

CATCH THE FIRE

STUDIES 1 - 10

TEACHER MANUAL

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

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Studies 1 - 10 *Teacher Manual*

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Stephen Nemeth Lectures

PLACE OF REVIVAL IN THE CHURCH

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: John 21:1-22

A London church had a large board outside with the invitation: “Come In Here And Have Your Faith Lifted!”

Unfortunately, in many congregations, this is definitely not the impression given, but rather one of gloom and death. An examination of **John chapter one**, may furnish the reasons and the remedy.

1. THE REASONS FOR DECLINE.

(The letters RSV, following a reference, denotes the use of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, authorized by Protestant and Catholic authorities.)

Christ is hidden from view though always there in reality.

John 21:1 - (RSV) -*Jesus showed himself*.....

Important though it is for our redemption, there is a tremendous emphasis on the *death* of the Lord Jesus, without a balancing view of His resurrection life.

In this story, the death of the Lord Jesus had spelt disaster to the hopes of the disciples of a Messiah Prince’s sweeping them into political power.

The Lord had sent the women to testify that He was alive and that His disciples were to meet Him in Galilee.

Matthew 28:10 - *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

They had obeyed Him, but were now growing tired of waiting for His appearing - just as the modern church seems to have lost its expectation of His coming in glory and to have settled for more worldly aims.

Company and fellowship within the church are weak.

John 21:2 - *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.*

Peter was outstanding as the “rock” and leader, but he had just passed through the dreadful failure of his denial of the Lord with cursing and swearing.

Luke 22:61-62 - *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

62 *And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

Matthew 26:72-74 - *And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.*

73 *And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.*

74 *Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.*

Thomas was full of loving courage -

John 11:16 - *Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

but an inherent pessimist and a rank unbeliever when it came to the resurrection.

John 20:24-25 - *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

25 *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

Nathaniel had no guile -

John 1:47 - *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

but he had fled with the rest when Jesus was betrayed -

Mark 14:50 - *And they all forsook him, and fled.*

John alone had stayed right through to the cross -

John 19:26-27 - *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

27 *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

but may still have been thinking in terms of calling fire down from heaven upon their adversaries -

Luke 9:54 - *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

to forward his own throne in the new kingdom -

Mark 10:35-37 - *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.*

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

with typical selfish intolerance -

Mark 9:38 - *And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.*

How often we can trace the same attitudes in the church today! Yet Christ has to work with them and can turn these attitudes completely around, as He did with John -

1 John 2:9-10 - *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

c. Conditions within the church are bad.

John 21:3 - *..... that night they caught nothing.*

Peter backslid to the old life of fishing.

Luke 5:10-11 - *And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Others soon followed his example. The way in which it was done was completely without prayer. Darkness came on and their labor was fruitless.

Just so, despite better organization, meetings, campaigns and missions today, there is little fruit in souls being saved or believers being added to compare with the report being put in.

Strangers are hardly interested at all. The preacher often gives the same message to the same crowd year after year.

2. THE REMEDY IS REVIVAL.

1. Christ revealed.

John 21:4 - (RSV) - *.....Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach;.....*

This brought an end of their efforts. Christ now steps in where self has failed. The Lord kept His appointment and promise to be there, despite their unfaithfulness though the church was blind to it. He did a miracle.

In these last days, the Lord is doing a new thing.

b. Contact with God's power.

John 21:7 - (RSV) -*"It is the Lord!"*.....

Miracles reveal a risen Christ and attract people to come to the church -

John 21:9 - *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.*

while the fire, typical of the Holy Ghost's outpouring, brings love, warmth and purity -

Isaiah 6:5-6 - *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

and a real feast -

John 21:12 - *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*

Forgiveness follows for Peter -

John 21:15-17 - *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

after detailed confession and a promise of following Jesus to death -

John 21:19 - *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

In this body ministry, each one has a place from the Lord. We must be aware of being too concerned with God's plan for others!

What are the practical results of this new warmth in revival?

3. THE RESULTS OF REVIVAL ARE SEEN AS -

1. Preaching to God's people first, getting them right, before attempting to reach outsiders.

The Lord came first to His own -

John 1:11 - *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

Paul went first to the Jews -

Romans 15:20-21 - *Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:*

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

2. Prayer for unity in the love of God is answered!

John 17:21-23 - *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This prayer of Christ's was not for unity at any price or by organization, but a definite plea for contact with the Father in real fellowship!

John 17:11 - *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

c. Preservation of God's flock by His chosen leaders.

John 21:15-16 - *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

This is only where there is a prayerful concern for the condition of things and where God's own people are first reached so as to provide the maturity of experience necessary to carry the young converts forward.

Malachi 3:16 - *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

4. Prevention of disappointment.

John 21:22 - *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*

by looking to Christ and not to others.

Where Christ is seen clearly in the lives of church members, there is less room for the devil to work and less excuse for people to go back from God.

Witness work was not limited in the early church to just a few evangelists.

The nation of Israel itself was God's witness to the world!

Isaiah 43:10 - *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*

While the prayer for boldness in witnessing applied to the church -

Acts 4:31-32 - *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

even in persecution, everyone witnessed -

Acts 8:1-4 - *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Witnessing was corporate action.

e. Ministries of individuals are developed within the body.

Peter is an example -

John 21:15-17 - *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

This enables the exercise of personal evangelism and pioneering to be possible at a later stage.

2 Timothy 2:2 - *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

6. Presentation of a new vision of the glory of God through suffering.

John 21:19 - *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

The small group of those going through suffering here with Christ, were not promised any easy time, but definite persecution and even death, which they would bravely meet.

This shows that there may be blessing only for those prepared to go on with God and the people of God's first choice (e.g., the Jews) may not accept the message of revival. We may, therefore, expect persecution and division by "religious" (not "sinful") people.

This cost should be carefully counted before we accept the task of seeing a revival within the church which will enable it to evangelize the world.

At the same time, the Jewish rejection of Christ led to their judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. It is either revival or judgment for a dead church today.

Revelation 3:16-19 - *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

17 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

18 *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

What is *your* choice?

EXERCISE.

In your own words, what causes of going back from God are revealed in -

Question 1.

Exodus 32:1 - *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

Answer.

Absence of spiritual leadership!

Exodus 32:1 - *.....Moses delayed to come down.....*

He was in the mountain forty days and nights -

Exodus 24:18 - *And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.*

fasting -

Deuteronomy 9:9 - *When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:*

completely shut in with God.

The people supposed, perhaps, he had lost his way in the darkness or perished in the fire. They lost their reverence and awe which they had shown thirty days earlier at the giving of the law!

It is easy to *forget* the immediate presence of God in our midst and look on delay as weakness.

Exodus 32:1 -gathered themselves together unto Aaron.....

They gathered *against* Aaron in a tumult, and demanded an image of God (the Hebrew here is simply 'Name of God' in its plural form, *not idols*) now that the shekinah pillar of fire was veiled, which had gone before them.

Exodus 32:1 -we wot not what is become of him.

Ignorance and fear lead to lack of trust in God and departure from unseen spiritual reality, to outward forms visible to the eye.

Multiplication of outward forms and machinery within the church, does not always indicate more spiritual power and may, in fact, indicate growing spiritual weakness.

Question 2.

1 Kings 11:4 - *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

Answer.

Age and worldly associations.

1 Kings 11:4 -when Solomon was old.....

Solomon could not have been more than fifty years old. He already began to decline from his youthful piety very soon and, under the influence of others, fell away.

Galatians 3:3 - *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

You cannot begin in the Spirit and go on in the flesh. There must be a *continual* walk with God in the Spirit. Christians cannot afford to cool off from their first love -

Revelation 3:17 - *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

Mere length of time as an orthodox church is not sufficient to guard from backsliding unless associations and standards are spiritual.

1 Kings 11:4 -his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God,.....

Some see this as merely outward observance to please his wives, but this means that Solomon was a hypocrite. He must have become an actual and open idolater at Tophet -

Read **Jeremiah 7:30-34**.

and an old and foolish king -

Ecclesiastes 4:13 - *Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.*

The number of wives violated divine law -

Deuteronomy 17:17 - *Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.*

as their foreign connection led to idolatry -

1 Kings 11:2 - *Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.*

Read **Exodus 34:12-16**.

Mixture of the church and the world is equal adultery. The individual believer must mark -

2 Corinthians 6:14 - *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

Question 3.

Luke 8:13 - *They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

Answer.

Adverse times of testing.

Luke 8:13 - (RSV) - *.....receive it with joy. But these have no root;.....*

The Seed is the Word of God which is received but some who receive it have no root.

The immediate blessing of salvation, healing or the baptism, brings joy alike to the individual and the church.

There are many people emotionally stirred in revival times or by great preachers with a shallow response in no deep affection and no great conviction.

Matthew 8:19 - *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

Luke 11:27 - *And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.*

Galatians 4:15 - *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

Ezekiel 33:31 - *And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.*

Ephesians 4:14 - *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

Instability is not commended in scripture, but examples are given in -

Psalms 106:13 - *They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:*

Matthew 13:6 - *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

Galatians 1:6 - *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

Luke 8:13 - *..... in time of temptation fall away.*

A time of testing reveals the weakness of such a response. The Greek word (peirasmos) is linked here with the temptation of Christ, mainly by the devil -

Luke 4:13 - *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.*

A falling often occurs in a church where there is no deep spiritual root, so the preacher must avoid merely emotional stirrings.

Question 4.

Luke 11:24-26 - *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.*

25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Answer.

Apostasy caused by neglect to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:24 - (RSV) - *.....unclean spirit.....wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any,.....*

Spiritual cleansing is *vital* as the first step with the power of evil being cast out.

1 Corinthians 6:11 - *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Here demon. power is clearly meant, which is noteworthy, for seeking another place. Reformation without regeneration, and purging without filling, are not enough.

Luke 11:26 - (RSV) - *.....brings seven other spirits more evil than itself,.....*

The backslider, on going back, usually sinks into deeper sin than that from which he was originally saved. The church, not living right, often goes deeper into sin than some in the world.

Warnings on the dangers of apostasy will also be found in -

1 Timothy 1:19 - *Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:*

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;*

Hebrews 3:12 - *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

2 Peter 3:17 - *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*

The only answer is a definite baptism and being continually filled with the Spirit of God.

Question 5.

2 Timothy 4:10 - *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

Answer.

Attractions of the world.

2 Timothy 4:10 - (RSV) - *.....Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me.....*

Worldliness has been a real means of destruction in the souls of individuals and of the life of the church.

The Lord warned against it -

Matthew 16:26 - *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Luke 21:34 - *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

and mentioned it in the parable of the sower -

Matthew 13:22 - *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

as destroying the finding of the truth.

Before the end of the world especially, it will lead men into false security, as in the days of Noah -

Matthew 24:38-39 - *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

added to its power to mold the attitudes and pleasures of life -

Ephesians 2:2 - *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

to the power of the devil.

Demas had once been a fellow laborer with Paul -

Colossians 4:14 - *Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.*

Philemon 24 - *Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.*

He seems to have forsaken Paul for worldly ease, safety and home comforts, as Chrysostom implies that Thessalonica was his home town.

Paul himself, writes of the unworldly nature of the Christian call in -

Romans 12:2 - *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

1 Corinthians 7:31 - *And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

Galatians 6:14 - *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

2 Timothy 2:4 - *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

The apostle John expressly says that a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

1 John 2:15 - *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

There is no room here for anything other than a clear cut with the world for the church and the Christian.

PREACHING THEMES:

PRAYER

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: James 5:16-20

James 5:16-20 - *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Evangelism is promoted by drawing the attention of God's people to particular themes.

Of these, prayer is more conducive to spiritual power than the calling of conferences to discuss ways and means!

What instruction should be given on this point? By what means can prayer further outreach?

What, basically, is the type of prayer that can help here?

