important experiences that we can pass through. How do we respond to suffering? During the four years when my wife was an invalid, she never complained once.

The way things are seen in heaven is very different from the way man sees things on earth. In heaven, how many books one has written or the number of sermons preached or how much one has taught is not as important as what one’s attitude is in suffering. We must have a sweet attitude in the midst of the situations that God permits us to go through, because we have to be purified. Job said, “...*by reason of breakings they purify themselves*” (Job 41:25). Also, the Apostle Peter said that they that have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin (1 Pet. 4:1). Suffering is a very important aspect of life. As we suffer, God can work out things in our lives and also in the lives of others. Those are the ways of God.

The three men in the Bible renowned for their righteousness were Noah, Daniel, and Job (Ezek. 14:14). Job was one who had to pass through great suffering; and he did so triumphantly. If we are called upon to suffer, the first thing we have to realize is that heaven is looking at us. The recording angels are there; and they are determining how we are responding as we go through trials. For example, we must not challenge God in the things that He permits us to go through. The One who created the universe said to Job, “*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding*” (Job 38:4). However, we can ask God why

certain things happen. When we obtain an understanding of “why,” it does indeed help us in the trials.

### **Apollos Was Fervent in Spirit**

Returning to Apollos, we are also told in verse 25 that he was fervent in the spirit. He was on fire for God. He had the fire of the Holy Ghost, for we are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Mt. 3:11).

On the night that I was baptized in the Holy Ghost in southwest England, I was alone with God. When the Lord baptized me with His Spirit, my body just burned with the fire of God. We have to be *on fire* for God.

### **Apollos Preached and Taught Diligently**

We are told in Acts 18:25 that Apollos, being fervent in the Spirit, spoke and taught diligently. In other words, it was because he was on fire for God that he preached and taught diligently. Preaching and teaching are very important. We have to ensure that our doctrines are right, because our teaching is going to bring the presence of Christ and form the character of Christ in the lives of those who listen to us.

While I was a student in Bible school, I remember travelling on a bus headed to school and meeting a gentleman of about 50 years of age. As it turned out, he was a student in the same Bible school that I was going to. When we engaged in conversation, he said something to me that I have not

forgotten since: “You must have had a very good pastor. Why I say this is because as the sheep is, so is the pastor—and as the pastor is, so is the sheep. The sheep take on the qualities of the pastor.”

I have been to churches where everybody is bitter. The reason is often because the pastor and his wife are bitter. We produce like kind. It is important *how* we teach and the *attitude* in which we teach. We must not be hypocrites, teaching one thing and living another. Let us remember that when we teach, we are imparting not only knowledge, but we are imparting ourselves. That is why it is so important to have the goodness of God worked out in our lives, because our students are going to be like us.

Apollos was one who taught diligently the things of the Lord. “Teaching diligently” meant that he was one who applied himself to studying the Scriptures all the time. When we are given opportunities to teach, we must, by the grace of God, study constantly. Winston Churchill estimated that it took him six to eight hours of study to prepare himself for a forty-five minute speech (“Presentations that Persuade and Motivate,” 2004, p. 51).

### **Apollos Aimed for Perfection**

We are then told that Apollos knew only about the baptism of John, and that he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After hearing him, Aquilla and Priscilla took him into their house and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly

(Acts 18:26). Here, we see God's desire, for Jesus said, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Mt. 5:48). God wants perfection. We are created in His image, and with a desire to be perfect. If, for example, we buy a car, we examine it for scratches and other defects, because we are looking for perfection in the car.

I remember that when my wife's aunt was sick, she asked her husband if he would mind going to the supermarket to buy some fruit. He had never done that before, and when he returned with bags of fruit, she was horrified at their poor quality. He had simply picked up the pieces of fruit randomly and put them in. She then said to him that when she bought fruit, she always examined each piece for blemishes.

## **We Can Attain to Apollos' Qualities**

We, too, can attain to the qualities that distinguished Apollos. We must place before God's people that which is within reach, otherwise they will become frustrated.

These are some of the qualities of Apollos that we can emulate:

- He was *eloquent*; and we can become eloquent by God's grace.
- He was *mighty in the Scriptures*; and we, too, can study the Word of God.

