

***WHAT EVERY
CHRISTIAN
WORKER
SHOULD KNOW***
PART # 1

Teacher Manual

Studies 1 - 13

STEPHEN NEMETH LECTURES

What Every Christian Worker Should Know

Part #1

Teacher Manual

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Stephen Nemeth Lectures

THE WORKER'S PRIVILEGE

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: 1 Chronicles 4:23

Key Verse - **1 Chronicles 4:23** - *These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.*

The key verse of this first study presents us with the theme for the thirteen studies in this series.

We are to think of the importance for a Christian -

- to live in fellowship with the Lord and
- to be engaged in active service for Him.

Both these aspects of the truth are emphasized in the key verse.

In this opening study, we are to think in particular of the immense privilege that we enjoy as Christians, in that we not only dwell with the King but that we are engaged, or should be engaged, in the King's business.

We need to lift these words in **1 Chronicles 4:23** out of their historical setting and translate them into our own experience.

By way of introduction, notice the following: -

As Christians and Christian Workers, We Serve a Glorious King.

He is greater than any earthly king -

1 Timothy 6:15 - *Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;*

Revelation 17:14 - *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

He was born King -

Matthew 2:2 - *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

He declared Himself to be a King -

John 18:37 - *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

And when He died, the inscription over the cross also testified to His kingship -

John 19:19 - *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

What an honour it is to be in the King's service!

As servants of the King, we dwell with Him and He dwells with us.

The word *dwelt* occurs twice in the key verse. The New Testament teaching is found in our Lord's words in -

John 15:4 - *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

An Old Testament illustration is found in -

Psalms 91:1 - *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

The work we are doing is the King's work, not ours.

This is emphasized in -

1 Chronicles 4:23 - *.....there they dwelt with the king for his work.*

We are engaged in the King's business.

1 Samuel 21:8 - *And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because*

the king's business required haste.

Christian service is the Lord's working through Christians who are His servants. To remember this will save us from pride. Any success which results from the work in which we are engaged is due to what God has done.

It will save us from a feeling of helplessness and insufficiency.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 - *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Notice that the key verse contains two central thoughts. Around these we shall gather the rest of this study.

1. ALL WHO DWELL WITH THE KING MUST WORK FOR HIM.

Every Christian has been saved to serve.

1 Chronicles 4:23 - *.....there they dwelt with the king.....*

What for?

1 Chronicles 4:23 - *.....for his work.*

The setting is the king's palace with all the various servants living either in the palace or on the palace grounds.

a. Why did these servants live with or near to the king?

Was it that they might rest and enjoy all the benefits of the royal household? No! They were there as workers.

Why has the Lord saved us?

Certainly that we might enjoy all the immense benefits of His saving grace, but more than that: we have been saved in order that we might serve the Lord, not only now -

Ephesians 2:10 - *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

but throughout eternity -

Revelation 22:3 - *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

Our King needs workers, not shirkers. There is no room for idlers in His kingdom.

Matthew 20:6 - *And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

Are we engaged actively, conscientiously, in the King's business?

b. There are a variety of ways of serving the King.

Notice the words -

1 Chronicles 4:23 - *.....there they dwelt with the king.....*

To whom does the word **they** refer? It refers particularly to -

1 Chronicles 4:23 - *.....These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges:*

There would be all kinds of workers in the King's employ - servants, watchmen, scribes, courtiers, musicians, etc. Also, these men were engaged in humble but very necessary tasks.

This is true in the royal service of the Lord in which we are engaged. Some are preachers, some are teachers, some are musicians, and so on. But each one is necessary if the whole of the King's work is to be accomplished satisfactorily.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 - *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.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of

knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

c. *Just where we are is the place of service.*

Notice the importance of the little word *there* -

1 Chronicles 4:23 -*there* they dwelt with the king for his work.

They served him just where they were.

We are often tempted to think that we could render better service elsewhere. If we are in business, we feel we could serve the Lord better by being freed from our secular calling. If we are in the pottery, in the garden, in the office or in the shop, we think we could be better Christians if we were somewhere else.

The great lesson for us to learn is that every Christian is to be a missionary just where the Lord has placed us. That is the place where He would have us serve Him.

2. *ALL WHO WORK FOR THE KING MUST DWELL WITH HIM.*

1 Chronicles 4:23 -*there* they dwelt with the king.....

What for?

1 Chronicles 4:23 -*for his work.*

This leads us to ask the question: Why must we dwell with the King?

a. *In order to become like Him.*

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.*

We learn that, by gazing upon the King, by being occupied with Him and by living near to Him, we become like Him. This is not by any self-effort on our part, but by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:13 - *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*

b. In order to be trained in His ways.

When the Lord chose His disciples, we read -

Mark 3:13-14 - *And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.*

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

His purpose was that they might be sent forth, but they must be with Him in order that they might learn of Him.

Communion must come before service.

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

c. In order to receive our instructions.

For a good illustration of this, read **Jeremiah 38:1-13**.

And picture Ebed-melech going into the presence of the king to receive his instructions, and then going out to do the rescue work.

d. He wants our fellowship.

John 15:14-15 - *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

The potters and the gardeners would always be servants of the King, and no more. But, we are more! We are friends of the King. If He calls us His friends, it means that He

wants our friendship and fellowship.

This kind of intimate fellowship has to be cultivated.

This is why we must *dwell* with the King.

e. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

John 15:4-5 - *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Surely this emphasizes the absolute necessity of dwelling with the King. If fruit is to result from our fellowship with Him and our service for Him.

We have a wonderful picture in -

Mark 16:19-20 - *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Jesus, our King is in heaven but He is doing His work through His servants. How? By the Holy Spirit.

John 14:12 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

Thus we see in this little verse which is tucked away in **1 Chronicles 4:23**, a brief description of ordinary people, doing humble tasks in the service on their King.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 - *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

THE WORKER'S COMMISSION

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: Matthew 21:28

Key Verse - **Matthew 21:28** -*Son, go work today in my vineyard.*

The Lord's desire and intention for every one of His children is threefold. It is -

First: that they should be holy.

Second: that they should be happy.

Third: that they should be helpful, or useful.

It is in relation to the third of these that we are to consider our Lord's word of commission to us as His servants.

Matthew 21:28 -*Son, go work to day in my vineyard.*

In this commission, there are five significant words, each of which brings before us a vital aspect of truth in relation to the service to which we are called and in which we should be engaged.

Let us examine these five words one at a time. What do they tell us concerning the whole matter of Christian service?

1. SON - describes the basis of Christian service.

It is very important to see that the basis of all true Christian service is relationship with God. This involves being born into His family.

John 3:3 - *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

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.*

Relationship is the first qualification for service.

Sonship must precede service.

It is a sad thing that there are many who are serving the Lord who are not sons, for they have never been born into the family of God.

John 1:11-13 - *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The work of regeneration, of the new birth, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when we are led to trust the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour.

Titus 3:5 - *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

It is only after we are born into the family of God that we are qualified to enter upon God's service in the place of His appointment. How sad it is that unregenerate, unconverted, unsaved people are engaged in Christian work.

2 Timothy 3:5 - *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

Are you a member of God's family, a *son*?

2. GO - describes the authority of Christian service.

What is it that gives anyone the authority to preach the gospel, whether from a pulpit, in the open air, in a class, by word of mouth, by tract, by letter, or by any other way?

Where is our authority for proclaiming and spreading the good news of the gospel? Our authority is in our Lord's little word **Go**. It is the command and commission of the Lord Himself.

Matthew 28:19-20 - *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

We are to go forth and sow the seed making known the way of salvation.

Psalm 126:6 - *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

We are not to be content to keep the good news of salvation to ourselves. If we do so, *we do not well: this day is a day of good tidings.*

2 Kings 7:3-9 - *And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?*

4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

6 For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

Our authority for going to others with the glorious news of God's saving grace is the word of our Lord Himself - **Go**.

Luke 14:23 - *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*

Are you responding to this word of the Lord and going forth into His service?