4. THE AIM OF PRAYER MUST BE THE GLORY OF GOD BY DEPENDENCE UPON HIM.

James 5:16 - (RSV) - *.....The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*

How is this promoted?

a. Promotion of unity among Christians.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

This reveals the need of unity among those praying, as a precondition of God's answering prayer.

Hence -

James 5:16 - *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

begins by suggesting that Christians confess their sins one to another and pray one for another.

A united, powerful prayer meeting is the barometer of church power.

Pleading with God before moving out to man.

Philippians 2:13 - *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

James 5:17 - *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

Elijah, whose zeal for God led him to pray, sustained him, even during his darkest moments of loneliness and defeat.

1 Kings 19:10 - *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

God's glory was his chief aim and God knew this.

When Elijah had moved out in revival power, he took the trouble to find out God's plan and what he should do according to it.

1 Kings 18:36-37 - *And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.*

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

Later, when he neglected to do this again and ran away, God had to ask him -

1 Kings 19:9 - (RSV) -*"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

We need to find out God's plans first, not ask Him to bless our own!

b. Power of the Holy Ghost being allowed to lead our praying.

James 5:17 - *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

James 5:17 - (RSV) -*prayed fervently*.....

This “more earnestly” is seen in the prayer of Christ in the garden -

Luke 22:44 - *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly:.....*

which made our redemption possible and is referred to in our Lord’s words -

Matthew 26:41 -*the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Link this with -

Romans 8:26-27 - *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

The Spirit helps “our infirmities” (the same Greek word “astheneia” is used for “weak).”

See the place of Spirit-led praying that Elijah reached in -

1 Kings 18:42-46 - *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,*

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

The Holy Ghost not only enabled him to pray “through” for rain, but to outpace the king’s chariot back to the city!

Praying in tongues in this realm enables us to reach beyond human knowledge limits. We depend very much for the power of our praying, then, on God’s Holy Spirit.

2. THE ARRANGEMENT OF A PRAYER MEETING BY THE CHURCH.

James 5:18 - *And he prayed again,.....*

Regular prayer meetings over a time, need wise leadership and arrangement. This is recognized alike by the Catholic Pentecostals and by Finney's "Revival Lectures," where he advocated a program which included -

1. Scripture reading.

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Isaiah 44:3 - *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

which was much used of God in the Hebrides Revival in this respect.

- b. Selected topics for prayer and praise introduced specifically to the meetings.*

Be clear.

3. The Holy Spirit's leading to be relied upon.

Wherever it is safe to do so, let those who are led by the Spirit, pray as and when they feel to do so. Lead off with the keenest!

- d. Shorten your prayers to a small time limit and keep to one object.*

Long silences, if not led by the Spirit, can "chill" a meeting, while long prayers can deaden it.

5. Shout the victory and do not always be dwelling on sin, once confessed.

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

6. The avoiding of mistakes in the meeting.

James 5:19 - (RSV) - *.....if anyone among you wanders.....*

Avoid -

- (1) Lack of confidence by choosing the wrong person to lead.*

Jeremiah 29:13 - (RSV) - *.....seek me with all your heart,*

(2) Remarks.

Those which are controversial, unreasonable, unscriptural, ridiculous, irrelevant or directed against opposition, during the prayer, stop them at once!

Avoid mistakes of -

(3) Long hymns or prayers of a “dead” nature.

Too much singing at the wrong time can take away those pauses when the Spirit wishes to intervene in the meeting, especially for gift ministries.

Read **1 Corinthians, chapter twelve.**

(4) Local customs.

These can bind the meeting if you slavishly adhere to them. Have variety!

7. Awakenings in the church can happen in a bad situation.

James 5:20 - (RSV) -*whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death.....*

Scripture has many examples of this very thing happening at a time of greatest deadness among God's people.

(1) Hannah.

1 Samuel 1:27 - *For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:*

Although she had a need of a child, God's people had a greater need of a prophet in a time of spiritual darkness as Eli allowed sin in the worship of God.

God answered her prayer and used her dedication to save His people.

(2) Samuel.

1 Samuel 7:9-10 - *And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.*

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

God's people repented. Over the offering of a sucking lamb (type of Christ) Samuel prayed and the enemy was defeated.

(3) Elijah.

1 Kings 18:37 - *Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*

This is particularly mentioned here in **James** and would seem to indicate that the “sinners” are sinning saints, rather than outsiders, showing that backsliding can eventually lead to death.

James 5:20 - *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

This was certainly the challenge of Elijah to the people of God and led to the fire falling on Mt. Carmel which brought a revival and a destruction of idol priests among God’s people.

A modern archaeologist has actually found a piece of fire-blasted rock in this location!

(4) Ezra.

Ezra 5:15 - *And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.*

Ezra fasted and prayed and brought conviction and revival to God’s people.

The fire with Elijah and the rain here are types of the Holy Ghost.

(5) Zacharias.

Luke 1:12-13 - *And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

As with Hannah, a family problem was prayed about and answered by God in a much larger way, with the arrival of John the Baptist to start a move among God’s people to prepare them for Christ.

It is noteworthy that Zacharias was not believing at the time his prayer was answered, yet his previous faith and prayer still bore fruit.

(6) The Early Church.

Acts 1:14 - *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

Pentecost was a direct result of prayer of God's people, including the women and Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. This shows that there is a ministry of intercession for *all* the body of Christ.

Do not be discouraged, therefore, by the state of the church or group in which you find yourself but pray, and preach that others would pray, until God hears and brings a revival of His power.

This is the first step to evangelism.

EXERCISE.

What do the following stories teach us about the power of personal prayer?

Question 1.

Exodus 15:24-25 - *And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*

25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

Answer.

The power of personal prayer.

Exodus 15:25 - *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree,.....*

The water of Marah was bitter and the children of Israel complained against Moses, leaving him in a difficult position. Instead of defending himself or attacking the people, Moses wisely turned to prayer. The Lord gave him a word of wisdom, showing him exactly what to do to meet the need.

This was a definite miracle answer. Those who suppose it was the Arab ghurkud, are faced with the problem that its berries were not ripe at this time of the year.

We need much more to take our own problems to the Lord in prayer so that the Holy Ghost can operate gifts through us.

Question 2.

Judges 6:39-40 - *And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.*

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Answer.

Proving God's guidance by putting out a fleece.

Judges 6:39 - (RSV) - *.....please, make trial with the fleece just once more;.....*

Gideon had broken down his father's altar when called by the angel to deliver Israel, and had been protected. But now, he wanted to be sure of the call of God and had asked God to do a miracle on the fleece, by keeping it dry overnight from the usual dew.

Here he makes assurance doubly sure by asking for the bigger miracle of keeping all the ground dry and allowing the fleece to get wet.

While it is right to "put out fleeces" where God's will is already revealed, we need to see that this was a special personal prayer in a state of great emergency, demanding a tremendous miracle and is not, therefore, to form the basis of day by day guidance in smaller things.

Question 3.

1 Kings 9:3 - *And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*

Answer.

Promise of God's presence and power on consecrated people.

1 Kings 9:3 - *.....I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication,.....*

God had already appeared to Solomon in Gibeon.

1 Kings 9:2 - *That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.*

There he had asked for wisdom and received the promise of riches and honor.

Now he has built and sanctified the temple and is looking for God's approval, which is here promised, and with certain conditions. A blessing is also added for his family.

1 Kings 9:4-5 - *And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:*

5 Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

This shows the response of God to the genuine prayer of personal consecration, by the believer, whose body is now the temple of the Holy Ghost.

2 Chronicles 7:12 - *And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.*

See the direct answers to Solomon's inaugural prayer in -

1 Kings 8:29 - *That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.*

1 Kings 9:4-5 - *And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:*

5 Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

This was answer to -

1 Kings 8:25-26 - *Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.*

26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.

God does answer prayer where His glory is the single aim.

Question 4.

2 Kings 19:19-20 - *Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.*

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

Answer.

Protection is afforded by God as a witness to the world.

2 Kings 19:20 - (RSV) - *.....I have heard your prayer to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria.*

Sennacherib's messengers had taunted the people with their trust in Egypt and in God, and pointed to the weakness of the gods of the other nations to deliver them.

King Hezekiah realized that God's glory was here questioned. He prayed for deliverance, not just for his own benefit, but the whole world's need to witness the superiority of God.

This was a very powerful plea and brought an immediate answer from the Lord through the lips of His prophet, Isaiah, that He would protect His people.

The application of this story to modern conditions is that, when we are sure that we are standing for God, we may pray for His protection and confidently believe the words of prophecies which may be given us in the Spirit, or through the written Word, of His protecting power.

Once again, God's glory, and not mere personal advantage, is our aim.

Question 5.

2 Chronicles 18:31 - *And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to depart from him.*

Answer.

Prevention of persecution and death is possible by prayer.

2 Chronicles 18:31 - *.....Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him;.....*

Jehoshaphat had got involved with Ahab in an ungodly alliance.

2 Chronicles 19:1-3 - *And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.*

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

Thus he found himself in trouble at Ramoth-Gilead, although he had listened to the warning of the true prophecy of Micaiah.

Here he must have realized his mistake and called out to God to rescue him, which the Lord was able to do, while, at the same time, punishing wicked Ahab who had disguised himself and tried to escape divine retribution.

This story not only warns us to keep the right company, but shows that, where there is a righteous life and a genuine desire to seek God, His protection is always available.

PREACHING THEMES : **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

STUDY 3

Scripture Portion: 1 John 3:11-24

5. THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE.

1 John 3:11 - *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

What is the use of prayer when we are not keeping God's commandment to love?

1 John 3:22 - *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

The importance of love derives from -

The command of Christ.

1 John 3:11 - *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

Christ's definite new commandment is that Christians love one another.

John 13:34 - *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

Complete fulfilment.

Complete fulfilment of the Old Testament law lies in loving God and one's neighbor.
Romans 13:8 - *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

c. Christ's compassion should be ours, not a worldly attitude.

1 John 3:12 - *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one,.....*

Clearly it should be no surprise to find the worldly person hating the Christian.

1 John 3:13 - *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

This is the world's attitude for the Christian who is living the new life, but it should not be so of us.

4. Condemnation will be ours if we fail to love.

1 John 3:14 - (RSV) - *.....He who does not love remains in death.*

Read **James 2:8-15**.

This explains that, even as Christians, we must suffer when we break God's law, for the law of liberty under which we come in Christ, demands judgment on its breakers.

e. Conquest of sin.

1 John 3:15 - (RSV) - *He who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

When we love our brother, we are in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling found in us.

1 John 2:9-11 - *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

We *must* get the victory here!

6. Clear Distinction.

1 John 3:15 - *.....no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

What then, is in one who hates?

Very clearly, the devil.

1 John 3:10 - *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

Jesus puts this fact bluntly to the Jews who wanted to get rid of Him.

John 8:44 - *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Recognize the source of hatred.

g. Christ's own example.

1 John 3:16 - *.....he laid down his life for us:.....*

This example should be a powerful stimulus to us to lay down our lives for other Christians. How much more should we be prepared to help them in practical ways?

It is a real contradiction to say that we love God and hate another Christian in whom God is manifest, when Christ was prepared to die for him. How much more should we be prepared to do for him!!

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?*

8. Christian teaching is against selfishness.

1 John 3:17 - (RSV) - *If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother is in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?*

This teaching is again clearly seen in the book of **James** which deals with faith shown by helpful works.

Read **James 2:14-26**.

Is this practical outworking of love seen in the church?

1 John 3:18 - *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

6. INSTRUCTIONS HOW TO LOVE ARE GIVEN VERY CLEARLY IN SCRIPTURE.

1 John 3:18 - *.....let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

In what ways should we show our love to others?

9. Clear characteristics are given in -

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Patience, kindness, humility, gentleness, unselfishness, calmness and joy in the right.