- He was *instructed in the ways of God*; and as we wait on the Lord in His presence, we will learn His ways and how He works.
- He was *fervent in spirit*. We can get on fire for God. William Booth made this statement as he gathered his leaders shortly before he died: “Remember this, the tendency of fire is to go out, so keep the fires burning.” We must keep the fire in our heart burning so that we are fervent in spirit.
- He *spoke and taught diligently the things of God*. We must remember that those whom we teach are going to be like us. We must have a happy disposition, and be pleasant people. We have got to love, so that we will be loved. Love is the bond of perfection.
- He *was taught the way of God more perfectly*. From this, we learn that Apollos was *teachable*. When people are not teachable, they create many problems. Let us learn to be teachers but also to be teachable so that we might teach the ways of God more perfectly.

Such are some of the qualities of those who seek to be among God’s hidden ones. We need people like Apollos to help establish the Body of Christ to prepare for the difficult times ahead. May we learn from him, so that we become eloquent,

mighty in the knowledge of the Scriptures, burning with the fire of God, and also imparting to others something of the nature of Christ.

# Chapter 13

## *THE APOSTLE TIMOTHY*

The Apostle Timothy was what I would term the “student apostle.” He was very young, perhaps in his mid-twenties; and he had an apostolic call upon his life. Much that is known about him is found in the first two epistles that Paul wrote to Timothy. These epistles are very important indeed.

When I was a student at a Bible college, I was introduced by one of my friends to a dear old pastor from Wales. There were three of us in the room; and this pastor suggested that we pray, each kneeling in a corner of the room. But before we prayed, he said to me, “I have been praying for you; and the Lord has laid upon my heart that you should study the first two epistles of Paul to Timothy.” He then prayed, “O Lord, lay Thy hand upon this young man.” As I knelt in the corner of the room praying, to my amazement, I felt a hand come upon my shoulder—and it was the Lord’s hand, confirming that I should be reading the epistles of Timothy.

The first of these two epistles was written at the beginning of Timothy’s apostolic life, and the second was the last epistle that the Apostle Paul wrote. The latter really is Paul’s last will and testament, and his last opportunity to write to Timothy and the Church in general. Therefore, what he wrote is of great importance.

## Timothy's Background

Timothy was an interesting young man, because he was half Jewish and half Gentile. His mother and grandmother were Jewish, while his father was Greek. Timothy epitomized the Church in those days because it was made up of both Gentiles and Jews. It was thought that Timothy was therefore equipped to understand the situation in the churches.

Timothy was called an apostle, but he did also the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). He was clearly an apostolic evangelist. Paul, on the other hand, was an apostolic teacher (2 Tim. 1:11). The apostles had dominant ministries that differed one from another. Thus when one is called to an apostolic ministry, one has to ask the Lord, "What kind of an apostle am I?"

There was something else about Timothy that is very interesting. He was rather fragile of nature. He was timid, and Paul had to constantly encourage him. For example, in 2 Timothy 1:7-8, Paul wrote, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."*

Also, there were some prophecies that had been given to Timothy, and Paul encouraged Timothy to war a good warfare through them, saying, *"This charge I commit unto thee, son*

*Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare”* (1 Tim. 1:18). There is another important truth that we must learn: we are to listen to what the prophetic word of the Lord says when we are prayed for, so that we can stand strong in spiritual battles.

Paul also urged Timothy not to neglect the gift that was given through prophecy (1 Tim. 4:14). In Colossians 4:17, Paul gives a similar warning to Archippus, someone who had received a ministry. There, he was told by the Apostle Paul that he must fulfil his ministry. That is a very important truth for each one of us. We must fulfil the ministry that God has given to us.

## **Combating False Teaching**

There is a truth that runs through the epistles of Paul and also of Peter—namely, that the Church is to combat false teaching. The Early Church was plagued with people who were false teachers. Paul made it very clear to Timothy that he was to oppose them by preaching sound doctrine: *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto*

*fables*” (2 Tim. 4:1-4). In other words, the false teachings were to be combated by the public reading of Scripture, preaching, and sound teaching.

The epistles to Timothy are vitally important, because in the Last Days, there will be great deception, even of the very elect; and many people will give heed to false doctrine (2 Th. 2:10-11). During the years that I have spent in the ministry, I have seen spiritual cycles in which God does something new and then false teachers rise up to contradict what God is saying. We have got to be very careful indeed.