3. *WORK - describes the nature of Christian service.*

The word is *work* not *shirk*. It is important to emphasize this because it has been said that the work of God is progressing very slowly today because so many Christians are lazy and lacking in holy enthusiasm for the Lord and for the salvation of others.

This is a solemn charge. Is it true?

Matthew 9:36-38 - *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.
37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;
38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

We are ambassadors of the King of kings, but are we really representing Him on this foreign territory of the world where He has placed us?

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 - *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We are workers together with God, in partnership with Him, but are we active or sleeping partners?

2 Corinthians 6:1 - *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

All around us men and women are filled with tremendous enthusiasm for the things that they are doing. Are we enthusiastic for the things of the Lord?

4. *TODAY - describes the time of Christian service.*

For some people it is extraordinarily hard to live in the present. They are always planning ahead and looking forward to this, that or the other thing which is going to happen next week, next month or next year.

This is very exciting but the important thing really is to live for today. This is exactly what the Lord says to us here.

Matthew 21:28 - *.....Son, go work to day in my vineyard.*

Surely this emphasizes the urgency of the task of world evangelization.

John 9:4 - *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

See how our Lord felt about this, and feels about this today.

In many parts of the world, doors are now closed, doors which were once open for the gospel. In many parts of the world, doors which are now open are gradually closing.

Apart from the fact that all the signs of the times point to an increasing darkness which will cover the face of the earth, there is also the pressing and immediate need of multitudes of souls around us who are without Christ and who are, therefore, without hope.

Ephesians 2:12 - *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

Truly, the King's business requires haste!

1 Samuel 21:8 - *And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand*

spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

Compare -

Hebrews 3:7 - *Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,*

5. VINEYARD - describes the sphere of Christian service.

Where are we to serve the Lord when He commissions us?

The answer to this question is that we are to serve the Lord in His vineyard, which means in the place of His choice for us.

If you will place yourself at the Lord's disposal, He will soon show you where and how He would have you serve Him.

Maybe He will call you into a ministry of intercession. Maybe He will delegate some special task to you in connection with your church. Maybe He wants you to train for missionary service. Maybe He wants you to prepare for the Christian ministry.

Who knows? He knows! And, if you are His *son* and if you are really at His disposal, He will show you the sphere of service which He has planned for you.

More than that, in response to your obedience, He will give you all His enabling so that you may fulfil His purpose and engage in the work of His choice.

The need of the lost -

Matthew 9:36 - *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

The need for labourers -

Matthew 9:37 - *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few;*

The way to secure laborers -

Matthew 9:38 - *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.*

There is nothing more wonderful in the whole of life, and certainly nothing more satisfying than this: to be able to say during each day and at the close of each day,

Through His amazing grace, I am working in the Lord's vineyard, in the corner He has appointed for me. I am doing it in dependence upon Him and with His enabling!

Can you say that?

Begin now to live each day in the realization that you are His representative, serving Him just where He has placed you, and that He promises to give you all the enabling you need to represent Him effectively for His glory.

*The Master calls! Arise and go.
How blest His messenger to be!
He Who has given thee liberty,
Now bids thee set the captives free;
Proclaim His mighty power to save,
Who for the world His life-blood gave.*

THE WORKER'S POSTURE

STUDY 3

Scripture Portions: 1 Chronicles 17:16; Luke 10:39

Key Verses -

1 Chronicles 17:16 - *And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

Luke 10:39 - *And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.*

By bringing these two references together, we are at once presented with our theme: the worker's posture, or attitude, in the presence of the Lord. What should it be? It should be the attitude, or posture, of sitting.

There are two places where we sit before the Lord: privately, when we are alone, and publicly, when we meet with His people to worship Him and to serve Him.

It is very easy, of course, just to sit and not really to sit before the Lord. Read -

Matthew 15:8 - *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

for an indication of this terrible possibility!

The trouble with most of us is that we are so much on our feet - hurrying, rushing, working. What we need to do is to sit quietly before the Lord. This is to be our posture.

We need to do this deliberately, by setting aside time for it. We need to do it regularly and frequently.

Matthew 6:6 - *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Compare -

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.

Is there the equivalent of this *sitting before the Lord* in your life?

1. THIS ATTITUDE OF SITTING BEFORE THE LORD
SUGGESTS THREE THINGS.

a. Relaxation.

When we sit, we are in a relaxed position. What need there is for every one of the Lord's servants to know how to relax - physically, mentally and, above all, spiritually!

It is no exaggeration to say that the secret of good health, poise, peace and power in the body, mind and soul, is found in the art and practice of relaxation. This is true with regard to our bodies and our minds. It is also true with regard to our souls.

As we get older, it is good for us if, in addition to our normal amount of rest at night, we can also rest occasionally during the day.

Do you have the equivalent of this in relation to your spiritual life and needs?

b. Submission.

In the case of David and of Mary, their attitude of sitting before the Lord indicated submission. They were *at His feet*.

At whose feet?

At the feet of the King, their Lord and Sovereign.

How great He is and how small they were.

Isaiah 57:15 - *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

Our great need is to get into this place of submission to our Lord where we recognize His majesty and holiness, and where we yield completely to His sovereignty and authority in our lives.

c. *Expectation.*

When David and Mary sat before the Lord, they were expecting that something would happen. Of course, something *did* happen. The very fact that they had sat there in the presence of the King meant that they were never quite the same again.

How could this be?

When Isaiah went into the presence of the Lord, his life was completely changed and his ministry revolutionized.

Isaiah 6:1-8 - *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
3 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.
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:
7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
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.*

Likewise, when we come to sit before the Lord, we come in faith expecting something to happen. What does happen?

2. AS WE SIT BEFORE THE LORD, THREE WONDERFUL THINGS HAPPEN.

a. *We see His face.*

Try to picture David as he sat before the Lord and spoke to Him, and Mary as she sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His word.

When we come to sit before the Lord, it is to worship Him, to recognize His greatness, His glory and His grace. When we look into His face, we are changed into His likeness.

Compare -

Psalm 34:5 - *They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.*

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.*

Perhaps our greatest present need is simply to see the face of Jesus. To see His face will cure our ills, relieve us from our tensions, banish our pride, dispel our jealousies and enable us to live victoriously, happily and effectively to God's glory.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

b. *We hear His word.*

Of course, when David and Mary sat at the feet of the LORD, they spoke to Him. But, what is more important is the fact that He spoke to them! Surely this is our greatest need, to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

Psalm 85:8 - *I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.*

We need to be silent in order to hear what He has to say to us -

(1) *Because we fail and fall and grieve Him, we need to hear and act upon His word in -*

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.*

(2) *Because we wonder whether we have forfeited His love because of our sin and failure, we need to hear and rejoice in His word in -*

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

(3) *Because we wonder whether we have committed the unpardonable sin, we need to hear and rest upon His word in -*

John 10:28-29 - *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

(4) *Because we wonder whether He has forsaken us, we need to hear and lean upon His word in -*

Hebrews 13:5-6 - *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

(5) *Because we wonder about the provision for all our needs in the coming days, we need to hear and believe His word in -*

Philippians 4:19 - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

(6) *Because we wonder why God does not use us more, we need to hear and rely upon His word in -*

Galatians 6:9 - *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

(7) Because we sometimes feel lonely and forsaken when sorrows and trials overwhelm us, we need to hear and find His word in -

Isaiah 41:10 - *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

c. We receive His grace.

King David did. Read **1 Chronicles, chapter 17.**

And Mary did.

Luke 10:38-42 - *Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.*

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

And Paul did.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 - *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And you may receive His grace, indeed, you must if you are to be the Christian God wants you to be.

We need to sit at His feet in order that we might enter into the experience of -

2 Corinthians 9:8 - *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

This study really impresses upon us the importance of cultivating a holy walk with God. It emphasizes the essential requirements in the life of a Christian worker, namely, communion with the Lord Himself.

When General Gordon, the great Christian soldier, was in his tent praying, his men would know that he was alone with his God because of the white handkerchief attached to the entrance to his tent.

This white handkerchief was a warning that no one was to enter and to interrupt the General's interview with his Lord.

Do you have a white handkerchief outside your *tent*?