1 Corinthians 13:7 - (RSV) - *It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Do we do this?

10. Covers sins.

Proverbs 10:12 - *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*

Christian love overlooks the repeated lapses of other Christians -

1 Peter 4:8 - *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

when talking to outsiders -

Proverbs 17:9 - *He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.*

This does not excuse us talking to the person concerned.

Do we “gossip” too much?

c. *Calls back the one who has slipped.*

The everlasting love of God has drawn many a person back to Himself.

Jeremiah 31:3 - *The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

This love was shown by Hosea in a very practical way when dealing with his unfaithful wife -

Hosea 11:1-4 - *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

Deal gently with backsliders!

4. Caused by the Holy Ghost.

Romans 5:5 - *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

God's love should be outworked in yielding to the leading of the Spirit of love.

2 Timothy 1:7 - *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

This causes fear to go and the use of spiritual gifts in a loving manner.

Read **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**.

5. Concern for others should be genuine.

Romans 12:9 - *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

Do not pretend to love others, but do it sincerely from the heart -

2 Corinthians 6:6 - *By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,*

Do not pretend love!

f. Christ's love should be our standard.

John 15:12 - *.....love one another, as I have loved you.*

We should ask ourselves, "Would Jesus do this?"

God is essentially love -

1 John 4:8 - *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

This is seen in the gift of His Son, *not* the love of complacency or affection - drawn out by any excellency in its object.

Romans 5:8 - *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

This is a deliberate exercise of the divine will in choice. It is not, however, self-pleasing, nor an impulse from the feelings or natural inclinations, but seeks the welfare of all.

Romans 15:2 - *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

Seek opportunity to do good.

Galatians 6:10 - *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

This love is deep and constant by a perfect Being towards unworthy objects, producing a love in them.

The word “love” means more than “tender affection” -

John 21:15-17 - *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

where unselfish love is used in the first two questions to Peter, ready for service.

Peter’s use of “love” in reply and in the Lord’s third question, conveys just the thought of cherishing an object above all else.

To love life from an undue desire to preserve it selfishly, is attacked by Christ -

John 12:25 - *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

but to love life -

1 Peter 3:10 - *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

putting emphasis on the real object of living, is something the Lord commends.

Be unselfish in your love!

(Avoid confusion with “epos” which means “human passion” and “human love for other humans.”)

7. Created by the Lord in answer to prayer.

The Lord helps us to increase in love to others by practical praying -

1 Thessalonians 3:12 - *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:*

as love comes from God's nature in us -

1 John 4:7 - *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

h. Clearly shown in our faith in others.

Perfect love casts out fear.

1 John 4:18 - *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

7. INSTRUMENTS OF ITS PROMOTION LIE WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH.

The whole group should see the value of love and be clearly taught how to work towards its divine power by outworking the life of God, planted within us by the Holy Ghost.

This will lead to -

1. Positive assurance.

1 John 3:19 - (RSV) - *And by this we will know that we are of the truth.....*

The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary shows the measure of God's love.

Ephesians 5:2 - *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

By sharing in this love, we may be sure of our identification with Him. We shall lack assurance of this when we lapse from His love.

2. Personal dealing with sin.

1 John 3:21 - (RSV) - *Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God;*

If there is something which needs to be put right, it should be confessed.

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

or else we cannot pray with confidence,

1 John 3:21-22 - *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Private things should be confessed privately, public things publicly. This confession should include unloving attitudes as well as acts.

c. Pray together.

Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends -

Job 42:10 - *And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.*

Psalms 133:1-3 - *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

2 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;

3 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.

United prayer brings down the blessing of the Spirit in revival.

4. Prepare to serve God.

Serve God even in the menial tasks.

1 John 3:24 - (RSV) - *All who keep His commandments abide in Him, and He in them.*

Evidence of this is seen in the abiding power of the Spirit on those who do this service.

1 Peter 1:22 - (RSV) - *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart.*

Only then can the church have an impact on the community.

EXERCISE.

In your own words, what do these verses teach us about the love of Christ?

Question 1.

John 13:1 - *Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Answer.

Everlasting love seen at the time of Christ's suffering.

On the eve of His last sufferings, instead of thinking of Himself and His coming sufferings, He thinks of His own being left behind.

The words "unto the end" mean the utmost degree of an act.

This sets the measure of our love towards other Christians, which should be utterly self- less.

Question 2.

John 15:9 - *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

Answer.

Enjoyment of Christ's love can be continuous through obedience.

Not "continue to love Me" but continue in the possession and enjoyment of My love."

The conditions of continuing in God's love is obedience to God's commands.

Obedience of discipleship is the secret of Christ's abiding in His Father's love. The same conditions apply to our own abiding in Christ.

The word for “continue” is the same as “abide” in -

John 15:10 - *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.*

John 14:15 - *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

1 John 2:5 - *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

1 John 5:3 - *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

2 John 6 - *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.*

Question 3.

John 15:13 - *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Answer.

Christ says that one can show no greater regard for those dear to him than by laying down his life for them, and this He was preparing to do.

This is the measure of Christ’s love and is to be matched by our own willingness to make sacrifices, even smaller ones, for other Christians.

John 10:11 - *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Romans 5:7-8 - *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

This shows the measure of Christ’s love in dying for us in our sins and applies equally to Christians.

Ephesians 5:2 - *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

Love especially seeks the good of those of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:10 - *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Question 4.

Romans 8:35 - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Answer.

Eternal attachment of Christ to His own.

This shows that nothing can separate us from Christ's love to us - not our love to Him (as is seen at the end of the chapter.)

Paul had endured so much trouble, but saw it not as the wrath of God, but as His chastening and part of his ministry.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:11-33.

1 Corinthians 4:10-13 - *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.*

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

The reference here is to -

Psalm 44:22 - *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*

This shows Christ as God and that His love is divine to the unloving.

Question 5.

Galatians 2:20 - *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.*

Answer.

The everlasting love of God leads to Christ's death for each one of us.

Self must die and the life now lived by the Christian is no longer the old life before conversion. The Christian lives no longer as an animal "in the flesh," but "in the faith" of divine sonship.

Christ loved us before salvation and showed this love by His sacrifice. The Greek here (paradidomi) shows that Christ handed Himself over for this sacrifice voluntarily.

Ephesians 5:2 - *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

Ephesians 5:25 - *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

This measure of Christian loving and giving is vital to our following in His steps!

PREACHING THEMES: **PRACTICAL CONSECRATION**

STUDY 4

Scripture Portion: Romans, chapter six - (RSV)

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SURRENDERED LIFE.

Our relationships with one another depend very much upon the victory which we have obtained in the realm of crucifying self.

Let us look at the kind of character which is self-less and ask ourselves, honestly, whether this is our own character before preaching it as the ideal for others.

This character is for *all* Christians -

Galatians 5:24 - *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

Death to self is shown by total immersion in water baptism and rising again, as set out in **Romans, chapter six.**

What does this show us?

8. DEATH TO SIN.

Romans 6:2 - (RSV) - *How can we who died to sin, still live in it?*

The possibility of being dead to sin is not only assumed here, but is taken as basic for every Christian

From the moment we are “born again” of the Spirit of Christ, we must see ourselves as dead to the old life and raised in Christ to the new. This must affect our whole aim in life and be reckoned as an accomplished fact.

Romans 6:11 - *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Merely trying to get the victory over sin in small things, fails to deal with the *root* of the problem in *self*. So there must be a radical dealing with sin, as well as sins.

Many Christians may start well enough by realizing this at conversion, but fall back into a life of imposed rules later, rather than dealing with the matter at the root, by realizing their position in Christ -

Colossians 2:20, 23 - (RSV) - *Why do you submit to regulations?*

23 These have an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion.....and severity to the body, but they are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh.....

Colossians 3:1-3 - (RSV) - *If then you have been risen with Christ, seeking the things that are above, where Christ is.....*

2 Set your minds on things above, not on things that are on the earth,

3 For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

9. DYING WITH CHRIST.

Romans 6:6 - (RSV) - *We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.*

Reckoning ourselves as dying with Christ, our Representative, is the first step to victory. When we *try* to get victory, we do it in our own strength and fail. When we *trust* His finished work, we enter into *an accomplished fact* which brings complete deliverance and keeps us humble.

Galatians 2:20 - (RSV) - *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer that I live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

2 Corinthians 4:11 - *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

10. DEFINITE OBEDIENCE.

Romans 6:13 - (RSV) - *Do not yield your members to sin!*

This reckoning must be followed by a *definite yielding* to the Lord, maybe on some minor point at issue, which becomes an attitude of unquestioning obedience.

This was seen in the lives of -

Noah -

Genesis 6:22 - *Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.*

Elisha -

1 Kings 19:20 - *And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*

Isaiah -

Isaiah 6:8 - *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

and Paul -

Acts 9:6 - *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

to say nothing of the blessed obedience of the Lord Himself -

John 4:34 - *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

11. DISCIPLESHIP IN TRIAL.

Romans 6:13 - (RSV) - *Yield.....your members to God as instruments of righteousness!*

This action of yielding must lead to an attitude of submission to God. We see this in the trial -

of David when he ceased to fast for his baby -

2 Samuel 12:23 - *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

of Job -

Job 1:21 - *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

and of Christ -

Mark 14:36 - *.....not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

John 18:11 - *.....the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

This brings us to a place of *delight* is doing God's will.

Psalms 40:8 - *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

1. Prayer to be led aright.

Psalms 143:10 - *Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

filial feeling (the obedient are in the true family of Christ) -

Matthew 12:50 - *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

and eventually to new revelations -

John 7:17 - *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Service to God then comes from the heart -

Ephesians 6:6 - *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

and our daily rule becomes -

James 4:15 - *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

rather than a self-planned and sufficient life.

Thus we become *totally dependent upon God*, contrary to all natural inclinations.

2. Consecration.

Romans 6:22 - (RSV) - *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God.*

A slave is one who -

(1) *has forfeited all rights.*

(2) *looks for no rewards.*

How far is this true of our own attitude to the work of the Lord? Do we still look for something out of it for ourselves?

Clearly, the service of God brings a blessing -

Exodus 32:29 - *For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

But we must be willing to be always giving of ourselves with no expected return -

1 Chronicles 29:5 - *The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?*

Once our heart is yielded to Him, then our eyes will automatically be looking for His directions -

Proverbs 23:26 - *My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*

in gratitude for His mercies -

Romans 12:1 - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

This consecration may have to be made in times of difficulty -

Judges 5:2 - *Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.*

or stress (the apostles concentrated on the Word of God and prayed) -

Acts 6:4 - *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

and will lead to practical sacrifice (the Macedonian churches) -

2 Corinthians 8:5 - *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*

At the end we should be able to say with Paul -

Philippians 3:8 - (RSV) - *Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.*

3. Crowning reward.

Romans 6:22 - (RSV) - *.....the return you get in sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

The Lord Jesus promises to us one hundredfold in this world for all we have given up, and eternal life in the world to come -

Mark 10:30 - *But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

with *persecutions* by people who do not understand us!

The Congo Evangelistic Mission has seen many saved, but the cost is to be seen in the missionary, Mr. Richardson, who perished on the way; Mr. Armstrong's agony and death through blackwater fever; and a grave at Katenta where "a little missionary baby lies," (Mr. Burton on David Burton and Margaret Gittings' child) "this little thing, long prayed for, joyfully received, and then....."

The world will not understand this suffering in the body of Christ, that souls may be born into the kingdom of God.

"Teaching lazy people to work, while your own folks are starving."

The black Christians on the field, also pay a price. "Bwana, it would be easy to *die* for Christ. It would cost us nothing to lay down our lives, but it is hard to *live* for Him. We are scorned and maligned today. It will be the same tomorrow, next week and next year. Oh, why do people treat so cruelly, those who come to them with nothing but grace and love?"