### **Preach and Practise Sound Doctrine**

In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul warns Timothy, *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* There is only one way to get sound doctrine. As Paul said to Timothy in no uncertain terms, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15). There is no other way of getting sound doctrine than by hard studying. Thus, the Church needs to be a teaching church that is filled with students. We must all be students and teachers of the Word. Sound doctrine will be the key to the preservation of the Church in these Last Days.

Not only is it very important to have sound doctrine, we must also live the life. We must practise what we preach, so that the Word of God becomes part of us. As Jesus said

in Matthew 5:18-19, “...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

## **How to Treat Others in Church**

Paul wanted to make sure that Timothy knew how to found a church, how to put a church in order, as well as how to behave in the house of God. Thus he felt it necessary to address these issues in his epistles to Timothy.

One topic was the care of widows. In those days, there were often wide age gaps between the husbands and wives (often as much as 15 years), so that there were many widows because the husband would die long before his wife. This created a real problem for the church, because these widows would approach the church for care. Paul told Timothy to be careful not to look after those who were under 60 years of age (1 Tim. 5:9). He said that in actuality, widows should be cared for by their own families (1 Tim. 5:8). Nonetheless, those who are true widows, without any other support, must be cared for by the church.

Likewise, we have got to be very careful of “leeches” who come to the church to be cared for. People must be examined to see if they qualify to be cared for by the church.

Then Paul instructs Timothy on how one is to treat people in the Church, saying, *“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity”* (1 Tim. 5:1-2). We must remember that when Paul wrote this letter to him, Timothy was a young man. While Paul told Timothy not to let anyone despise his youth (1 Tim. 4:12), he was to treat the older men as fathers. In other words, one has to have respect for the elderly in church and in the Christian community. We cannot speak to an older man the same way we speak to a younger man. He must be treated with respect.

He also said, “Treat the young men as brothers.” I would just add a note of caution here, that we are to be careful who we associate with. We need to ask ourselves, “Are they going to lead us on the path of righteousness?” Proverbs 13:20 declares that *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”* In other words, we will become like our companions. In the natural, if one apple in a box of apples goes bad, the rotten apple will endanger the others. Some think, “We will change the ‘bad apple,’” but I have not seen that “remedy” work. We must be very careful who we associate with.

By the term “bad apple,” we are indicating the man or woman of Proverbs 5. They have left the path of righteousness, and have chosen that which is sinful. They are not your typical backslider who in general has just grown cold. I have rarely seen these “bad apples” change. On the other hand, there are

those outside the church who have not known Christ as their Saviour; and many of these will gladly accept the gospel message when it is expounded to them.

Paul exhorts Timothy to treat the older women as mothers. We are to treat our mothers and the older women with respect. Paul went on to say that the younger women are to be treated as sisters, with absolute purity. One has to be extremely careful these days with the relationship between the sexes. When we are saved, we cannot continue to walk with ungodly friends, along their path of temptation and sin. There are many moral compromises today and overt sins, even in churches, that would have been condemned in the generation of those who went through World War II, and even the next generation. The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged that when He returns, He will come in the midst of an adulterous and sinful generation (Mk. 8:38).

We also have to be very careful in the area of marriage. A man does not have to go seeking for a wife. According to the Scriptures, it is God who brings the woman to the man; and if we allow the Lord to do that, we will get the right one.

There are some who say to me, "I must marry." My advice to them is: "Do not go about seeking for your husband or wife. Rather, seek the Lord, and ask Him who He has chosen for you before the foundation of the world." If we do that, we then place the responsibility with God, so that He will direct us to the right one. In my own life, God protected me and warned me against marrying certain ones that people had

thought were suitable to be my wife. It is not sufficient just to marry a Christian; we must marry a Christian who has the same call and vision.

Then Paul also brings out in 1 Timothy 5:17 how one is to treat the elders (those who direct the affairs of the church), saying, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”* What we do in church is recorded by the angels of heaven, and we will be thoroughly rewarded. Paul placed much emphasis on those whose work is preaching and teaching. Therefore, if we get the opportunity to be invited to teach in Sunday School, let us take that opportunity, because it is a double honour.

### **Warnings and Charges to Timothy**

There are some sins that Paul warns Timothy against, one of which is the love of money. Often it is the false teachers that go around and raise money for their own ministries. Paul's charge to Timothy is, *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness”* (1 Tim. 6:10-11).