David the king came and sat before the Lord.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet.

*So, sitting at Thy feet, Lord,
My heart would all its love outpour,
And pray that Thou would'st teach me, Lord,
To love Thee more and more.*

THE WORKER'S CONFESSION

STUDY 4

Scripture Portion: Psalm 22:6

Key Verse -

Psalm 22:6 - *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

Here was a man who felt himself to be just like a worm. That was his estimate of himself.

What is our estimate of ourselves? Do not answer this question too quickly.

If someone called you a worm, you might very well be upset with them for doing so!

But what does God say about it, and how do you feel about it?

As a matter of fact, God's estimate of us is that we are like worms in His sight. The trouble is that we do not easily accept what God says about us.

We like to think of ourselves as important, attractive, adequate, but God says, *No, you are a worm! You are small, feeble, puny and, by nature, you are full of moral corruption.*

Jeremiah 17:9 - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

It is hard to accept this estimate of ourselves because we are so often too proud, too self-important and too full of ourselves.

What we need to do is to cultivate the Christian grace of humility, or recognizing that, of ourselves, we are absolutely nothing and that our place is to get down low at the feet of the Lord Jesus. When we get there, He will say to us what He said to Jacob of old in:-

Isaiah 41:14 - *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

What a wonderful word this is! It is a word that God speaks to us immediately we are willing to get low at His feet and admit our unloveliness and our unworthiness.

What does God promise to do for worms, for His own people who will recognize their weakness and their utter poverty of spirit? Well, notice these answers to this question.

1. FIRST, HE CARES FOR WORMS.

Isaiah 41:14 - *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

Think of the man Jacob. He was just a worm in God's sight. Yet the Lord promised to help him.

Who is this God Who promises to help this worm? He is, according to this verse, *the Holy One of Israel.*

Is that all?

No, look again at this verse - He is -

Isaiah 41:14 - *.....the Holy One of Israel.*

This should fill us with wonder, love and praise.

We are so insignificant and so unlovely and repulsive in ourselves, yet the Holy One Himself cares for us enough to become our Redeemer. He shed His blood for us upon Calvary in order to deliver us from sin, death and hell.

1 Peter 1:18-19 - *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*

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

How much the Lord must have cared for us to send His own Son to redeem us - to redeem a worm like you and like me!

Yes, God cares for worms!

2. GOD ALSO SPEAKS TO WORMS.

Notice the words in -

Isaiah 41:14 -*saith the LORD*,.....

Does God speak to worms? If so, what does He say?

Think of Him, the great Creator, the Lord, the High and Lofty One - does He speak to a worm?

He does, and the special thing He says is -

Isaiah 41:14 -*Fear not*,

He speaks a word to banish our fear and a word of promise that He will give us His help.
He says -

Isaiah 41:14 - *Fear not*,.....*I will help thee*,.....

You see, worms are not only in special need of help but they are especially ready to hear what God is saying and to receive His help.

It is when we come to the end of our own supposed strength, ability and resources that we are ready to cry out to God and to ask for and to receive the help which He is ready to give us.

So, if you are a worm, rejoice in this, that God not only loves and cares for worms, but that He speaks to worms.

3. THEN, GOD TRANSFORMS WORMS.

Look again at -

Isaiah 41:14 -*thou worm Jacob*,.....

To whom is it addressed?

It is addressed to Jacob, and Jacob was his real name. It was Jacob who was transformed

by the Lord and re-named Israel. Jacob, the supplanter, became Israel, *a prince with God.*

Genesis 32:24-30 - *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

25 *And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*

26 *And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

27 *And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.*

28 *And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*

29 *And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.*

30 *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*

What a wonderful transformation this was! But it is an illustration of what the Lord has always done in the lives of His people, and of what He is ready to do in your life.

Think how wonderfully He transformed -

the life of Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 - *And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,*

11 *In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,*

12 *And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.*

the life of David -

Acts 13:22 - *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.*

the life of Isaiah -

Isaiah 6:1-8 - *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

2 *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face,*

and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 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.

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:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

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.

the life of Jonah -

Jonah 3:1-2 - *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,*

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

the life of Peter -

Luke 22:32 - *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

and the life of Paul -

Acts 9:1 - *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,*

Acts 9:5-6 - *And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

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.

Acts 9:17-18 - *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.

God can take a Jacob and turn him into an Israel.

God transforms worms.

4. ANOTHER THING: GOD USES WORMS.

Isaiah 41:15-16 - *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.*

16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

God is still speaking to His people, whom He calls Jacob, the worm. He is telling them that, although they are in insignificant little worm, He will make them an instrument in His hands and, through them, He will do great and mighty things.

God will do this. Jacob will only be the instrument.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul meant when he said -

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 - *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Corinthians 4:7 - *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

It takes some of us a long time to learn the lesson that it is God Who is the Worker and we are only the instruments in His hands.

The instrument may be very small and insignificant, but, when God takes it up, He exercises His power mightily and accomplishes something great for His praise and glory.

How worthwhile it is to take our place low at His feet, for then the Lord will lift us up and use us.

Compare -

John 3:30 - *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

1 Peter 5:5-6 - *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

5. FINALLY, GOD EXALTS WORMS.

We learn this from the last part of -

Isaiah 41:16 - *.....thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

The Lord is still speaking to and of Jacob, the worm.

It is a great moment in the life of any Christian when he recognizes his union with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies.

Ephesians 2:6 - *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Compare -

Isaiah 33:16 - *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*

Then, and then only, is he willing to be lost sight of to *glory in the Holy One* alone, and to give Him the preeminence.

Colossians 1:18 - *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

In concluding this study, notice that it is only when we are willing to get down, down, down low at the feet of our Lord, as a mere worm in His sight, that we are enabled to enter into the glorious reality of the truth that God cares for us, speaks to us, transforms us, uses us and exalts us.

Notice also that **Psalm 22** is a Messianic Psalm and that the words in -

Psalm 22:6 - *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

are words which refer to our Saviour Himself Who was willing to be completely identified with us in our contempt, our littleness, our weakness and our moral corruption (though He Himself knew no sin), in order that we might be lifted up.

*Alas, and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*

*Was it for crimes that I have done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree. (Isaac Watts)*

THE WORKER'S IMPORTANT LESSON

STUDY 5

Scripture Portion: John 3:30

Key Verse - **John 3:30** - *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

The lesson we all have to learn is that Jesus is everything and we are nothing. John the Baptist was very keen to learn this truth more and more and to experience the reality and power of it in his own life.

In this chapter, the Lord Jesus is presented as -

the Son of Man -

John 3:13 - *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

the Atoning Saviour -

John 3:14 - *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:*

the Bestower of eternal life -

John 3:15 - *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

the Son of God -

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

the Anointed One -

John 3:28 - *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.*

the Bridegroom -

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.*

the One Who is above all -

John 3:31 - *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.*

the One Who must increase in our estimate and in His control of our lives.

John the Baptist was a remarkable man. He had a supernatural birth.

Luke 1:7 - *And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.*

Luke 1:13 - *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.*

Luke 1:18 - *And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.*

Luke 1:24 - *And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,*

Luke 1:57 - *Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.*

He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth -

Luke 1:15 - *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*

His ministry was predicted in the Old Testament. He was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus.

Isaiah 40:3 - *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

During the period of his ministry, he was right in the limelight, but, suddenly there came a change.

When Jesus began His public ministry, all the attention was focused away from John and on to the Person of the Lord Himself.

John's disciples were upset about this.

John 3:25-26 - *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

But John had the answer -

John 3:27-30 - *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

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.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

The Lord Jesus was to increase, but John was to decrease.

What have these challenging words to say to us?

They immediately place before us several propositions.

2. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A CHRISTIAN TO BE CHRIST-FILLED OR SELF-FILLED: FOR CHRIST TO BE ON THE THRONE OR FOR SELF TO BE ON THE THRONE.