Galatians 6:17 - *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

For the Christian, the "best is yet to be." We have to die anyhow, so cannot hold onto our life. What then is the loss for Christ, of something you cannot keep anyway? Consecration is our "reasonable service" in this light.

As Jim Elliot (martyred by the Aucas) wrote: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

EXERCISE.

What do these verses teach us about the consecration of the church?

Question 1.

Read **1 Corinthians 3:10-17**.

Answer.

These scriptures show us about the consecration of the church, that it should be built on Christ, to be tested by fire, and the reward of faithful leadership.

This passage is *not* primarily to do with personal salvation but the ministry of building up the church of Christ. Work in this building was begun by Paul who made Christ his foundation stone.

1 Corinthians 3:10 - *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

Those who built after him by teaching, life and character, would build either in the abiding substances of gold, silver and precious stones (truth, faith, love) or the flimsy substances of wood, hay, stubble (false teaching, selfish motives, unworthy conduct.)

These are revealed.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13 - *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

by God's visitation and trial -

2 Thessalonians 1:8 - *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

when the builder himself may survive, but the building will be lost, depriving him of any reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15 - *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

God's building is His Body, the church, and injury done to it is very serious in the consequences it brings to the one responsible.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

The word "defile" here is the same word as "destroy". The ruin that that individual works in the church, will be visited on the one who did it.

The phrase "which temple ye are" can also mean "of which holy sort ye are."

No literal temple is recognized in the New Testament, but a spiritual temple is made up of all believing worshippers.

John 4:23-24 - *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.
24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

The Greek word for temple (naow = shrine) means "the earthly dwelling place of God. Christ uses it of His own earthly body -

John 2:19-21 - *Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?
21 But he spake of the temple of his body.*

It is used of the individual body of the believer in -

1 Corinthians 6:19 - *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own*

The synagogue was merely a place of assembling men and women.

The ones actually destroying the holy temple, will, in turn, be destroyed by God. Death was the penalty of destroying the Old Testament temple.

Leviticus 16:2 - *And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.*

Daniel 5:2-3 - *Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.*

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

Daniel 5:30 - *In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.*

So, eternal death is the reward of those who destroy God's building. (These are distinct from "unwise builders" who still hold to the foundation.)

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Question 2.

Ephesians 2:19-22 - *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Answer.

Born and brought up by the Spirit, Christians grow as a holy temple.

A marked progression is seen here. God dwells not only in a *state* but in a *family*; not only in a *family* but in a *temple*. The visible glory of God is seen in the church.

2 Corinthians 6:16 - *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

The saints inherited the status of spiritual Israel and all the glory of the temple at Jerusalem. The ministry and living example of the apostles were the foundation of this new building.

Matthew 16:18 - *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The prophets here mentioned are probably those of the New Testament days and the present dispensation. All were *holy men*.

Psalms 118:22 - *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*

This reference may refer to the Old Testament prophets as well.

The church has holy growth as a living organism not the mere mechanical increase of a building.

1 Peter 2:5 - *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Christ is the Head of the building and the personal element of holiness in which it is built. God, by His Spirit in the believers, has them for His habitation.

1 Corinthians 6:19 - *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

Both in the Old and New Testaments, God's people had to be holy.

Question 3.

Ephesians 5:25-30 - *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Answer.

Baptism and the Word are symbols of the purity of the church.

This is a reference to the church as the bride of Christ.

A Jewish bride, before she was presented to her husband, was bathed in water -

Esther 2:12 - *Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)*

Baptism derives its efficacy from the Word accepted and growing in the heart.

Revelation 21:2 - *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

The “word of faith” confessed in baptism has a real cleansing power -

Romans 10:8-9 - *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

John 15:3 - *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

Holiness and glory are inseparably joined here. Christ is at work preparing His bride.

Matthew 25:1 - *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

Question 4.

1 Peter 2:1-5 - *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,*

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Answer.

Brought to Christ, young Christians are built up into a spiritual body.

In order to grow, there must be a balance for all (Greek - aorist), a laying aside of malice, which leads to guile, leading, in turn, to hypocrisy - pretending to be what we are not. Envy then springs up and slanders.

All these must be laid aside in favor of the pure Word, which will enable us to grow up into a kingdom of priests, for our great High Priest.

Men will reject this process, but God will accept holy people offering spiritual sacrifices.

Question 5.

2 Peter 3:11-14 - *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Answer.

Banishment of the present earth and creation of a new world in holiness.

Greek present tense shows that things are already being dissolved so that there is a present need of holiness.

2 Peter 3:2 - *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:*

A holy commandment.

Our holiness in prayer and witnessing can hasten Christ's coming, when a completely righteous new world will be created.

2 Peter 3:12 - *Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

It will be vital in this new world to have pure holiness.

2 Peter 3:14 - *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

1 Corinthians 1:8 - *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 1:10 - *That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

God will do this in co-operation with your own consecration.

Following are prophecies setting this out.

Read **Isaiah 65:17-25**.

Read **Isaiah 66**.

Revelation 21:1 - *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

1 Peter 1:19 - *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

PREACHING THEMES: **PRAISE AND WORSHIP IN** **THE SPIRIT**

STUDY 5.

Scripture Portion: 1 Peter 2:9

1 Peter 2:9 - *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Cleansing and consecration should lead to praise.

In the Kikuyu Revival, it was found that dwelling merely on sin and its cleansing, made for introversion and could even be used of the devil whereas, after a positive cleansing, a fresh consecration, a looking away to God in positive praise, led to real power in witnessing.

Hence, we have -

12. THE PEOPLE WHO PRAISE.

1 Peter 2:9 - (RSV) - *.....a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.....*

It is only those who have experienced God's cleansing that can really praise Him from the heart. Hence the need for the church to be shown the first stages of sin, repentance and consecration, before this level of praise is reached. It is the redeemed of the Lord who would say so.

Psalms 107:2 - *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;*

Those who can best offer thanksgiving are those who -

1 Timothy 4:3 - *.....believe and know the truth.*

Mere repetitive praise, without the life to back it up, is obnoxious to God.

Proverbs 15:8 - *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.*

13. POINTS FOR PRAISE.

1 Peter 2:9 - (RSV) - *that you may declare the wonderful deeds....*

Praise is, in itself, **a good thing** -

Psalm 92:1-2 - *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:*

2 To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

Psalm 92:4 - *For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*

even commanded by God -

Psalm 100:4 - *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

Ephesians 5:4 - *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*

and linked with thankfulness -

Colossians 3:15 - *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

Colossians 3:17 - *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - (RSV) - *Give thanks in all circumstances: for this is the will of God concerning you.*

The Lord Jesus Himself gave an example of it -

Matthew 11:25 - *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

b. Thankfulness.

Thankfulness also led immediately to the outpouring of the Spirit on the first believers - **Luke 24:52-53** - *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:*

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

c. *Worship.*

Worship not only leads to outpourings of the Spirit, but is a vital product of the Spirit-filled life bringing glory to God.

Colossians 1:9 - *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

Colossians 1:12 - *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

2 Corinthians 9:12 - *For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;*

d. *Public testimony.*

This forms a public testimony, for example, Jesus at the grave of Lazarus at a time of the release of God's miracle-working power by the Spirit.

John 11:41-42 - *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

14. PRAISE, HOWEVER, IS PRODUCED BY SEVERAL FACTORS.

1. A vision of the greatness of Christ.

Prophetess Anna -

Luke 2:36-38 -*And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;*

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

2. Awareness of God's forgiveness and healing power.

Psalms 103:1-5 - *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

- 3 *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*
- 4 *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*
- 5 *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

c. *A sense of victory over sin and a positive looking forward to Christ's coming.*

1 Corinthians 15:52 - *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

4. Advance hope of resurrection derived from a definite new birth experience.

1 Peter 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

e. *Assurance of the Father's making us worthy of inheritance among the saints in light.*

Colossians 1:12 - *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

This is the prospective condition and share of the believer in the new order of things to be ushered in at the return of Christ.

Acts 26:18 - *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

One enters into this birthright by being a son of God, not because of a price paid or a task accomplished, though faithfulness to God is implied, amid opposition.

Galatians 4:30 - *Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*

Revelation 21:7 - *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

6. Ability to comfort others because God has comforted us in our afflictions.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

4 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.

g. Answered Prayer.

Jesus clearly shows this at the grave of Lazarus, where He praised God aloud -

John 11:41 - *.....Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

Notice that the Lord did this *before* anything visible had taken place in the resurrection of Lazarus. He did this *publicly* so that, when the miracle took place, God alone would be glorified as He acknowledged the Source of the miracle.

We need to do the same.

7. Appearance of spiritual gifts.

Daniel and his three friends needed spiritual gift manifestation, literally, to save their lives. They registered appropriate gratitude for God's manifestation.

Daniel 2:23 - *I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.*

Without such supernatural vision the church may still perish. We need to praise God whenever the Holy Ghost manifests His power.

1. Appointment to the service of Christ.

God gives strength where He appoints and shows His faith in us by doing so.

1 Timothy 1:12 - *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*

Paul received mercy because of his ignorance, but never ceased to marvel at his salvation and call to the ministry.

10. Abundance of praise in tongues.

Paul thanked God for the special strength he received from the gift of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:18 - *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:*

At a time when some have often rejected tongues, we should remember that God has given them for praise and refreshing. We ought to show our gratitude to God for His gift by accepting it and using it to His glory.

Isaiah 28:11-12 - *For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.*

12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

What an insult to God it is to reject such a generous gift!

What would we feel like, if somebody rejected a precious gift which had cost us a great deal to give?

k. Association in fellowship with other Christians.

The Christians came out from Rome to meet the prisoner Paul, which caused him to -

Acts 28:15 - *.....thank God, and take courage.*

Fellowship should never be taken for granted, but we should always be grateful to God for His provision in this and other respects.

12. Accessions to Christ.

Salvation of souls should always be made the object of thanksgiving -

Romans 6:17 - *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

especially to the Lord Who called them -

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

13. Abiding growth in the Spirit.

Paul thanked God for the gift ministry in the Corinthian church -

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 - *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

He also showed gratitude to God for the well-known *faith* displayed by the assembly at Rome -

Romans 1:8 - *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

as well as the *love* at Ephesus -

Ephesians 1:15-16 - *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,*

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

and at Colosse -

Colossians 1:3-8 - *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

These are linked with the steadfastness in the church at Thessalonica -

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 - *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;*

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

with increasing faith and love -

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 - *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Are we grateful enough in the fellowship for what God is doing in the midst?

n. Attitude of steadfastness in bad times.

1 Thessalonians 3:8-9 - *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

To Paul this was a matter of life and death to him as he was so personally involved in his converts and churches which he had brought to birth.

God's keeping power should always be praised.

15. THE PERSON TO BE WORSHIPED.

1 Peter 2:9 - *.....him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Praise should not be limited to what God has done for us, but what He is to us! We need to beware of speaking of man and praising somebody other than God.

Matthew 4:10 - *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

This worship - in Spirit and truth - may be offered anytime, anywhere.

John 4:19-23 - *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

It is made possible by an entrance into the Holiest Place through the blood of Jesus.

Read **Hebrews 9:7-14**.

It is a vital preparation for our activity as a body, in heaven -

Revelation 5:9-11 - *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

and unites us with the body of the Old Testament people of God in the past -

Philippians 3:3 - *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

God has called us and chosen us to be a worshiping people and to show His praise.

This is an essential part of our evangelistic witness. Sinners are looking for those who are really enjoying their salvation.

David realized he had lost this and asked God to return it to him, to make him an effective witness -

Psalms 51:10-13 - *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

The church needs to be cleansed and then show the same joy, if converts are to be won.

EXERCISE.

Give some of the results of worship, *in your own words*, from these verses.

Question 1.