We have got to be very careful indeed in the area of finance. It is true that we need money, but we should really ask God for that, and He will provide for us (Mt. 6:31-33).

Paul has a number of charges to Timothy, addressing him as a “man of God.” We want to be men and women of God. He tells him, “...*Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called...*” (1 Tim. 6:11-12) Then Paul adds in 1 Timothy 6:20 that Timothy is to guard the truth that has been entrusted to him and keep the truth. We are to “buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23).

### **Dealing with Betrayal**

There is another aspect of the relationship between Paul and Timothy, namely, the deep affection between the two. Not everyone, however, was loyal to Paul. In 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul said to Timothy, “*This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me...*” It was very difficult for him when brethren deserted him.

It is easy to be shaken by the attitude of those who have been very faithful and then become disloyal. I have seen people broken by that. In fact, there are pastors who are always telling me, “I was mistreated and abandoned by those I had helped.” They continue to concentrate on wounds that occurred as many as 20 years previously, harking back to the time when they had been injured. One cannot live like that; and I would like to share with you how to overcome it.

When I was betrayed, my solution was to go to the Lord and say to Him, “Well, how do You feel about it?” On many

occasions, He has graciously said, "Well, I have experienced this. You are passing through the fellowship of My sufferings. Hold steady." When I hold steady and see the situation from the Lord's viewpoint, the problems become like "water off a duck's back." I do not allow those things to trouble me. Yet many are troubled by betrayal; and their lives are literally ruined. They become bitter because of it.

Another important key to overcoming is to have an attitude of thanksgiving. Paul makes much of thanksgiving. If we can have the attitude of thanking people for the least little thing that they do for us, we will be surprised how we are washed and cleansed from all bitterness. Let us therefore practise thanksgiving.

### **Other Keys to Victory in Life**

Paul then addresses the implications of being a soldier in God's army. He points out that a soldier does not get involved in the things of this world so that he can devote himself to the army. He has to endure hard labour (2 Tim. 2:3-4). He also has to keep focused on the purpose for which he is called, devoting himself completely to the work of the army, instead of becoming distracted by side issues.

In John 15:1-2, Jesus says, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*" Thus Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches. We need to allow God

the Father, who is the Husbandman, to trim away all that is unnecessary.

Another truth that Paul brings out is the thought of an athlete: *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Tim. 2:5). An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. Therefore, we have to run according to the rules of God’s Holy Scripture. If we are not doing so, we will not get crowned.

**An attitude of thanksgiving enables us to overcome offences.**

He continues, saying, *“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits”* (2 Tim. 2:6). The hardworking farmer is the first to receive his share of the crops; and the one who plants is the one who will receive the fruit. These things have to be borne in mind, because they are the keys to being triumphant in this life.

### **Paul’s Closing Thoughts**

In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul is very concerned about what Timothy is going to face. He does not really know if he is going to see him again. Paul was in a Roman prison, waiting to appear before Nero for the second time. Since Nero ordered his execution, it is uncertain if Timothy was able to see Paul in time. But Paul is taking this opportunity of telling him the things that he had been concerned about.

## Vessel of Honour

In 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Paul makes the point that there are different vessels in a household: *“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”* Thus we have to be very careful that we are vessels of honour in the household of God.

## Preach and Teach Sound Doctrine

Then he brings out the prevailing state of people in the Last Days in 2 Timothy 3:1-5: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* They will be lovers of themselves, only concerned with what pleases them, lovers of money, unholy, brutal and treacherous (as well as the other terrible descriptions listed here). These evildoers will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:13).

Paul is warning Timothy that he is going to face a world that is going to get worse, where the people will love sin

more than righteousness. Then Paul emphasizes again the importance of sound doctrine, saying, *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

I commend to each one of us that we must study the Word of God. There is no substitute for studying. As we enter these Last Days, we will see sin on every side. Jesus made it very clear that because sin will abound, the love of many will wax cold. The key is to keep ourselves pure and in the love of God. If we will stay close to Christ and guard what has been entrusted to us, we will be vessels of honour, qualifying to be hidden in the day of His anger.

We see that in his second epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul repeats himself. We have the tendency of letting these truths slip through our fingers (Heb. 2:1). Many have failed because of this. Let us hold fast the truth and propagate it, and in so doing, we shall save many.

I commend these epistles to you and recommend that you read them often.