When we read the New Testament, we see at once that there are two kinds of Christians spoken of there -
the carnal and the spiritual -

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 - *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

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?*

4 *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

the conquered and the conquerors -

Romans 7:18-25 - *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

19 *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

20 *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

21 *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

22 *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

24 *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

25 *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

those who are vessels unto dishonour and those who are vessels unto honour -

2 Timothy 2:20-21 - *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.*

21 *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

those who walk carelessly and those who walk worthily -

Colossians 1:10 - *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the Spirit -

Romans 8:2 - *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

or, in other words, those in whose lives self is increasing, or Christ is increasing. This is very solemn, for we all come somewhere in these categories.

3. THE WORDS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST PINPOINT WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN.

What is a Christian?

A Christian is: CHRIST - IN.

When the Lord Jesus crosses the threshold of a man's life, that man becomes a Christian, but is that the end of the matter?

NO!

He Who comes in, waits to fill that life and to increase in that life until He truly possesses, dominates and controls that life;

- not only to be resident but to be President,

- not only to have a place or to be prominent, but to be pre-eminent in the life,

or to sum up -

that He should increase and that we should go down.....Down.....DOWN.....and decrease.

This is the meaning of -

Galatians 4:19 - *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*

Ephesians 3:19 - *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3 - *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

4. THESE WORDS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ALSO DESCRIBE THE DEEP LONGING OF EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN.

O, that self, this ugly self, might decrease and that Christ might increase!

This is not the world's philosophy but it is heaven's philosophy. It is, moreover, God's provision - that this old sinful self should be right out of the picture and that Christ Himself should fill us, possess us and dominate us.

In Theodore Monod's hymn,

verse 1 ends with the words - *ALL OF SELF, AND MORE OF THEE.*

verse 2 ends with - *SOME OF SELF, AND SOME OF THEE.*

verse 3 ends with - *LESS OF SELF, AND MORE OF THEE.*

and the hymn concludes with - *NONE OF SELF, AND ALL OF THEE.*

This expresses the desire of every true Christian.

Another of our hymns puts it like this:

*My Saviour, Thou hast offered best,
Oh, give it then to me:
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee.*

When William Carey was dying, he turned to a friend and said,

*When I am gone, do not talk about William Carey. Talk about William Carey's Saviour.
I desire alone that Christ might be magnified.*

The Apostle Paul possessed this same desire. To begin with, he spoke of himself as the least of the apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:9 - *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

later as the least of all saints!

Ephesians 3:8 - *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;*

Later still he spoke of himself as the CHIEF of sinners.-

1 Timothy 1:15 - *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

And he, whose real name was Saul (which means *great*), became known everywhere as Paul (which means *little*).

Acts 13:9 - *Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him.*

5. THE LORD JESUS CAN ONLY INCREASE IN US AS SELF DECREASES IN US.

These two words, *increase* and *decrease*, are words of degree. One translator makes them read - He must wax and I must wane.

And another - He must grow greater, and I must grow less.

It was Tauler who said,

In what measure a man dies to himself and grows out of himself, in the same measure does Christ enter into him.

This might be described as the ***Spiritual Law of Displacement***. His love increases as my lack of love decreases.

The same is true of His life, His humility, His purity, His gentleness and His beauty.

He can only increase as I decrease. But how can I decrease so that Christ can increase?

This is the heart of the problem. How can self be conquered?

5. HOW CAN I DECREASE AND CHRIST INCREASE?

The answer is not by struggling and striving and special efforts of will-power. Self cannot be dealt with in that way. There is a threefold secret.

a. *We must die to ourselves.*

This is what Paul meant in -

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.*

In God's reckoning, every Christian died with Christ on the cross. But we must do some reckoning.

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

*How may I know the victory,
So many cry;
Commit thyself to Calvary -
Consent to die!*

b. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit Who forms Christ in the believer and Who frees the believer from sin and self.

Read carefully the following references.

Romans 8:2-5 - *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 - *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

and remember that walking is a moment-by-moment experience of dependence upon the Lord.

c. *We must delight in the Lord.*

John the Baptist spoke of the Bridegroom -

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.*

We are the Lord's bride and He is our Bridegroom, for we are married to Him -

Romans 7:4 - *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

It is as we cultivate a closer walk with our Beloved that He will increase and we shall decrease.

Joan was a nice girl, but she was completely self-centered. Everything had to go round Joan and what Joan wanted and what Joan was. It was all Joan, Joan, Joan!

Then one day Joan met John, a fine fellow. They fell in love and got married. Joan was absolutely transformed. Her whole life became completely John-centered.

She so loved John that, somehow or other, she was not now living unto herself. John filled her horizon and her whole heart and life went out in love and devotion to him.

She decreases and he increased.

This is the lesson we all have to learn.

THE WORKER'S CONFLICT

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: Colossians 2:1

Key Verse - **Colossians 2:1** - *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.*

The Apostle Paul had never seen the Christians at Laodicea and Colosse face to face, yet, in writing to them, he spoke of his very deep concern for their spiritual welfare and of the burden that rested upon his heart for their spiritual and eternal well-being. What an unveiling of the apostle's heart this is!

Paul, of course, is a model for every minister, pastor, leader and worker in the Lord's vineyard. Although we can never hope to equal his example, yet we may well seek grace to follow his example.

It would be well for each one of us who is a servant of the Lord to ask at once:

Have I any real concern for the souls in my care? for those to whom I minister in the name of the Lord privately or in public?

Do I experience any conflict in relation to their spiritual well-being? How deep is my concern for them?

We are told seven things about this conflict of which the apostle speaks in

-

Colossians 2:1-5 - *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

1. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT.

What kind of a conflict was this? To what was Paul referring to in **verse 1**?

It was not primarily a physical conflict, it was spiritual, mental and emotional. The great heart of the apostle yearned over the Christians at Laodicea and Colosse. This yearning issued forth in a volume of intercessory prayer on their behalf.

Paul's conflict was a burden of spiritual desire that streamed forth in prayer for the blessing of the Lord to rest upon those who had been converted through his ministry, or who had been entrusted to his spiritual care. Such conflict, of course, does affect the body.

Doubtless, the guards in Paul's hired house -

Acts 28:30 - *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.*

not only heard the apostle pray, but they saw him pray as he lifted his arms towards heaven and as his whole being seemed to tremble as he poured forth his petitions.

Do we know anything of such a conflict for others who are so dependent upon us to pray them through?

Romans 9:1-3 - *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

2. THE INTENSITY OF THE CONFLICT.

Notice that the apostle speaks in **verse 1**, about the *great conflict*..... he had for the Christians at Colosse and Laodicea. This suggests the idea of intensity.

The prayer that filled the apostle's heart and mind was not a passing, light kind of prayer. It was a heavy burden. Indeed, the Greek word gives the thought that it was an agony.

In his writings, the apostle frequently referred to the Greek races and games. This idea is contained in the following references -

1 Corinthians 9:24-26 - *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.

1 Timothy 6:12 - *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

Hebrews 12:1 - *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

How intense is the effort put forth by the racer or the wrestler - and how intense must be the conflict in which Christians engage if they are to win through in prayer for blessing upon those for whom they have a spiritual concern!

The word *conflict* suggests that there are obstacles in the way. So there are.

Ephesians 6:12 - *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Colossians 1:29 - *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

3. THE SUBJECTS OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:1 - *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.*

It is important to notice that the apostle is not here speaking of a concern for the unsaved but for the saved, for those who were babes in Christ and who needed to grow to maturity.

Colossians 1:28 - *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

We frequently hear of the need for Christians to possess *a passion for souls*. This need is very great indeed. We mean by this expression that Christians should possess a passion for winning others to Christ.

But Paul is speaking of something more than this. He undoubtedly had a passion for the salvation of sinners -

Romans 10:1 - *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

But he also had a passion for the sanctification of the saints, a passion for the spiritual welfare of those who had been converted and needed to go on, and on, and on in the Christian life.

Do we share this concern for the welfare of the babes in Christ? There would be fewer *losses* from our assemblies and memberships if more Christians knew more of this kind of conflict.

4. THE NECESSITY OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:4 - *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

The apostle tells us why he felt it such an urgent and imperative matter to wage a prayer warfare for his fellow-believers. They were in great danger of being turned aside by false doctrine. Indeed, some of them had already been turned aside.