Isaiah 6:3-5 - *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Answer.

Conviction of unworthiness as we see the glory of God.

These angels seem to have sung responsively one to another -

Isaiah 6:3 - *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

emphasizing the holiness of God.

Jeremiah 7:4 - *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.*

Jeremiah 22:29 - *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.*

Ezekiel 21:27 - *I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.*

Isaiah was personally convicted of unclean lips and so of unworthiness to carry God's message.

Isaiah 6:5 - *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

The same fountain cannot give forth salt and clear water, so those exercising a prophetic ministry must have sanctified lips.

Read **James chapter three**.

Isaiah 6:4 - *And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

The "smoke" here is probably the Shekinah cloud of glory.

1 Kings 8:10 - *And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD,*

The glory of God produced also a cleansing which enabled Isaiah to prophesy, although, at first, it awed him.

Judges 6:22 - *And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.*

Judges 13:22 - *And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.*

Job 42:5-6 - *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.*

6 *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Question 2.

Job 42:5-6 - I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Answer.

Cleansing and repentance made possible by an open vision of God.

Job is here retracting his former words of complaint against God and is in a new place to pray for friends and be healed himself. Job does not actually see God here except through the veil of a dark cloud.

Job 38:1 - *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,*

But, here he also sees spiritual facts that had escaped him before.

We often do not see the outworking of God's plan until later, so must be patient in allowing Him time to reveal Himself in His workings.

Question 3.

Luke 17:17-19 - *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?*

18 *There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*

19 *And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*

Answer.

Complete health and healing are secured by praise and thanksgiving.

Here, although ten lepers were cleansed, only the Samaritan had come back to thank and worship the Lord Jesus.

This shows that Christ knew (word of knowledge) that ten had been cleansed - without them being actually there. Jesus is marvelling at this display of faith by one of another nation.

Matthew 8:10 - *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

The Samaritan had fallen down on his face at His feet and lay there prostrate, worshipping Christ as God. This was a greater revelation than that of any of the Jews and enabled his salvation.

Question 4.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Answer.

Change into His likeness by the Spirit of God, comes by worship.

“We all” here shows that all Christians may enjoy this change into the likeness of Christ by our worship of Him in the Spirit. All those enjoying the Spirit, instead of vainly reading the Old Testament with veiled heart (as the Jews) reflect, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord.

James 1:23-25 - *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Just as Moses caught the reflection of God’s glory from being in His presence, so we catch this same glory, to one degree or another, the longer we spend in the presence of the Lord.

The Spirit receives the things of Christ, the Lord, and shows them to us as we read His Word also.

(The absence of the article in the Greek can be accounted for by the use of “the Spirit” as a proper name.)

Question 5.

Nehemiah 8:10 - *Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

Answer.

Continue in the joy of the Lord if you wish to be strong.

The festival had been marked by a deep sense of various convictions over sins, but now Nehemiah and his followers exhort the people to be joyful in God.

Leviticus 23:23-25 - *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.*

25 Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

suggests this should be a joyful festival and the people under conviction of their national sins from the reading of the law, were not allowed to forget this.

Portions were to be sent also to the poorer brethren enabling them to participate in the public rejoicings.

Deuteronomy 16:11 - *And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.*

Deuteronomy 16:14 - *And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.*

At a time of deep conviction of sin, in revival especially, over emphasis on sin and no balancing view of the efficacy of the blood in cleansing, can be used of the devil to depress and destroy the strength of believers.

After adequate confession, we need to take our cleansing from Christ and enter into praise and worship.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14

“The strength of the chain is its weakest link” is a very true saying when it comes to church evangelism, as the power of the group depends upon every individual in the fellowship playing their full part.

This is seen at a personal level in the next three lessons. Its effect is traced in the last two lessons of this series.

To see why everyone is involved, we must first of all, trace the functioning of the body in its ministry, then in its location for meetings and finally in the emergence of individual ministries, as “seeds” for other bodies to benefit by.

This will occupy our next three lessons.

16. BODY MINISTRY OF THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

Character of the body is love.

1 Corinthians 14:1 - (RSV) - *Make love your aim.....and desire.....gifts.*

Love is the essential atmosphere in which the body of Christ can grow. It does not replace the gifts but is the way in which the gifts should be used.

1 Corinthians 12:31 - *But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.*

Where there is hatred or even suspicion, the gifts cannot be exercised. Where there is genuine love, there will be a marked growth among the body members in -

(1) Knowledge of God.

We have not received the spirit of the world which leads to quarrels.

1 Corinthians 2:12 - *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

1 Corinthians 3:3 - *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

The unspiritual man can neither receive nor understand the gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 - *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

This fact should be recognized by the use of the gifts of the Spirit at the proper times and places. It is wrong to force them on an unprepared people. Our growth in the deeper revelations of God is seriously hampered by lack of love in the fellowship.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 - (RSV) - *I.....could not address you as spiritual men, but as children of the flesh, as babes in Christ.*

2 I fed you with milk, not with solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready.....

3for there is jealousy and strife among you.

Superior knowledge to the unspiritual only leads to pride. Even Branham was warned not to divulge all God had shown lest carnal impersonations would be used.

(2) Members of the fellowship.

The early Christians devoted themselves to teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

Acts 2:42 - *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

They did not wander around to other doctrines or churches. They could be relied upon to be out at every meeting, without a falling away in attendance, where they could always expect miracles.

Acts 2:43 - *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

They shared everything, meaning that the move of God relied on a fresh influx of converts for its income and was not cushioned against spiritual decline by vested income, which came in, irrespective of no conversions.

Acts 2:44-45 - *And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

They broke bread in their homes.

Acts 2:46 - *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

They had glad and generous hearts and were popular. The Lord added daily to their number.

Acts 2:47 - *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

It is true of our fellowship today.

17. CHRIST-CENTERED WORSHIP SHOULD BE THE MAIN AIM.

1 Corinthians 14:25 - *.....he will worship God,.....*

Paul prefers prophecy to tongues in that prophecy builds up others - though he does not forbid tongues to build up one's own spiritual life.

1 Corinthians 14:5 - *I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

He suggests that even with outsiders present, really deep prophecy will reveal hidden secrets.

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 - *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:*

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

This again should not be to draw attention to the individuals being used of God in the gifts, but to glorify God. One man, therefore, should not be glorified or one woman made prominent, but Christ should be acknowledged as Head -

Ephesians 1:22-23 - *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

and Saviour -

Ephesians 5:23 - *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

In fact, the whole aim of the body should be to build up individual members to the personal stature of Christ.

Read **Ephesians 4:11-16**.

To achieve this, God has not only given gifts to individuals in the body, but has given individual men (sometimes with natural talents) to benefit the whole body.

These are -

(1) Apostles.

Those sent by Christ to start and father them, e.g., Paul.

(2) Prophets.

Used in deep prophetic ministry, like Agabus in -

Acts 11:28 - *And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

Acts 21:10 - *And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.*

(3) Evangelists.

These were concerned with the proclamation of the good news as distinct from the work of starting new churches (apostles), e.g., Phillip -

Acts 21:8 - *And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.*

(4) Pastors and teachers.

A pastor is a shepherd to feed and tend the flock of God.

A teacher is one also concentrating on this ministry.

(Compare with Barnabas and Saul at Antioch.)

Ephesians 4:11 - *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

These are not offices but kinds of work to be done for God within the body.

1 Peter 5:2-3 - *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

Acts 11:26 - *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

The actual men who did this work are the “elders” or “bishops.”

Acts 20:17 - *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*

Acts 20:28 - *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

These men are mature leaders, given to the body for this work, usually appointed by the apostles, as new works were opened under God's leading.

Acts 14:23 - *And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

(5) Other ministries, including healers, helpers, administrators.

1 Corinthians 12:27 - *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

All play their parts in the work of the body and should be seen in action locally. These are all supplied to the church by the Lord Jesus, Who works through them.

Colossians 2:19 - *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

18. CHARISMATIC GIFTS TO THE BODY.

1 Corinthians 14:26 - (RSV) - *Each one has.....a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation.....*

While individual men are given to the body, the Lord gives gifts to all as they need them. These, too, may differ. There is unity in this diversity.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 - *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

The Spirit determines how each one is to be used -

1 Corinthians 12:11 - *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Note that the emphasis here is on unity.

1 Corinthians 12:13 - *.....baptized into one body,.....*

tells us nothing about those who have *not* received the baptism, as this was basically assumed as an experience for all Christians.

Read **Hebrews 6:1-5**.

Paul is dealing here with the unity of those who have received this baptism.

The body has many members, whose ministries differ in gifts of tongues -

1 Corinthians 12:30 - *Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

though all praise God in tongues at baptism.

Acts 10:44-46 - *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

and -

Acts 2:4 - *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

with the twin gift of interpretation of these messages.

4. CONDITIONS OF EXERCISING GIFTS.

Read **1 Corinthians 14:27-40**.

1. Everyone should be given a chance to participate in this ministry.

No one person should give more than two or three messages in tongues -

1 Corinthians 14:27 - *If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.*

Similarly, each person should be limited to two or three prophecies, which should be submitted to judgment of the others.

1 Corinthians 14:29 - *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*

b. All should co-operate in this move.

Times of quiet should be observed when another person gets a revelation.

1 Corinthians 14:30 - *If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.*

Since everyone should be able to prophesy -

1 Corinthians 14:31 - *For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*

exercise of the gifts should not lead to arguments -

1 Corinthians 14:33 - *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

These should be acknowledged as the command of God -

1 Corinthians 14:37 - *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*

The body must work in unity in this way.

3. There should be no clamping down on spiritual gifts, such as tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:39 - *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*

in a wholesale way, *but* the principle of decency and order should be observed.

1 Corinthians 14:40 - *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

There should be no pride or preference for individuals, but a waiting on the judgment of revelations.

1 Corinthians 4:5-7 - *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

7 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?

We must remember our accountability to God for these gifts.

Read **Matthew 25:15-30**.

These talents are divinely given.

Prophecy should be done in faith, humility, patience, simplicity, diligence and cheerfulness.

Read **Romans 12:3-8**.

1 Corinthians 14:39 - *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*

EXERCISE.

In your own words, say what these portions tell us about the work of the body of Christ.

Question 1.

Romans 12:3-8 - *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Answer.

The work of the body of Christ is shown in the scriptures as separated among various individuals and operated by faith.

Romans 12:4 - *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:*

Humility is the keynote for every individual - **verse 3.**

Body ministry, depending on co-operation with others, is more likely to lead to this than a one-man organization.

We do have an essential unity in Christ - **verse 5.**

But, there are different jobs for each one to do, including prophecy - **verse 6.**

depending for its operation on faith - service - **verse 7.**

teaching, exhorting - **verse 8.**

giving, helping - with zeal and doing acts of mercy cheerfully - **verse 8.**

Each one of these ministries should be used and not kept back - **verse 6.**

Paul himself is an apostle only by God's grace and emphasizes no self-elevation here - **verse 3.**

Teachers are distinguished from prophets who have a personal revelation ministry as distinct from mere teaching of the Word and preaching.

Acts 13:1 - *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

1 Corinthians 12:28-29 - *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

This personal ministry demands greater faith as more detailed prophecies are given.

Exhorters - were apparent in the Kikuyu and W.E.C. revivals where they would openly exhort the person under conviction, "You are hiding the real big sin, now out with it!" This is a powerful ministry in times of the Spirit's moving.

Giving - was done here privately. Liberal giving was also mentioned.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:2-9.

There is also a place for the administrator to rule -

1 Timothy 3:4-5 - *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

These scriptures also pertain to the elders.

Question 2.

1 Corinthians 12:28 - *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

Answer.

Several different ministries are needed for the complete body. These are appointed by God, not just by men.

“God has appointed in the church.....”

Some kind of definite order is here set out parallel to God’s making up a human body.