They lay down basic precepts of living for the Christian. Above all, Paul stresses one thing—that we must preach the Word and pay the price for the truth. Then we will be a

bastion that stands against this evil tide of sin. We will be as a lighthouse, shining forth the Word of God in the darkness.

I believe that many nations will turn to the Lord in the Last Days. Isaiah 60:3 refers to the Gentiles coming to the light of the Church. In order for them to come, they have got to see the light shining forth from us. May God grant that we shine forth the light of the Gospel to the nations in darkness. We will do so if we hearken to Paul's exhortation in these epistles.

By God's grace, may we be like Timothy. Timothy loved Paul as his own father, embracing Paul and his teachings so that Paul could say that he knew of no man likeminded as Timothy (Phil. 2:20). We want to be those who, like King David, will do the whole will of God (Acts 13:22). Then we will receive His commendation and see true fruit in this time of darkness.

# Chapter 14

## *THE CROSS AND THE CROWN*

In the Last Days, there will be great suffering for the saints who wish to press in to become the king-priests of Revelation 5:10. We have therefore added this chapter on the cross and the crown to illustrate this truth. We need to have a vision in these Last Days to hold us firmly on the pathway of righteousness so that we do not turn to the right or the left and miss our heavenly calling. The cross and the crown will indeed do this for us, as we see a crown of righteousness awaiting all those who triumph over the suffering of the Last Days.

The Lord had spoken to me on the cross and the crown when I was first called to the ministry. At that time, I was in an evangelical church which was on fire for God. When I came into the church one evening, I saw before me the cross and the crown. The Lord then said to me, “If you take up your cross, you will get your crown” and to that I said “yes.”

That is essentially the message of Christ—the cross and the crown. There are all kinds of messages circulating in the Church today; and many are not presenting the message of Christ, but are presenting other aspects of life that are not really Christian. We want to be in the centre of God’s will, studying to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of God, and giving a true message of what our Saviour came to promote.

## Telling People the Truth

We must be careful to present people with the truth. In World War II, when Sir Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of England, he certainly did not sugar coat his message. He said to the British people, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat....You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. Victory." (Copeland & Lawrence & McKenna, 1999, p. 431).

But because he was so truthful, the English people rallied to him. Wherever he was, he was cheered and sought out.

Likewise, we must tell people the truth in church. My call to the ministry came through the vision of the cross and the crown. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12, "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...*" He makes it very clear that the crowns are for those who are willing to suffer for Christ. Job was correct when he said, "*Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). This was a rather poetic way of putting things, but life is not easy for those who are going to follow Christ.

## Christ's Suffering Was Ordained by God

Let us look at Christ's sufferings for us. It is important for us to understand that it pleased God to bruise Him. The prophet Isaiah said, "*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief...*" (Isa. 53:10). When my wife was suffering so much, I kept asking the Lord why all this was happening.

He quickened to me again and again the verse about Christ—that it pleased God to bruise Him. In other words, all the sufferings of Christ were analyzed and determined by God the Father, who directed everything.

While I was going through a trial recently, the Lord said to me, “It pleases Me to bruise you.” Our life of suffering is ordained by God; and our *attitude* towards God’s course for our life will determine whether we are victorious or not. In Romans 5:3, the Apostle Paul said, “*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.*” Paul undoubtedly had the right attitude.

### **Christ’s Sufferings for Us**

As I study the sufferings of Christ, I marvel that any one person could go through so much in such a short time.

A crown is placed upon the head. Yet as we consider the many wonderful crowns that Jesus has (Rev. 19:12), let us also consider what He had to endure in His head to merit those crowns. His head was not only smitten with sticks, but there was placed upon it a crown of thorns, which pierced the skin of His head. The head is one of the areas where one can suffer the most. We know that a headache can impair us for the entire day.

Jesus was also buffeted and smitten on the face. This was prophesied in Isaiah 50:6 about Christ: “*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair:*

*I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*” On one occasion, my wife and I were in a certain town, and we were on our way to another town. There was a town that was in between these two towns; and I said to my wife that we were going to bypass the town in between because there was a pastor’s wife there who was anything but holy. She had a terrible tongue, and she did not like me at all. My wife was very happy, because she was concerned about what I would say to that lady.