This placed a heavy burden of concern upon the apostle that this undermining work of the enemy should be arrested.

Colossians 2:8 - *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Do such dangers exist today? They certainly do!

Christians everywhere are faced with the subtle dangers of humanistic philosophies that discount the power of God and the wisdom of God. Oftentimes such philosophies are put out in the name of so-called scholarship.

In addition to the unbelief of many professing Christian teachers and leaders, there is the

presence on every hand of false cults.

Paul felt that, if someone did not engage in a conflict for the deliverance and protection of these babes in Christ, they would be beguiled and moved away from their firm standing in Christ.

Do we feel the same?

5. THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFLICT.

Paul expressed his feeling of concern in the prayer of intercession.

Colossians 2:2-3 - *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

The apostle prayed that they might be blessed in five ways.

a. That they might be ENCOURAGED.

The word *comforted* means *encouraged* -

Colossians 2:2 - *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*

Discouragement is the first enemy that attacks the new convert.

b. That they might be ENAMORED.

Paul prayed that their hearts might be -

Colossians 2:2 - *.....knit together in love.....*

There is safety for us in loving and in being loved.

c. That they might be ENRICHED.

Paul prayed that they might be -

Colossians 2:2 -*knit together in love, and unto all riches.....*

Ephesians 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*

Colossians 2:9-10 - *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.*

d. That they might be ESTABLISHED.

Paul prayed that they might have -

Colossians 2:2 -*the full assurance of understanding.....*

Compare -

1 Thessalonians 1:5 - *For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*

Hebrews 6:11 - *And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*

e. That they might be ENLIGHTENED.

Paul prayed that they might -

Colossians 2:2 -*the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
that they might discover their all in Christ -

Colossians 2:3 - *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

6. THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:5 - *For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*

Though Paul was separated from these Christians by a long distance geographically, he was actually with them in spirit. As one translator rendered it -

I am by your side, watching you like a proud father.

What a joy it brought to Paul to see his prayers answered in the lives of those for whom he prayed.

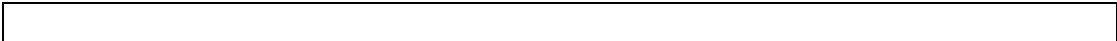
7. THE SECRET OF THE CONFLICT.

Who is sufficient for these things?

How can we be faithful in exercising this ministry of loving concern for others?

The answer is in -

2 Corinthians 3:5 - *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.*



THE WORKER'S PERIL

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: Luke 9:55

Key Verse -

Luke 9:55 - *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

It was to His own disciples that our Lord spoke these solemn and searching words. They contain a rebuke. In this study we shall look upon them as the key that unlocks this ninth chapter of Luke's Gospel.

What do our Lord's challenging words tell us?

They tell us that it is possible to know the Lord, to belong to Him, to be His servant, friend and follower, and yet to be out of touch and out of fellowship with Him. In other words, to have a wrong spirit.

These twelve men to whom our Lord was speaking, had been chosen and called by Him. They had enjoyed His intimate fellowship for over two years.

Yet their hearts did not really beat in harmony with His heart. Their spirits did not blend with Him. Their outlook was quite different from His. In many ways, they were altogether unlike Him. Their feelings and sympathies were contrary to His.

We, too, have been called and chosen by Him. Perhaps we have walked in fellowship with Him for many years,, yet it may be true that, in many respects, we are out of touch, out of harmony and out of sympathy with Him. We are so unlike Him, for we have a wrong spirit and the Lord has to rebuke us and say, *Your spirit is wrong.*

In this chapter, we shall notice seven ways in which the disciple of the Lord may be characterized by a wrong spirit.

1. THE PROFESSIONAL OR OFFICIAL SPIRIT.

Luke 9:12 - *And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.*

These disciples had been commissioned by the Lord to evangelize. They had actually been engaged in that task -

Luke 9:6 - *And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.*

But, how strange it was that when they had a glorious opportunity to preach the gospel to a great crowd, their only thought was to -

Luke 9:12 - *.....Send the multitude away.....*

How different was our Lord's loving concern.

Luke 9:13 - *But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.*

Here we see a great danger which faces every servant of the Lord, the danger of professionalism. It is so possible to go through all the motions of our service for the Lord, whether it be preaching, teaching or visiting and for our service to lack soul and heart and reality.

2. THE IMPULSIVE, UNDISCIPLINED SPIRIT.

Luke 9:33 - *And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.*

How impulsive Peter was at this particular time. He frequently said and did things, then wished he could recall his words and cancel out his actions.

John 18:26 - *One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?*

Notice the last five words in -

Luke 9:33 -*not knowing what he said.*

Peter was out of touch and spiritually blind.

He suggested building three tabernacles. In making this suggestion, he missed the deep significance of the occasion because he was only concerned about the external things.

We are often like that. We are concerned about the crowd, the grand music, the good offerings, etc., when all the time we, like Peter, are without any depth in our spiritual experience.

3. THE FAITHLESS AND PRAYERLESS SPIRIT.

Luke 9:37-41 - *And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.*

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

What had happened to these disciples?

The Lord had given them -

Luke 9:1 -*power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.*

but now they were completely powerless and ineffective. Certainly they were out of touch with their Lord, so much so that Jesus had to say to them -

Luke 9:41 -*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.*

Matthew 17:19-21 - *Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?*

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

There were two reasons for their powerlessness: the first was unbelief, and the second was prayerlessness. The result of these two things is always powerlessness.

Many Christians fail just here. They do not really believe God. They do not really pray, then they wonder why nothing happens.

The reason that nothing, or very little happens, is that there is a wrong spirit, a faithless and prayerless spirit.

4. THE BLIND, UNDISCERNING SPIRIT.

Luke 9:44-45 - *Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Somehow or other, although these disciples had been with the Lord for so long, they were still unable to receive the truth that He longed to impart to them.

John 16:12 - *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

They were still spiritual babes with little capacity for the deeper truths that our Lord would impart to them. They were immature and undeveloped.

Insofar that this was true of them, their spirit was wrong and their hearts were not beating in true harmony with that of their Lord.

How easy it is for any of us to be like this. How greatly we need the enlightenment which the Holy Spirit waits to give to the humble and believing Christian!

1 Corinthians 2:10 - *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

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.*

5. THE SELF-SEEKING, AMBITIOUS SPIRIT.

Luke 9:46 - *Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.*

This is a horrible spirit. Who would have thought that these disciples, in the presence of the meek and lowly One, would act this way?

What a contradiction of terms - a proud, self-important, self-assertive, self-seeking disciple of Christ?

Is it possible that you are like that?

Notice what Jesus did in dealing with this wrong spirit. Read carefully -

Luke 9:47-48 - *And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,
48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*

Notice that He knew exactly what was going on in their hearts, just as He knows the thoughts of our hearts.

What a horrible, evil spirit is this proud, self-seeking, ambitious spirit! Pray earnestly for deliverance from it.

6. THE SECTARIAN SPIRIT.

Luke 9:49-50 - *And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us.
50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.*

It is possible to be intensely jealous of one's ecclesiastical and denominational position and yet to be completely out of touch with the Lord Himself. These verses should caution us to be large-hearted and generous in our sympathies.

Let us always remember that God has His own true children who meet and worship in many different assemblies, denominations and churches. Concerning all these truly born again, blood-washed children of His, the Lord says -

Galatians 3:28 - *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

7. THE VINDICTIVE, INTOLERANT SPIRIT.

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?*

Now read -

Luke 9:55-56 - *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

Religious intolerance is one of the most dreadful things imaginable. It leads to bitterness and faction. It most certainly always blocks the way to revival.

We must certainly, in this day of apostasy -

Jude 3 - *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

But also heed -

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.*

Thus we have considered seven wrong spirits which characterized the twelve disciples. In all probability, they characterize us in some measure. Do they?

Has the Lord shown us that our spirit is contrary to His and that, although we have loved Him and serviced Him, perhaps for many years, oftentimes we are unlike Him and out of touch with Him.