1 Corinthians 12:18 - *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

Apostles were not limited to the twelve, but included Barnabas and others -

Romans 16:7 - *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

Prophets followed them in precedence, (e.g., Agabus in **Acts**). Teachers came next followed by workers of miracles, showing the precedence given to the Word of God in bringing about miracles, which confirmed the teaching.

Healers are those exercising a less spectacular ministry, while helpers and administrators show the priority of spiritual power over administrative ability in the church.

Tongues may be last, but all are necessary and no one must be thrown out of the body.

Question 3.

Ephesians 4:13-16 - *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Answer.

The single aim of the body should be to grow up into Christ's fulness.

“Until we all attain to.....the stature of the fulness of Christ.....”

The aim of this body ministry should be the stature of Christ and not merely drawing a party after one's self.

Christ supplies this ministry by the Spirit, Who sorts out the crafty doctrines of men and helps us mature in God - **verse 14.**

Compare with **Hebrews chapter six.**

There is a need of growth, even for Paul. It is only through the ministry of others that we are able to achieve it, hence the need of fellowship.

“Holding the truth in love” (not “speaking” only) shows common teaching with charity in it.

Question 4.

Colossians 1:24-26 - *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:*

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*

Answer.

Sent to complete Christ's suffering work and reveal His body.

“complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body.....the churchthe mystery hidden for ages and generations.”

Paul speaks of the mystery of suffering within the body identifying us with Christ. A “mystery” is a thing always here, but formerly hidden and just now revealed by the power of the Spirit.

This shows that, from the beginning of the world, God had in mind to bring the Gentiles and all mankind into His plan. This was only revealed in the book of **Acts** to Paul and other of the apostles, in its fulness.

1 Corinthians 12:26 - *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

Ephesians 1:9-10 - *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

Ephesians 3:5-9 - *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

These reveal the importance of this revelation of the Gentiles as in the body of Christ.

Question 5.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-21 - *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;*

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

15 *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

16 *Rejoice evermore.*

17 *Pray without ceasing.*

18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

19 *Quench not the Spirit.*

20 *Despise not prophesyings.*

21 *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

Answer.

Seek to be obedient to leaders and have peace among yourselves, verses 12-13.

The body functions in a disciplined and peaceful way. There are definite leaders in it, put there by God - **verse 12.**

Their job is to admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak and be patient with all - **verse 14.**

The body must always do good, rejoice and pray (with praise) and allow the Holy Ghost to work freely - **verses 19-22**, while at the same time exercising its direction on prophetic revelations.

Matthew 25:8 - *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*

Colossians 2:18-19 - *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

19 *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

Evidently the elders are here meant as workers and leaders -

Philippians 1:1 - *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

Hebrews 13:17 - *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

Ephesians 4:11 - *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

2 Timothy 2:14 - *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.*

2 Timothy 2:24-25 - *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,
25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

1 Peter 5:3 - *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

There should be no differences among leaders -

1 Corinthians 1:12 - *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 4:6 - *And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*

Prayer must be a vital part of this ministry -

Romans 14:11 - *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

Romans 12:12 - *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*

Acts 5:41 - *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*

Note the need for the body to exercise its discernment on prophetic utterances, which must be proved.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: **HOME MEETINGS**

STUDY 7

19. SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND AND USE

Home meetings are not merely to be advocated because of their advantages in bringing various denominations together, or even because of their need in times of trouble, but more because of their Bible backing. In the scriptures we see -

Worship.

Worship at its highest form is possible in the home because it is a spiritual thing. The Spirit-filled meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is paralleled by that of the wise men worshiping the baby Jesus and having divine revelation in **Matthew chapter two**.

Miracles.

Wonderful miracles became possible with the presence of Christ in the home. This could happen in the family, e.g., Peter's mother-in-law, or to others.

Mark 2:1-5 - *And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.*

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

c. Witnessing.

Witnessing work to sinners is done most easily in homes.

Matthew 9:10-11 - *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

Cornelius' home became a place of mass salvation and baptism in the Spirit.

Acts 10:22 - *And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.*

Even today, where sinners hardly enter gospel meetings, a gathering in the home can be a powerful evangelistic weapon.

4. Greater privacy.

Work of a deep personal nature is possible in more secluded privacy provided by the home, whether for salvation or healing. For example, Nicodemus at night on the housetop, **John, chapter three**, and the two blind men who followed Jesus home, are two outstanding examples.

Matthew 9:28 - *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

e. Wayfaring evangelism needs hospitality to sustain it.

The Lord Jesus stayed in homes regularly.

Matthew 26:6 - *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,*

He encouraged His followers to do the same, making just one home their base in each town and using it, rather than the synagogue, as the place to preach and heal the sick.

Luke 9:4 - *And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.*

6. Deeper truth could be more easily explained.

Words of deeper truth could be explained to the inner ring of disciples in the privacy of the home where they could be presented only by parables and pictures in outside preaching.

The Lord Jesus did this in homes -

Mark 10:10 - *And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.*

Traces of the same work by Paul, as a supplement to his public ministry, is recorded in -

Acts 20:20 - *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,*

The more personal revelations of the Spirit and deeper teachings were thus able to be privately communicated to a ready audience, which would not have been possible elsewhere. This is a tremendous advantage in deepening the scope of Spirit gifts.

g. *Waiting upon God.*

Waiting upon God for longer periods of prayer was easier in the home, where whole nights could be spent in urgent intercession, e.g., Peter, on release from prison, knew to go to the home which was a regular scene of Holy Ghost prayer meetings.

Acts 12:12 - *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*

It may even have been the scene of Pentecost itself, after prolonged prayer - **Acts chapter two.**

8. War and persecution.

War against the church and persecution in the synagogue made the home a useful place of refuge. Paul had no hesitation in leaving the synagogue, where his message was not accepted, for the home where his message was accepted -

Acts 18:7 - *And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.*

and even of “splitting the believers” where he met opponents of his teaching -

Acts 19:17 - *And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.*

This reflects strongly on the present position of churches where the full gospel message is opposed and people are compromising in declaring it for fear of being “put out” or “splitting the work.” The work of God is already split when God’s people are unwilling to move onward with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:46 - *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

The early church kept fellowship as long as they could with the established Jewish system but broke bread happily in their own homes. Finally, they spent most of their time in the home, as the Jews finally rejected the Saviour.

1. Wholesale use of homes.

Wholesale use of homes is found in the epistles.

Romans 16:5 - *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*

1 Corinthians 16:19 - *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*

Colossians 4:15 - *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

2 Timothy 1:16 - *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:*

Philemon 2 - *And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:*

There is no mention of special buildings here!

10. Communion.

Wine and bread for the breaking of bread were partaken of in homes, not elsewhere!

Matthew 26:18 - *And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*

Acts 2:46 - *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

Simple fellowship meals made Christ real.

Luke 24:30 - *And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.*

20. SUGGESTIONS FOR RUNNING THE MEETINGS.

1. Avoid sectarian attachments.

Do not run the meeting to promote a sect but as part of a larger fellowship.

Protestants and Catholics should be equally welcome and an informal atmosphere maintained in which it is easier to develop the use of spiritual gifts.

Those who come to worship Christ, like the woman with the spikenard ointment -

Mark 14:3 - *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.*

should not be subjected to the suspicion of their church standing.

The home meeting is there to build up the body of Christ, not a denominational organization of man although it should, and must, stand for the full counsel of God as revealed in the scriptures without compromise.

b. Allow room for the Spirit to move in the meetings.

Seating should be done informally round the central table, rather than in pew-like rows!

After the introductions, allow time for free praise and prayer where everyone can take part.

- (1) Where strangers are present, an element of greater control is needed by the leaders who should meet and have a private time of prayer beforehand.
- (2) Introductory talks should be informal and not too full of scripture except that which is natural to the context of the talk. Catholics and the unsaved will otherwise be embarrassed.
- (3) Testimonies should be practical experiences (not sermons) and prayerfully considered, before they are shared, allowing the Holy Ghost to emphasize those parts which He wishes.

For example, life before the experience, exactly how you received it, and what were the main effects of that particular contact with God.

- (4) Adequate explanations should be given to newcomers of spiritual gifts in operation, with the literature also made available at the end to help.
- (5) The shy should be encouraged to participate and the bolder ones quietened down.
- (6) We should not be frightened of times of silence, as well as worship more loudly in English and in tongues.

Every meeting should have a fresh leading by the Spirit and never settle into a routine.

21. ARRANGE TIME FOR PERSONAL COUNSELING.

After the meeting, a break may be provided for informal fellowship round a cup of tea and a biscuit. Refreshments should be kept simple or the meeting will prove too heavy a load for the hostess, who will look forward to it with dread.

If possible, a private room should be set aside for talks with those who need personal counseling and prayer, e.g., the sinner woman in -

Luke 7:37-38 - *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

should not be talked about in the open by modern Pharisees!

There is a tremendous need for personal dealing with people at this informal level to sort out problems, which can never be aired in the larger gatherings.

These points are merely suggestions and are given on the basis of experience of such home meetings and are *not* intended as a rule book.

Obviously, where the group is closer, for instance, there is a greater degree of informality and liberty than where strangers are present. Each meeting must be considered on its own merits.

2 Corinthians 3:17 - *Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

1 Corinthians 14:40 - *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

EXERCISE.

The Bible describes the work done in home meetings as -

Question 1.

Acts 2:2-4 - *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Answer.

Charismatic and powerful at Pentecost!

“.....a sound from heaven.....and filled all the house where they were sitting” - **verse 2.**

The suddenness, strength and diffusiveness of this Holy Ghost power in the house, must have been graphically witnessed by the writer. Thus the church originated in a house where a number of like-minded Christians met privately for prayer.

This humble origin indicates the concern of God to use those who prayerfully seek His gifts and are not concerned with the prestige of buildings or powerful positions.

These tongue-shaped flames rested upon each one sitting in the house, a visible evidence of united power received from God.

Question 2.

Acts 5:41-42 - *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Answer.

Common meeting ground for prayer in time of trouble.

“.....and in the home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus Christ” - verse 42.

Here we have a private, as well as a public, preaching ministry showing that they did not withdraw from their first church loyalties into the homes, until they were forced to do so.

They witnessed to the Lord in their old church connections, but fellowshipped in the homes and used them to spread the Word. This reveals a balanced approach to the new move of God which may be imitated today.

Notice the severe punishment of the scourging they had to endure and the persecution which drove them to meet in the homes as their only place of refuge.

Home meetings fill a vital part in periods of persecution and civil strife.

Question 3.

Acts 9:10-19 - *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.*

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Answer.

Call and private revelation given by God to God's chosen leaders.

The home provides an ideal setting for private revelation ministry and the preparation of future leaders for public work.

Notice the private revelation of Christ to Ananias in his own home which was a detailed word of knowledge on the name and address of the man he was to visit and the way in which Paul had been granted a vision also as he quietly waited on God at this home - **verses 11-12.**

Notice the need to ignore gossip, if we are to listen to the Spirit - **verse 13.**

and the measure of revelation given of Saul's future ministry - **verse 16.**

Notice the loving greeting of Ananias on entering the other's house - **verse 17.**

The private ministry of healing and the baptism of the Spirit which followed in this house - **verse 18.**

He was also evidently baptized after that and took food at the end of his fast - **verse 19.**

Personal revelation of this sort should always be checked against one's own leading of the Lord.

Question 4.

Acts 10:9 - *On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:*

Read **Acts 10:24-33**.

Acts 10:44-48 - *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts 10:24 - *.....And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.*

Peter took time off to pray in the house where he was staying -

Acts 10:9 - *On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:*

This led to a vision of greatest importance for the future of the church, showing the need for regular communion at home with God.