The night before we left, the Lord woke me up, and I realized that He wanted to speak to me. I got out of bed, went to the other room, and knelt down by the chair. There I saw the face of Christ and how His beard had been plucked off. He said to me, “You are to go to that town and there, allow her to verbally beat you.” I said to my wife the following morning, “I have some bad news for you, Dear. The Lord wants us to go to that town. But we will get in a little late, and hopefully by that time, she will be up in front of the church with her husband.”

We arrived at the church a little late, and sure enough, she was up in front by her husband. I told my wife that we would leave the church early, before the woman could greet us. However, this wily woman had somehow espied us coming in. Just as I nodded to my wife to leave, that woman appeared and gave me a verbal lashing. I actually felt as if my face was bloody and my skin had been peeled off by the fervour of this lady’s tongue. Yet of course for Christ, it was not just verbal, but physical abuse. The hair of His beard lay hanging off because they had pulled it away.

Let us remember that Christ's heart had been damaged by His sufferings. When He began His ordeal after the Last Supper, He suffered that ordeal with a heart that was collapsing. Remember that He did not die from His wounds on the cross; He died from a broken heart (Ps. 69:20). He went into all that suffering in a weakened condition; and those sufferings were formidable. Yet at all times, He was the master of the situation.

We can understand why the hymn writers eulogize Him the way they do because of what He went through; and He went through these things not for Himself but for our sakes.

**Jesus did not die  
from His wounds  
on the cross.  
He died from a  
broken heart.**

Romans 5:17 gives us an idea of how Christ went through all those sufferings, and how we are to go through our own sufferings: *“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”* Here we have the key—it is through the abundance of grace that we can participate in the fellowship of His sufferings. It is not by might, not by power, but by His Spirit (Zech. 4:6).

## **The Importance of Forgiveness**

While Christ was hanging on the cross, He cried out, *“... Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...”*

(Lk. 23:34). This is something we have to do. We have to forgive those who have offended us, whether knowingly or unknowingly. We absolutely have to forgive.

It is so important, especially before we go on into eternity, that our hearts are free from offences. We must be like Christ, saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Christ must have had in mind the terrible judgment that awaited those who crucified Him. When we consider the awesome judgment that will be faced by those who take the mark of the beast, we realize that it is likely that those who crucified Christ would be in a similar situation: *"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name"* (Rev. 14:10-11).

It has been months since I have slept normally. When one has no rest day or night, it is agony upon agony. While I have a hope that this ordeal will end soon, for those who suffer eternal judgment, their ordeal is forever and ever. The Lord could have been thinking, "I will suffer just these few hours, but they are going to suffer eternally." It is so wonderful to have a heart of compassion that forgives, so that we can look at everybody, even those who have irked or hurt us (whether intentionally or not), and still have a

free heart. We must forgive because it will cost us dearly if we do not.

I was told of a certain brother who refused to forgive another person before passing on into eternity. That brother will have to wait at the receiving area until the person he should have forgiven enters heaven, and there, he will have to ask him for forgiveness for not putting things right. He will not be free until that other person forgives him. Unforgiveness will not only limit him in heaven, it will limit him eternally.

In a certain vision of heaven, a man was walking with several other people, all of whom he knew. An angel was conducting them and showing them fresh things in heaven. Then they arrived at a gate, and the angel said to some, "You can go through," but to others, he said, "You cannot go through this gate because of certain things that you did not put right in your life." It is so important to realize that where we are on earth in our spiritual maturity and holiness will determine where we are in heaven.

### **Temptations in Suffering**

When you are going through suffering, there are tremendous temptations and onslaughts of evil spirits who try to push you over the edge to commit suicide. Christ had all kinds of demons coming against Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. In resisting them, the capillaries across His head were broken. The Apostle Paul said, "*For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied*

*and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb.12:3-4).*

What held me in my time of suffering against the spirit of suicide was indeed the joy that was set before me, as it was for Christ in Hebrews 12:2. It was through the joy that was set before Him that He was able to endure the cross. That was exemplified for me when I was invited to speak to a Romanian church. I had no message when I stood to go to the platform, but at that moment, God gave me the theme of “Suicide.” Believing that He would give me the message, I started to warn against suicide. I did not know the people in the congregation, but I found myself declaring that someone who had fallen into adultery and could find no rest was contemplating suicide. As it turned out, it was he who had built the beautiful church in which they were worshipping. The message prompted him to reject suicide and grasp the hope that God was extending to him—of being an overcomer against the spirit of suicide.