Let us search and try our ways; confess our sins and failures; and pray David's prayers which are recorded in -

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

Psalms 19:14 - *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

THE WORKER'S MARKS

STUDY 8

Scripture Portion: Galatians 6:17

Key Verse -

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

The Apostle Paul wore a badge which marked him out as being a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Is there anything about us which marks us out as belonging to Christ and which identifies us with Him?

The word **I** in our key verse is emphatic in the Greek. Does this mean that Paul was boasting?

No, for, in this epistle, Paul was vindicating his ministry because many of the Jewish teachers had led the Galatian Christians to believe that he was not truly an apostle as he had not known the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh.

So Paul compared himself with these judaizing teachers, who were subverting the Galatian believers. He asked, *Have they the marks of the Lord Jesus upon them? No? But I have!*

What is the proof of our attachment to Christ? Is it the words we speak? Yes, but there should be other distinctive marks about our lives which identify us as Christians.

6. THE LITERAL EXPLANATION OF THE APOSTLE'S STATEMENT.

What did Paul mean when he said that he bore the marks of the Lord Jesus in his body?

Paul had in mind a common custom in the olden days, namely, that of branding certain people with a hot, searing iron. For example - slaves were branded as a mark of ownership, or as a mark of shame. If a slave ran away and was recaptured, his master would brand him as a mark of shame and ignominy.

Soldiers also were branded as a mark of allegiance to their generals. Religious devotees would frequently be branded by the priests in some heathen temples as a mark of devotion and fidelity.

The brand marks of the Lord Jesus upon the body of Paul consisted of each of these. The marks on his body identified him as a slave of Christ -

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.*

They were also the marks of shame and reproach in the eyes of the world -

1 Corinthians 9:22 - *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

They were brand marks of the soldier -

2 Timothy 4:7 - *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

And they were marks of devotion and fidelity -

2 Corinthians 5:14 - *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.*

But what were the actual marks?

They were the bodily scars and blemishes that he bore as the result of persecutions which he had encountered because of his faithfulness to Christ. A description of the fearful physical suffering which the apostle endured are listed in -

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 - *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night

and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Notice five kinds of suffering mentioned.

a.in prisons more frequent.....

Compare -

Acts 16:23 - *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.*

Ephesians 3:1 - *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.*

b.in deaths oft...

Paul was often exposed to death. It seems that, on one occasion, he was actually killed. God mercifully raised him up.

Acts 14:19-20 - *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Compare with -

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 - *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.*

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth).

4 *How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

c.five times received I forty stripes save one...

These were inflicted with a long leather strap divided into thongs. To each thong were attached stones or pieces of metal. Thus the back would soon be lacerated with deep, jagged wounds.

d. Thrice.....beaten with rods.....

This method of punishment was inflicted upon Paul and Silas at Philippi.

Acts 16:22-23 - *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

23 *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.*

e.once was I stoned.....

Large boulders, as heavy as a man could lift, would be hurled at the victim until his body was reduced to a pulp.

This descriptive passage of scripture explains the marks on Paul's body, the brand marks of the Lord Jesus.

Do these scars put us to shame?

Most of us want to be easy-going Christians. We know little of suffering for Christ's sake.

Let us exercise a loving sympathy for those in many lands today who are suffering much at the hands of men, who are, for their Lord's sake, bearing in their body *the marks of the Lord Jesus*.

Let us pray that, should we be called upon at any future date to suffer shame for His name, we may be given grace to be faithful even unto death.

Acts 5:40-42 - *And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.*

41 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.

Revelation 2:10 - *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

7. THE SPIRITUAL APPLICATION OF THE APOSTLE'S STATEMENT.

The immediate application of Paul's words cannot be made to many of us. But there is a spiritual application which applies to each and all who are Christ's true disciples.

Just as those physical marks branded Paul as one of Christ's slaves, as His property, as His soldier and as His follower, so there should be upon us spiritual marks which brand us as belonging to Him.

What are the marks of the Lord Jesus which should characterize every Christian?

a. A cluster of fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

These are the marks of the Lord Jesus for He personified them all. As we are united with Him by faith, these marks, which so completely characterized His life, will characterize ours.

b. A spirit of meekness.

Galatians 6:1 - *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

This is one of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned above, but it is such an important characteristic of the real Christian, we give it special and separate emphasis. The opposite of this spirit of meekness is mentioned in -

Galatians 5:26 - *Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Compare -

Matthew 11:28-30 - *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

c. A willingness to share the burdens of others.

Galatians 6:2 - *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

What a true mark of the Lord Jesus this is for He so constantly bore the burden of others. If we follow in His steps, we shall do likewise.

d. A willingness to help support those who minister.

Galatians 6:6 - *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

Compare -

1 Corinthians 9:7-15 - *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

9 *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

10 *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

11 *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

12 *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*

13 *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*

14 *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

15 *But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.*

e. A life made up of well doing.

Galatians 6:9-10 - *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

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

Do we go about *doing good*?

Acts 10:38 - *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

f. A complete separation from the world.

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.*

If the marks of the Lord Jesus are upon us, we shall recognize that, while we are in the world, we are not of it. We shall see to it that His prayer for us is fulfilled.

John 17:15-16 - *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

g. A glorying in the cross.

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.*

What does this mean?

We shall glory in the preaching of the cross, the story of the cross and, above all, in the victory of the cross. For it is through the cross of Jesus that we are saved and sanctified. But think what the cross meant to the Lord Jesus. In what sense did He glory in the cross?

The cross to Him was the token of God's will for Him and He gloried in doing the will of His Father.

This is the supreme mark of the Lord Jesus which should be upon His followers. The will of God was the consuming passion of His life. It should be the consuming passion in the life of each one of His followers.

Luke 22:42 - *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

Let us ask the Lord that He will honour us by placing upon us *the marks of the Lord Jesus*, so that others may readily see Whose we are and Whom we serve, until the time comes when we are able to say with the apostle -

2 Timothy 4:6-8 - *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

THE WORKER'S VICTORY

STUDY 9

Scripture Portion: **Ephesians 6:10**

Key Verse - **Ephesians 6:10** - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

The Christian life is a victorious life. Christian servants are to serve the Lord victoriously. They are to be -

Ephesians 6:10 - *.....strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

These words introduce our theme which is amplified for us in **Ephesians 6:10-19**.

In his epistles, the Apostle Paul speaks of the Christian life under a number of suggestive metaphors. For example, in this letter to the Ephesians, his favourite designation of the Christian life is that it is a walk.

Compare the following references in **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:*

2:10 - *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

4:1 - *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

4:17 - *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

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 sweet smelling savor.*

5:8 - *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

5:15 - *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

Wives -

Ephesians 5:22-24 - *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*

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.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Husbands -

Ephesians 5:25-31 - *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.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Children -

Ephesians 6:1-3 - *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*

2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Fathers -

Ephesians 6:4 - *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Servants -

Ephesians 6:5-8 - *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of

God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Masters -

Ephesians 6:9 - *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

All these people are told how to walk!

But, suddenly, the apostle changes the metaphor.

Ephesians 6:10 - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

He introduces us to something of the sterner side of the Christian life. He tells us that there is a fight to be fought, that we have a powerful enemy to face and that we can only be -

Romans 8:37 - *.....more than conquerors.....*

as we -

Ephesians 6:11 - *Put on the whole armor of God.....*

What Paul is emphasizing is the fact that, we as Christians, are not only saints -

Ephesians 1:1 - *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*

children -

Ephesians 1:5 - *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

believers -

Ephesians 1:13 - *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*

and servants -

Ephesians 6:5 - *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.*

but we are also soldiers.

Compare -

Ephesians 6:11 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

1 Timothy 6:12 - *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

As soldiers, we are in a conflict and we have to fight.

1 Timothy 6:12 - *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

2 Timothy 4:7 - *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

Moreover, if we are to be victorious soldiers in God's army, we must understand the nature of the conflict in which we are engaged, the character of our enemy and the absolute necessity of putting on our armour.

1. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT.

Some people seem to have the idea that the Christian life is a kind of picnic, that it is an easy, joyful, happy thing all the time to be in the service of Christ.