The use of hospitality to strangers -

Acts 10:23 - *Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.*

This reveals the place of the home in fellowship, while this gathering of friends shows the importance of the house as a place to preach and spread the word among one's own friends in informal meetings.

Acts 10:24 - *And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.*

In the home, church and racial differences can be dropped and we may simply obey the call of God.

Acts 10:28 - *And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

After this vital outpouring of the Spirit with tongues - **verses 46-47** - they realized their need of fellowship and the home became a place of teaching for the new converts to grow.

All these uses form models for the use of homes today in the move of the Spirit.

Question 5.

Acts 12:12-17 - *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Answer.

Challenging needs can be met by communal prayer.

".....the house of Mary.....where many were gathered together and were praying" - **verse 12.**

This prayer meeting must have been known to Peter but its special nature was determined by the urgency of the occasion - **verse 12.**

It is a great comfort to have the power of corporate prayer at times of special need.

Indeed, it may well have been in this very house that Christ ate His last meal together with the disciples and that they were sitting on the day of Pentecost.

Certainly out of this prayer meeting, young John Mark was soon to be launched on missionary activity - **Acts chapter thirteen.**

Peter then went away to another house to hide (showing the use of homes in dangerous times) and was able to communicate with James, the other acknowledged leader of the church at Jerusalem - **Acts chapter fifteen**.

The unbelief that seems to have been manifested on this occasion, is the more remarkable in view of the previous release of the apostles from prison by God's angel. It reveals the mercy of God in going even beyond our own understanding and prayer.

Ephesians 3:18-20 - *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

PERSONAL APPLICATION:
INDIVIDUAL MINISTRIES
EMERGING
STUDY 8

From the pattern of ministries we traced in our last lesson, it will seem strange to have the emergence of individual ministries in essentially a group concept of the body.

However, there need be no contradiction between the two, as the individual ministry must always be seen in the context of the group outreach, while wider group ministries can be developed only by individuals personally in contact with God.

22. MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT IN LOCAL MEETINGS LEADS, IN TIME,
TO WIDER USEFULNESS.

One main example of this is seen in the New Testament account of Phillip, the deacon who launched out into evangelistic work as seen in **Acts, chapter six** onward.

Chosen for local administration of funds.

Philip was full of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 6:3 - *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

Acts 6:5 - *And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:*

Scattered by persecution, Philip left Jerusalem.

Acts 8:5 - *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

c. *Despite prejudice, the Lord gave him a miracle ministry in Samaria.*

Acts 8:6 - *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

4. Many were saved. He led them through water baptism.

Acts 8:12 - *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

e. *He lacked the ministry of the baptism in the Spirit.*

Acts 8:15-16 - *Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:*

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

He even seemed not to have noticed the superficial nature of the sorcerer's profession.

6. The Holy Ghost moved him supernaturally to the desert to make way for the **deeper ministry of Peter at Samaria.**

Acts 8:26 - *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

g. *His obedience marked a new development in his ministry of the words of wisdom and knowledge.*

Acts 8:29 - *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*

Essentially, this was a move of faith to a deeper walk in God.

8. Philip, not Peter, opened the gospel door to the Gentiles with the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:38 - *And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*

Thus, Philip's ministry not only became deeper but wider in its scope.

1. Levitation by the power of God.

Acts 8:40 - *But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.*

This marked a deeper move into the miraculous.

10. His household was essentially spiritual.

His daughters also prophesied. He passed his spiritual zeal on to the next generation!

Acts 21:8-9 - *And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.*

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

23. MEANS OF BUILDING UP THE CHURCH.

After local usefulness and proving, from the local home meeting, we see emerging the ministries which can travel and benefit the body as a whole.

1. Apostles.

For example, Paul and Barnabas trained others and launched out from Antioch.

Read **Acts, chapters twelve and thirteen.**

2. Prophets.

All may prophesy,

1 Corinthians 12:28 - *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

but some were sent out from the Jerusalem church to travel, e.g., Judas and Silas.

Acts 15:32 - *And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.*

c. Evangelists.

For example, Philip was sent out after training at Jerusalem (as above.)

4. Pastors and teachers.

For example, Peter was commissioned by Christ to feed His sheep - **John chapter twenty-one.** He traveled from Jerusalem into a larger miracle ministry.

This system seems to cut out the need for residential Bible schools, as distinct from training in the local churches or training with a traveling group (e.g., with Paul.)

The modern context of workers going out to countries under the government, rather than through missionary societies, does not seem to be found in the scriptures.

Traveling ministries in the New Testament church were developed first in the local setting, then in a wider setting as they proved faithful. This made for mature, stable leadership and incentive to reliance on the Spirit for leading in a deeper way.

EXERCISE.

In your own words, give the importance of Christian experience in witness work from -

Question 1.

Mark 5:19 - *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

Answer.

The importance of experience is shown in Christian witness work in the absence of the Lord Jesus in person. His absence led to personal testimony by witness.

(RSV) - *Tell them how much the Lord has done for you.*

The men of Gergasa preferred their pigs to the Saviour Who told this man who had been delivered to go home and tell his friends what God had done for him.

Seeing him and knowing him in the past, this testimony would make up, in a powerful way, for the lack of seeing Jesus in person - just as we must testify today, now that people can only touch and see Jesus through us.

2 Corinthians 3:2 - *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:*

The Lord refused his request to stay with Him.

Mark 5:18 - *And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.*

He had confidence that the demons would not reenter his body. This shows the effect of testimony also on personal deliverance.

This man actually went, not to his friends only, but to the whole district!

Mark 5:20 - *And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.*

As a result, Christ returned later to find a whole crowd of sick awaiting His touch!

Question 2.

John 3:10-11 - *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

Answer.

Assurance of doctrine is gained only from personal experience.

(RSV) - *Are you a teacher.....and yet you do not understand this?.....We speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen.....*

The Lord Jesus here uses the word “we” to speak of Himself and the other disciples as having experienced this new birth - or birth from above by the Spirit.

John 3:5 - *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

He showed surprise that Nicodemus had not seen this already in the scriptures -

Psalms 2:10 - *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.*

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:*

20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26 - *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

Isaiah chapters eleven and sixty-one.

Experience never contradicts the scripture but the scripture is made real by experience of it today. The Greek word here used is a perfect tense with a present meaning signifying to have seen or perceived.

This is different from growing knowledge and shows a fulness of knowledge.

John 7:17 - *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

As we do God's will, we get a full knowledge of His teaching.

Question 3.

John 9:25 - *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

Answer.

Attacks of doubt are warded off by personal experience.

(RSV) -*one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.....*

The priests directed the healed blind man to give the glory to God as Jesus was a sinner. But the latter stuck tenaciously to the facts of his experience and so warded off the attacks of the doubters, who kept on hearing him and trying to ensnare him in his story.

They had to answer to this and had to cast him out.

Do not let Satan rob you of your experience of healing or tongues of doubt!

1 Samuel 6:5 - *Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.*

Jeremiah 13:16 - *Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.*

Luke 17:18 - *There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*

These scriptures direct all glory to God.

Be like the man who was asked how he knew he was saved. "Sir, I was there when it happened. Do not argue. Stick to facts.

Question 4.

Acts 26:16-18 - *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Answer.

Appointment to missionary service springs out of personal work.

(RSV) - *I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you.*

Enlargement of vision and experience is granted to those who are faithful in testifying to what they have already received. This enables the hearers -

Acts 26:18 - *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Paul here joins the eyewitnesses of Christ and the ministry of the apostles who had seen Jesus, and is promised further visions later in his life.

Luke 1:2 - *Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;*

Acts 18:9-10 - *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Acts 22:17-21 - *And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;*

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Acts 23:11 - *And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*

2 Corinthians chapter twelve.

Note the importance he attaches to this experience as a qualification for his authority in -

Galatians 1:12 - *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Personal faith in Christ brings this deliverance and forgiveness.

Isaiah 61:1 - *The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;*

Question 5.

2 Peter 1:1 - *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:*

Answer.

Admission to faith and standing of the greatest Christians is by experience!

(RSV) - *.....those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours.....*

The measure of our faith is not determined by reading books and knowing promises claimed by other Christians, but by actually passing the tests in our own experience. Many make this mistake and think they have a greater faith than that which they actually enjoy, as the test reveals.

There is no substitute for a personal proof of one's own ministry and paying the price of revival.

2 Peter 1:18 - *And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

It is stressed here that Peter was an eyewitness of Christ's power, but the object of his faith was the same as that for every other Christian.

One article is here used in the Greek to show that God is, at the same time, our Saviour.

We must all press forward to the common objective of experiencing all that there is of Christ.

POWER OF THIS TYPE OF EVANGELISM: FAMILY CONCEPT

STUDY 9

24. THE LOCAL CHURCH AS A FAMILY.

Home for new converts in a family of love, with maturity.

The whole point of this study is to underline the need for evangelism.

The present forms of evangelism by a one-man ministry from outside the church in the locality, is valid only to set up a group in a new area. Where the evangelistic effort is made in context of a backslidden local church, the converts are often lost when they contact the coldness of the local group.

The first priority, therefore, must be to get the church right before launching out for converts.

God had to deal with Ananias to accept Saul -

Acts 9:17 - *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Even for pioneer works, follow-up must be done by a mature man, often with a religious background.

2 Corinthians 12:14 - *Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*

The ultimate aim.

Apart from the efficiency of such church evangelism, there is the ultimate aim of producing not just souls saved, but citizens for heaven where we are to be joint heirs together -

Romans 8:17 - *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

We must realize our brotherhood with one another and with the Lord -

Hebrews 2:11 - *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

Matthew 12:50 - *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

Romans 16:23 - *Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

(Quartus - a brother in Christ)

1 Corinthians 7:12 - *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.*

Christ set the example by starting His preaching within the church.

Matthew 12:9 - *And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:*

Mark 1:21 - *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.*

Luke 4:16 - *.....as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

Paul and Barnabas followed this example by going first to the Jewish synagogue.

Acts 13:14 - *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.*

Even the writer of **Hebrews**, exhorts them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together when trouble began -

Hebrews 10:25 - *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

d. Fellowship is a mark of real salvation.

1 John 3:14 - *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

There is power in a double witness -

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.*

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

The Lord hears and knows the fellowship thus produced -

Malachi 3:16 - *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

This marked the early church -

Acts 2:42 - *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Philippians 1:3 - *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,*

Philippians 1:5 - *For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;*

and the Methodist revival "love feasts."

2 Peter 2:13 - *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;*

Jude 12 - *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;*

5. Fellowship is vital to growth.

God's original plan for man (Adam) included fellowship -

Genesis 2:18 - *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

It was well illustrated in the life of Moses -

Numbers 10:31 - *And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.*

Exodus 17:12 - *But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.*

Christ Himself appreciated this need for fellowship -

Matthew 26:37 - *And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.*

The Lord sent out the disciples two by two showing His appreciation of the need of fellowship in evangelism.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

25. THE BIRTH OF DAUGHTER CHURCHES.

This is made possible by the leaders released from the mother church, as in **Acts chapter eight**. This keeps the outreach going forward into new areas.

1. Home churches are easy to set up.

This allows the church to move with the population into new areas. All the early references during the spread of Christianity are to home meetings.

1 Corinthians 16:19 - *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*

Colossians 4:15 - *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

These allowed more intimate fellowship and more people to be involved in the outreach activities.

2. Fellowship was good between mother and daughter churches.

These were not regarded as “split” moves. Compare with the prophets who came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, **Acts chapter eleven**, to assist in their growth.

Barnabas and Paul also had contact with Jerusalem, **Acts 15:22-34**.

The same fellowship in sending out missionaries and gifts to those in need elsewhere, is found in **Second Corinthians chapters eight and nine**.

Similarly, the letter to the church at Corinth was passed around to all the others.

2 Corinthians 1:1 - *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:*

Psalms 119:63 - *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

c. Christian love shown in broad-minded tolerance and instruction.