## **The Rewards of Suffering**

Philippians 3:10-11 speaks of the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. It is so important for us to realize that we are called to a life of suffering, to one degree or another, so that we may partake of the rewards.

What are the rewards of suffering? If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:8, *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,*

*which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [in other words, those who have walked with God].”*

After I had been going through a tremendous spiritual battle one night, the Lord showed me a large vat made of gold, inside of which were the most precious jewels. He said to me, “If you finish your course, this is what you will get.” The jewels represent the lives of men and women whom we have led to the pathways of righteousness.

### **Being an Overcomer**

On several occasions, the Lord has shown me in vision form how heaven sees our life of about 70 years or so on earth. In this vision, although most of my life was not within view, I could see specific situations in my life, including my response to difficulties and sufferings. I could see, for example, times when I had triumphed by leaning upon the grace of God.

It is very interesting how the Lord views situations. I knew of a minister who had failed terribly and had gone into adultery. Because of that, he could not face his family. Although they loved him dearly and pleaded with him not to leave, he did; and down he went to skid row. Finally, after many wasted years, one night, an angel came and said, “You are to return to your wife. She is waiting for you.” He did.

The angel also showed him another man who had been living in the slums. A kitten had crossed his path, almost

causing him to trip. This man had shown compassion to the little kitten. Because of his attitude toward the kitten, he was encouraged to triumph and overcome his terrible situation. We may think that these little things are inconsequential, but they are all recorded in heaven above. The Lord said that we will have to give an account of every idle word that we speak (Mt. 12:36).

God permits difficulties in our lives. It pleases Him to bruise us; and our response to the bruising is recorded. How we triumph over difficulties is so important. But what is the end of the matter? For Christ, the end result was recorded in Isaiah 49:6: *“And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”* In like manner, if we go through the suffering that Christ has ordained for us, then there will be mighty rewards here on earth and in heaven above. It is so important to understand that it is those who endure until the end who will be so rewarded. When we are going through a trial, let us ask others to pray for us, so that we might have the abundance of grace to overcome the temptations, because the rewards that are awaiting us are phenomenal.

I knew a lady who was crippled from birth. At the age of 17, she had an experience in which she died and went to heaven. Then the Lord healed her and caused her to return to earth. While in heaven, she saw things that were very interesting. I had the privilege of travelling with her and her

husband for some time in Switzerland. She said to me, “It is so interesting how one is rewarded for the least victory, whether it is a smile, shaking hands with someone, or patting the back of another. All these little things are remembered in heaven.” If we are rewarded for those acts of kindness, how much more we will be rewarded when we have to overcome more serious situations.

The Lord said in Revelation 3:11, “*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*” How can another take our crown? If we do not ask for the abundance of grace and someone else does, then that person takes our crown. When people whom we have served and ministered to arrive in heaven, and through our teaching and exhortation receive rewards, their victory becomes our joy and crown of rejoicing.

The cross comes first and then the crown. May God grant that each one of us may see the cross not as something to be avoided, but as something to be embraced daily, so that by His grace, we might receive the rewards that He has for us.



# Chapter 15

## *THE GLORY*

### **Light in the Midst of Darkness**

In Isaiah 60:1-2, there are two distinct manifestations of God. We have looked at one aspect of the Last Days—darkness. Let us now look at the other aspect—the glory of God.

### **The Glory of God**

The glory of God resides in the Holy of Holies above the Mercy Seat, between the cherubim. Therefore, we must dwell within the Holy of Holies to be filled with His glory. To enter into the Holy of Holies and dwell there requires that we experience the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Heb. 6:19). This entails dying with Christ, and living the crucified life continuously day by day. As we are crucified with Him and live by His faith and His faith alone, we are sanctified and live for Christ alone.

**The price for dwelling in the  
Holy of Holies requires  
dying with Christ and  
living the crucified life daily.**

What is God's glory? It is nothing less than the manifest presence of God in the form of light. It is for this reason that it is written, "His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. 60:2). His power is likewise manifested through His glory.