A study of the apostle's words in this section of scripture, however, will soon dispel any

such ideas.

Consider the nature of the conflict in which we are engaged.

a. *It is a real warfare.*

It is a literal fight against a literal enemy. Notice that the word *against* occurs six times in -

Ephesians 6:11-12 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

b. *It is a conflict between real antagonists.*

Who are they?

The Lord on the one hand -

Ephesians 6:10 - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

and *the devil* on the other hand -

Ephesians 6:11 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

The soldiers, or allies, of the Lord are described as *brethren* in -

Ephesians 6:10 - *Finally, my brethren,.....*

and as *saints* in -

Ephesians 6:18 - *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*

The allies of Satan are described in -

Ephesians 6:12 - *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual*

wickedness in high places.

c. *It is a fierce conflict.*

Ephesians 6:12 - *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

shows us how deadly a fight it is.

d. *It is a hand-to-hand conflict.*

You and I are in the conflict. Our part is to -

Ephesians 6:12 - *.....wrestle.....*

This implies close-up fighting.

e. *It is a spiritual conflict.*

It is as literal as any battle against *flesh and blood*. But it is ten thousand times more deadly, for it is a conflict not with the human and visible but with the superhuman and invisible.

Luke 12:4 - *And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.*

This is not far-fetched or fanciful. It is God's revealed truth. Let us accept it, for only by so doing shall we be fortified for the fray and spurred on to -

Ephesians 6:11 - *Put on the whole armor of God.....*

2. THE CHARACTER OF THE ENEMY.

Here again, many Christians have an unscriptural concept of their great enemy, the devil. From this portion of scripture, we learn three things about him.

a. *He is a real person.*

Today his personality is often questioned, but scripture never does this. The names given to Satan indicate personality. The actions attributed to him imply personality: deceiver, liar, murderer, accuser, tempter, prince, etc.

Compare the following references.

Job 1:6 - *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Isaiah 14:12 - *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*

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.*

Matthew 6:13 - *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Matthew 9:34 - *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

Matthew 10:25 - *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

Matthew 25:41 - *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angel.*

Luke 4:12 - *And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

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.*

John 12:31 - *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

2 Corinthians 2:11 - *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

1 Thessalonians 2:18 - *Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.*

1 Thessalonians 3:5 - *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.*

b. He occupies an exalted position.

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.*

indicates his control as prince and ruler over evil spirits.

John 12:31 - *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

John 14:30 - *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

John 16:11 - *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

show his domination in the lives of -

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.*

He has a kingdom -

Matthew 12:26 - *And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*

He is -

2 Corinthians 4:4 - *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

He counterfeits true Christianity -

1 Corinthians 10:20-21 - *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

2 Corinthians 11:14 - *And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

Revelation 2:9 - *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

c. He is very powerful.

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.*

His power is subtle -

2 Corinthians 11:14 - *And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

sinister -

Colossians 1:13 - *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

active -

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:*

supernatural -

2 Thessalonians 2:9 - *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*

and destructive -

Hebrews 2:14 - *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*

One of the first requirements, if we are to be victorious in Christian living and in serving the Lord, is that we should know our enemy and something of his power and strategy.

What, then, is the secret of victory?

3. SECRET OF VICTORY.

Ephesians 6:10-18 - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

reveals the following threefold secret.

a. *We must recognize our standing in Christ.*

Go through -

Ephesians 6:10 - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

word by word. Notice that we are only strong *in the Lord*. There is no strength or ability to wage this warfare apart from the strength which is ours in Him.

We are to stand and withstand, not in our own strength but in His strength.

Compare **verses 11, 13 and 14**.

b. *We must accept our protection from Christ.*

This protection provided by Him is described in **verses 11-13** as *the whole armor of God*.

Five pieces are for defensive warfare and one only is for offensive warfare. Notice that there is no protection for the back, because (to change the figure) -

Luke 9:62 - *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

Our part, as **verse 11** makes clear, is to *put on* these pieces of armor.

(1) *the girdle of truth, verse 14.*

As the girdle encompassed the soldier, so truth must encompass our whole life.

Psalms 51:6 - *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*

John 8:32 - *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

3 John 4 - *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

There must be no hypocrisy, no unreality, no insincerity and no compromise.

(2) **the breastplate of righteousness, verse 14.**

This covers very vital organs. We must stand firm in Christ Who is our righteousness. We must be righteous in our life.

1 John 3:7 - *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

(3) **the shoes of preparedness, verse 15.**

When tempted and tried, we are sustained by the experience of -

Isaiah 26:3 - *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Philippians 4:7 - *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

(4) **the shield of faith, verse 16.**

Just as the shield can protect each part of the body, so faith must operate in respect to each part of our life. We are literally to live by faith -

Romans 1:17 - *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

2 Corinthians 5:7 - *(For we walk by faith, not by sight.)*

(5) **the helmet of salvation, verse 17.**

An unprotected mind is a ready prey to Satan's deceptions, delusions and defilements.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

(6) the sword of the Spirit, verse 17.

To see how to use the sword against the enemy, read -

Matthew 4:4-10 - *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

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.

Compare -

Hebrews 4:12 - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

c. We must maintain our communion with Christ.

This is brought before us in -

Ephesians 6:18 - *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*

It underlines something which is absolutely essential for real victory - *All prayer, at all seasons, with all perseverance.*

THE WORKER'S CONFIDENCE

STUDY 10

Scripture Portion: Romans 14:8

Key Verse -

Romans 14:8 - *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

This study is based upon the latter portion of this verse.

In this chapter of the Roman epistle the apostle expounds what might be called the Christian's fraternal responsibilities - that is, the responsibilities the Christian has towards other Christians.

The words in **verse 8**, however, are vital. They provide us with a practical and challenging theme for study.

They declare the fact that, if we are the Lord's, if we belong to Him having acknowledged His sovereignty in our lives, we should be able and glad to say with complete confidence -

Romans 14:8 - *.....whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

We do not know what the future holds for us except that it must, in the very nature of things, be full of uncertainty.

Compare -

Psalms 90:9-10 - *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.*

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Proverbs 27:1 - *Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

James 4:13-15 - *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:*

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

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

1 Peter 1:24 - *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

What we do know, however, is that -

Romans 14:8 - *.....whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

As one has said, *I do not know what the future holds, but I know Who holds the future.*

In this short statement of scripture, then, we notice three main thoughts.

1. THE PRIVILEGE WE ENJOY.

The privilege we enjoy is that *we live*. For the Christian, the child of God, who can say, *I am the Lord's*, to live down here in this world is a rare and joyful privilege.

To the worldly person, life must seem very frustrating and without purpose. Indeed, the worldly person, the man or the woman who is not a Christian, has no hope for the future or for eternity. What a tragedy this is! But how different it is for the Christian! Among the many reasons why it is a privilege for the Christian to live are the following two.

a. *Think of the privilege of living for the Lord.*

Think of the amazing privilege it is to walk with Him like Enoch -

Genesis 5:21-24 - *And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:*

22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

to talk with Him like Moses -

Exodus 33:9 - *And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.*

to be guided by Him like David -

Psalm 32:8 - *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

to be provided for by Him -

Psalm 37:25 - *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

What a privilege it is to know His joy, His peace and His presence every day.

Philippians 4:4-7 - *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian and to know Jesus as Lord.

John 20:28 - *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

b. Think of the privilege of serving the Lord.

When Jesus was in the temple in Jerusalem at the age of twelve, He was engaged in His Father's business.

Luke 2:49 - *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*

We also are engaged in this holy, heavenly business. Surely this is a great privilege.

John 20:21 - *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

We are His ambassadors, representing Him on the foreign soil of this world.

2 Corinthians 5:20 - *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

We are witnesses unto Him.

Acts 1:8 - *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Our job is to tell others, to preach the gospel, to make Christ known.

Matthew 28:18-20 - *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Thus, *whether we live.....*- well, we do live. And this is the privilege we enjoy. But we do not live down here for ever. Sooner or later we must go.....!