Acts 18:14-16 - *And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:*

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

4. Traveling ministries were thus made possible, which enriched all.

For example -

Agabus -

Acts 11:28 - *And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

Acts 21:10 - *And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.*

Apollos -

Acts 18:24 - *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.*

Acts 19:1 - *And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,*

EXERCISE.

The importance of fellowship is seen in -

Question 1.

Ruth 1:16 - *And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*

Answer.

Based on personal relationship and determination to go through with God.

(RSV) -*your people shall be my people and your God my God*.....

Ruth 4:15 - *And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.*

This shows that this daughter-in-law was better to Naomi than a son, in her determination to go through with God. Her dedication was amply rewarded by marriage to Boaz.

Naomi tried to dissuade her two daughters-in-law from going with her. This was a real test of their determination to have fellowship.

Naomi complained that God's hand was against her so promised them nothing. This step of Ruth's was all the more remarkable in view of the circumstances at the time it was made.

It is in times of real distress we prove the true value of fellowship.

Question 2.

Romans 16:4 - *Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

Answer.

Believers who risk their lives for missionaries.

(RSV) - *.....who risked their lives for my life.....*

Aquila and Priscilla were willing to risk their lives for Paul. This may have happened at Corinth.

Acts 18:6 - *And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

Acts 18:9-10 - *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

or at Ephesus -

Acts 19:30-34 - *And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.*

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 *Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.*

33 *And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.*

34 *But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

1 Corinthians 15:32 - *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.*

They must have returned from Ephesus to Rome. There the apostle was glad to see them.

The true test of Christian love is seen in this willingness to die for the brethren, just as the Lord Jesus died for us.

1 John 3:16 - *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

Question 3.

Matthew 12:50 - *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

Answer.

Brings a division with natural relationships by heavenly connection.

(RSV) -whosoever does the will of My Father in heaven is my brother, sister.....and mother.

Subjection to the known will of God brings us into the family of Christ.

It may put us at odds with our earthly kindred, as here it puts Christ first so that we actually have more fellowship with others of like mind, than with those nearest to us in the flesh.

Those who resemble Christ in His love and devotedness to the Father, are truly the most nearly related to Him and are the objects of His dearest affection.

In this relationship, a man's foes can even become those of his own household.

Question 4.

1 John 1:7 - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Answer.

Believing and walking in the light brings fellowship and cleansing.

We need to believe in His truth and behave with no part of our life hidden from God's light.

Ephesians 5:8 - *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

Ephesians 5:11-14 - *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Our behaviour shows our standing. Our daily life must be essentially God-like. By this means only can we have true fellowship with other Christians and have true cleansing through the blood of Christ.

Nothing hidden or in the dark can be cleansed until it is confessed and brought to the light.

The Greek present tense used here shows continuous cleansing from defilement of sin.

Ephesians 5:26 - *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

Question 5.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

Answer.

Agreement on earth in prayer leads to certain answers.

(RSV) - *.....if two of you agree on earth about anything.....*

Wide provision is here made for asking, based on the promise of -

Matthew 18:20 - *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

Note the premium put upon union in prayer, showing that we must agree as touching the object wanted. This is very different from a vague agreement.

This agreement must be made on details of how, when and where that prayer is to be answered.

Notice that they are gathered unto Christ's name, not a denomination or organization and that it is through His Name that this prayer is presented and answered.

***POWER OF THIS TYPE OF EVANGELISM:
GENERAL CONCEPT -
CHRIST AS HEAD OF THE SPOTLESS BRIDE
STUDY 10***

26. THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Evangelism cannot be isolated and an individualistic activity, due to the fact of Christ being not divided in His activity throughout all truly born again Christians.

He is also interested, not only in local churches or even in the increase of denominations, but is Head of the whole body of Christians.

Ephesians 1:22 - *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

He should be given His rightful place as Director of Operations, which will affect and nourish the body as a whole. As the husband is head of the wife, while the wife may make suggestions, yet the husband makes the final decisions.

Ephesians 5:23-25 - *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

24 *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

Colossians 2:19 - *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

This has the following important effects.

Not only the evangelist, but the whole church must be in a place with God if an evangelistic outreach is to have permanent results.

It is no use bringing converts into a dead church or one that is split. God's people must get it right.

Needs of the Christian must, therefore, find priority in evangelistic messages.

- (1) There must be a call to united, Holy Ghost prayer.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

- (2) Personal relationships must be dealt with and cleansing established between Christians before outreach to the unsaved.

1 Peter 4:17 - *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

- (3) There must be personal and practical consecration to Christ as Lord - **Acts, chapter ten.**
- (4) Joint worship and praise in the Holy Ghost should follow this cleansing and prove the main attracting power for the sinner.

Psalms 51:12-13 - *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Now a personal response must follow within the body by -

- (1) Body ministry of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which will enable the Lord to cleanse and keep His church pure.

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 - *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:*

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

- (2) Members should realize the value of their homes and open them for evangelistic outreach and teaching meetings within their areas.

Once the relationship for love is established, each cell group should work together to build up the body of Christ over the area.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 - *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

- (3) Individual ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist and teaching elder should be recognized within the body and given their place.

d. No other type of evangelism but the scriptural way can achieve results.

- (1) This family concept among all Christians in which new converts can enter and find, not only love, but maturity of leadership.
- (2) “Daughter” churches can grow up through the home meetings, without a “split” being made.

A background of real love alone, can avoid clamping down on the growth of the body of Christ as a whole, because man wants to direct.

27. THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

She is being made ready for her marriage. So, the present charismatic outpouring is not an end in itself. God wishes to draw all His people together into one body, not just to revive the old divisions.

1. The timing of the present move in a period of darkness.

This is significant when we read that the Lord will come back for His bride at “midnight.”

Matthew 25:1 - *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

Matthew 25:6 - *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

2. The truth of God must be realized by His people, who are responsible for making themselves ready for His coming.

Revelation 19:7 - *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

They must submit and respond to this prompting of the Spirit, as the bride submits to her Husband.

Ephesians 5:22 - *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*

While God is at work by His Spirit, He is also asking for an active response from His people to His plan for the return of Christ.

Matthew 24:14 - *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

What is this plan of God, as revealed by history, since the return of Christ to heaven?

We may trace definite stages from church history.

- (1) The original church, ready at any time for His coming, gradually lost its purity and power through sin - not through God's will.

This reached a peak when the Roman Emperor professed conversion and the church/state system grew up with temporal power.

This was followed by the "dark ages" in which only a few individuals kept to the original light of God.

- (2) A.D. 1500.

Martin Luther rediscovered the truth of salvation and justification by faith.

Starting within the church, his message was rejected by the authorities. He was still attached to the old state system of Catholic versus Protestant in geographical divisions following the government of rulers.

His teaching revealed, however, a new aspect of the truth of God and paved the way for national Protestantism and the Church of England. This system, however, is not God's final truth.

- (3) A.D. 1700.

John Wesley brought the new truth of sanctification by faith in that man cannot only escape the penalty of sin hereafter in hell, but also escape the power of sin in the life, enjoying real victory.

His message, too, was rejected by the church authorities within the Church of England and was still limited by the lack of vision on baptism for believers only. Accordingly, he did not see the sanctifying content shown by total immersion and attached holiness to the baptism in the Spirit.

His teaching opened the way for the smaller class meetings led by laymen and the spread of the teaching of holiness through the land. But this was not God's final truth.

(4) A.D. 1800-1900.

Plymouth Brethren went back to the church as being distinct from the state and began to see truth on the believer's baptism and body ministry.

The 1859 revival of holiness and the work of the Salvation Army in giving the church a social conscience, were also vital parts of this new move.

Apart from an abortive move among the Irvingites, there was no large scale realization of the miracle gifts of the Spirit.

This system, scriptural as it was, is not God's final truth.

(5) A.D. 1900.

New Year's Day marked the emergence of tongues as a sign of the baptism in the Spirit in the U.S.A., among a praying group. This spread rapidly across the world so that, in every denomination today, there are an estimate 25 million speaking people speaking in other tongues.

This blessing has crossed denominational barriers and empowered many Christians to see a return to the power of the early church.

Some who have received this blessing came under government by man made systems - specially under wartime pressure - while others, more recently receiving the baptism and going deeper into the gifts of the Spirit, still continue to hope for a revival which will save their own church system from destruction, not realizing that God is building a new church of people ready for Christ, with no spot, in perfect holiness, on a scriptural system!

Song of Solomon 4:7 - *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

2 Corinthians 7:1 - *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

28. YOUR LOCAL CHURCH IS A PART OF THIS GREAT MOVE.

Will you be in it? Or against it?

If God cannot unite His church through blessing, then He may well have to do it through judgment. The alternative rests with us to make the right response.

Will you look round to see what God is doing in your area toward His great plan and fall in with His move or begin to move on your own?

People perish without a clear vision. If we are to fully meet the needs of the world, we ourselves must be in the fulness of the plan of Christ.

Paul prayed for his Ephesian converts, who already had the baptism and many blessings of the Spirit.

It is to this end that God is moving and working today for His greatest day of all - the blessed return of our Lord Jesus Christ for His bride!

Will you be ready on that day? Saved? Sanctified? Spirit baptized? Enjoying fellowship with a New Testament body? Outreaching for souls?

Let us not go back to the previous stages of God's program but reach forward for this great, final denouement!

EXERCISE.

In your own words, give what these Scriptures teach about Christ's bride -

Question 1.

Revelation 21:2 - *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Answer.

The city of God is the bride.

God began this preparation in Eden where, in the garden, we see the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7 - *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

This requires more labor and building than a mere garden and stresses the need of preparation. The various "stones" in this city were brought into place and shaped by the hand of the Lord Jesus. God now comes to live (tabernacle) with men permanently.

Read **Ezekiel 37:25-28**.

John 1:14 - *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Question 2.

2 Corinthians 11:2 - *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Answer.

Christ is the Worker behind the preparation for the wedding.

Paul acts as a friend of the Bridegroom to present the bride to Him.

John 3:29 - *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

His jealousy has God's honor at heart.

1 Kings 19:10 - *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

Paul had labored hard to present the whole church ready for Christ as His coming.

Matthew 25:6 - *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

Read **Ephesians 5:27-32**.

Notice "chaste virgin" is in the singular showing the whole body as one.

Question 3.

Ephesians 5:27 - *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Answer.

The church is presented pure and spotless.

Holiness and glory are inseparable. Christ is preparing His church through gifts and graces of the Spirit for His coming.

Song of Solomon 4:7 - *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

The visible church contains both the clean and unclean.

Read **Matthew 22:10-14.** -

2 Timothy 2:20 - *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.*

But Christ is purifying and preparing it for His coming. Evil will be cut off forever as Christ works.

Matthew 13:47-50 - *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Question 4.

Revelation 19:7 - *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

Answer.

The coming of the marriage of the Lamb is certain.

Read **Revelation 21:2-9.**

This is the final consumation. Perfect union with Him personally and participation in His holiness, joy and power are seen here.

The harlot divides her attention among many lovers, but Christ alone is the object of the church's affection.

A special marriage supper is here -

Revelation 19:9 - *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

This shows public avowal by the Lord.

Read **Matthew 25:1-12**.

Question 5.

2 Peter 3:14 - *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

Answer.

Certain people need to watch that they be found blameless.

God will do much for His bride, but not everything. She must adorn herself and be spotless.

“Found of Him” - in His sight showing a personal interest in the coming of Christ. This is contrasted with present spots and blemishes in the “love feasts.”

2 Peter 2:13 - *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;*

On promises of blameless, see -

1 Corinthians 1:8 - *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 1:10 - *That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

1 Thessalonians 3:13 - *To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23-25 - *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

Our conscience must be clean towards God, fellowmen, and the witness of this will be personal peace.