### **Light in the Darkness**

The message is clear and loud that the glory of the Lord will cover His saints in the Last Days of great darkness. This is shown in Isaiah 60:1, where God is very explicit. He says, "Thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Paul repeats this in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11:

*"But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."*

Likewise in writing to the Thessalonian Church, Paul says, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

*presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Th. 1:9-10).*

Thus we have the two camps—darkness in the world and light and glory in the Christian camp, as the Israelites had when they came out of Egypt and were getting ready to cross the Red Sea. These are the Christians who have entered into glory; and that must be the pursuit of the Church in the Last Days. We must start preparing ourselves to enter into glory. It is God’s glory that will hold us and be seen upon us. One of the things I saw concerning the last day revival was that everybody looked young and it was wonderful to see. It was as though this verse had come to pass: *“His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth” (Job 33:25).*

## **God’s Mighty Army**

God has a mighty army that He is assembling for the Last Days. Many have received visions of the Church of the Last Days being like a mighty army.

As has been seen by many in prophetic visions, the army of God will go everywhere preaching and demonstrating the power of God throughout the world. The prophet Habakkuk said, *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).*

God's people will travel at times like Philip did, transported by the Spirit of God (Acts 8:39-40). On some occasions, they will go two by two, with one preaching whilst the other will interpret in the language of the people to whom they have been sent. They will have the power to pronounce judgment (as did the Apostle Paul, upon Elymas the sorcerer) upon all those who oppose their preaching (Acts 13:8-11).

This army will not break rank; but, like any normal army, there will be those who defect because of the tremendous stress in being in this army. A vision was given years ago to Tommy Hicks, who had marvellous experiences in the revival in Argentina. He saw God's mighty army, but there were defections to the right and left. Many cannot stand up to the pressure. We have to teach our people to seek God for grace to stay at their post.

In World War II, I was in one of the greatest fires the world had ever known in London; and the bombs fell. In the midst of the intense fire, we had to remain where we were and trust that the bombs would not hit us. Basically, that is the key—you have to stay at your post. It is imperative in the army that you keep steady in your position. One has to be very well trained in order to serve in the armed forces. Another important issue is that when in battle, we never, but never, give up.

Those who remain faithful will be a part of God's mighty army that will go throughout the nations of the world, demonstrating the power and glory of God, and preaching

the gospel. God is going to show Himself powerful and glorious in the Last Days.

## Preparing for the Glory

These two themes run parallel in the Last Days—darkness and light. We have got to be filled with the light and glory of God. But in order for this to happen, we must stay on course. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit to purge and purify us so that we are clean and everything is put in order in our lives to prepare us to receive God’s glory. The link between cleansing and God’s glory can be seen in Isaiah 4:3-5:

*“And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”*

The necessity for the children of God to be purified by the spirit of burning is also emphasized by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11-12: *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his*

*hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

Time is running out. The recent upheavals in the Arab nations are not without significance. This is part of the great “falling away” in the area of government and the resulting lawlessness referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. We recognize this as one of the signs pointing to Christ’s Second Coming. When France and England were giving their colonies self-rule in the 1960s, the Holy Spirit provoked me to ask Him why. He said, “It is so that every nation might be free to choose between Christ and the Antichrist.” Nations that have been in bondage to wicked rulers will now be given the opportunity to make the choice between the Antichrist and Christ; and I believe that some will turn to Christ.

God is shaking the nations and the Church—and may God shake us so that there will be nothing in us that offends Him. We want to have our lives cleansed, to stand in our appointed place in His army, and to be used of Him in these Last Days by His grace.

## *EPILOGUE*

Our hope is to be hidden by God in the days of trouble that lie ahead. The many truths that we have touched upon are all qualifications to be among His hidden ones.

God hid David from his enemies in battle. He was with him, protecting and watching over him. The first president of the United States of America, George Washington, was one who feared God and was also protected by Him in the Battle of Monongahela, after which he wrote to his brother:

“But by the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was levelling my companions on every side of me” (Pett, 2008, p.27).

Fifteen years later, the Indian Chief who was in that battle paid a visit to George Washington and recounted what had happened during the battle:

“I called to my young men and said, mark you tall and daring warrior? ...Quick let your aim be certain and he dies. Our rifles were levelled, rifles which knew not how to miss – ‘twas all in vain, a power mightier than we, shielded you. Seeing you

were under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, we immediately ceased to fire at you...” (Pett, 2008, p.27).

Psalm 94:12-13 declares, “*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*” Therefore, as we allow the Lord to work in our lives, and we choose to walk in the precepts that we have studied in this book, we have the hope that God will hide us from the storms of persecution in the Last Days.

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