2. THE APPOINTMENT WE KEEP.

The appointment we keep is indicated in the words, *we die.....*

It is referred to in

Hebrews 9:27 - *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

Of course, if the Lord comes in our lifetime, we shall go to be with Him without dying, as we learn from -

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 - *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

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.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

God has His appointment book in which the day of our departure is recorded.

There are two things about this appointment, and these refer to the Christians.

a. *Death is a blessed experience for the Christian.*

Link together -

2 Corinthians 5:8 - *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

Philippians 1:23 - *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*

Revelation 14:13 - *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

and you will see this fact clearly stated.

We all have a strong instinct to live, but to die will only take us into the presence of the Lord.

Psalms 116:15 - *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

We do not sufficiently dwell upon the facts that *heaven is better than this* and *to die is to gain*.

Philippians 1:21 - *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

b. *The Lord Jesus has conquered death and has removed*

death's sting.

We learn this by a comparison of -

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 - *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 14:8-9 - *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.
9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

We must all keep this appointment. But we need not be afraid, for all will be well - that is, if we really belong to the Lord. There is no need to be fearful of death or of the Lord's return, if it should be our privilege to go without dying, for the One Who is coming for us is *this same Jesus*.

John 14:1-3 - *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Acts 1:9-11 - *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;
11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

3. THE CONFIDENCE WE HAVE.

What is our confidence? This does not mean that we shall not suffer, that we shall have no pain or that we shall escape trials. Our confidence is that *we are the Lord's* and that is all that matters. We belong to Him.

We can say -

Song of Solomon 6:3 - *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

Song of Solomon 7:10 - *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

a. We are the Lord's here and now.

While we live upon the earth and serve Him, we are His -

by election -

1 Peter 1:2 - *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

by choice -

John 15:16 - *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

by redemption -

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - *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?
20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

and by our own decision -

Luke 15:5-6 - *And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.*

We are His now!

b. We are the Lord's for ever.

We are eternally His, and nothing can ever alter this fact.

John 10:28-29 - *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Romans 8:35-39 - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing on earth or in hell can alter this wonderful fact - we are His, and His for ever!

Turn to -

1 Peter 1:3-5 - *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,*

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

and rejoice in the glorious truth of the believer's security in Christ.

So, whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's!

Richard Baxter must have had these words in mind when he wrote:

*Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live.
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.*

*If life be long, I will be glad
That I may long obey;
If short, yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?*

*My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.*

THE WORKER AN AMBASSADOR

STUDY 11

Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 5:20

Key Verse -

2 Corinthians 5:20 - *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

In this classic passage of scripture, the apostle Paul is speaking of himself as an ambassador for Christ, though, by his use of the pronoun *we*, he is inferring that every Christian is to be an ambassador for Him.

1. WHAT IS AN AMBASSADOR?

An ambassador is a **REPRESENTATIVE** of the throne and of the government of the country of which he is a citizen.

It would be impossible for our Queen (or for any Head of State, for that matter) to represent her government in all the countries of the world, so she sends representatives who are known as her ambassadors.

An ambassador, therefore, represents a person and a people. The British ambassador in a foreign country represents the royal throne.

Now, Christians are the representatives of the throne of heaven. They represent the Lord, the King of heaven. They are living down here in the world, but they are the Lord's representatives in this *foreign* land.

If you are a Christian, you are Christ's representative in the world, His ambassador. Wherever you live and work, whether it is in the home, in an office, in industry or in one of the professions, you are a representative there of the King of heaven and of the throne of God.

You are God's ambassador just where He has placed you. Think of this in its spiritual significance. There are two representations going on.

In heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ is representing US -

Hebrews 9:24 - *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

Down here on earth, WE are representing Him. Just as He is our Representative in heaven, so we are to be His representatives on earth.

It is a great thing to be a Christian. It is a wonderful thing to know that your sins have been forgiven. It is just marvelous to know that you are a child of God and that heaven is your home.

But - have you realized that the Lord has left you here on earth to represent Him?

What a wonderful responsibility this is!

When we pause to realize the **RESPONSIBILITY** of our being involved as God's representatives on earth, we naturally cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

What are the **RESOURCES** available to us to enable us to discharge the responsibility of being the Lord's representatives?

None of us can rightly represent the Lord in our strength, but we have all the resources of heaven behind us, just as an earthly ambassador has behind him all the backing, the authority and the resources of the country he is representing.

As His ambassadors, we go forth in the name of the One who said -

Matthew 28:18-20 - *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

When an ambassador goes forth, all the resources of his earthly government are behind him. When we go forth in the Lord's name, all the resources of heaven and of the Lord Himself are available to us to enable us to be effective ambassadors for Him.

The Lord never sends us forth to do anything for Him without giving us all the power we need to carry it through.

Exodus 18:23 - *If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be*

able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

2 Corinthians 6:1 - *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Years ago I saw the picture of an old fashioned saw.

After a tree had been felled, it was placed across a large hole in the ground. One man stepped down into this hole and took hold of one end of the saw while his partner stayed on the ground and grasped the other end of it.

Then, with the man below pulling downward and the man above pulling upward, the saw cut its way through the tree to produce logs of the correct length and size.

This is an illustration of what it means to be an ambassador for Christ. We work together with Him. He is above and we are below. Together we work in perfect harmony for the accomplishment of His will on earth.

The Lord is doing His part in heaven, and on earth, His ambassadors are doing their part. Each is necessary to the other.

2 Corinthians 5:20 - *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Notice the following.

a. *He must be a citizen of heaven.*

No alien can ever represent our Queen or her government in a foreign country. In like manner, and quite obviously, one who is not a Christian, a citizen of heaven, cannot possibly represent the Lord to others here in the world.

A true ambassador must -

2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

He must be one who has been redeemed -

1 Peter 1:18-19 - *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*

b. *He must be above reproach.*

Our Queen would never send forth as her ambassador, a man who was of doubtful character. The Lord requires that His ambassadors should be living lives which are above reproach.

They are to be, as Paul puts it when writing to the Christians at Philippi, living a life that is -

Philippians 2:15 - *.....blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*

An ambassador is the object of the closest scrutiny in moral conduct, in word, in manner. In every relationship he must be blameless

They may not want to be Christians, they may not agree with the teachings of Christ, but they must see at once that we believe on Him and are seeking to conform to His teachings. There must be that about our daily walk that causes the people around us to recognize that we are Christians.

If we are to be the Lord's ambassadors, it must be seen that we are *BRAND NEW PEOPLE*, as a modern version renders -

2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

c. *He must be selfless.*

An ambassador must be willing to sink his own interests completely if they conflict with the will of his Sovereign. A Christian ambassador must not consider that he wants to do, but what his Lord wants him to do.

This is clearly brought before us in -

2 Corinthians 5:15 - *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

1 Corinthians 15:31 - *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*

In other words, an ambassador must face up to and enter, by faith, into the experience of
-

John 12:24 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Are you living unto yourself, or are you living unto Him?

d. *He must be in constant contact with the throne.*

How can an ambassador be in continual contact with his sovereign's government if he is living hundreds of miles away? He does it by radio or telephone.

We, as Christian ambassadors, have a better method of communication. By prayer we can be in constant contact with the throne of God. How necessary this is if we are to be His true ambassadors.

In moments of crisis, the earthly ambassador sometimes has a private line from his government to his base in the foreign land.

We have an even more wonderful facility. We have a private line to the throne room of our King. We can be in constant touch with our Lord who waits to guide us and guard us as we, His ambassadors, seek to represent Him here below.

e. *He must be steadfast and loyal.*

Why?

Because living in a foreign country, he will be tempted in all kinds of ways to disaffection and disloyalty. An ambassador must be steadfast and loyal at all times.

Paul is a great example in all this. Even when he was in prison he gladly suffered *bonds* for the sake of and out of loyalty to Christ.

Ephesians 6:20 - *For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

f. *He must be a man of diplomacy.*

Diplomacy is the art of negotiation. You and I, by nature, have no wisdom of our own.

Jeremiah 10:23 - *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

But we have a wonderful promise that God will fulfill in us if we will ask Him -

James 1:5 - *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

g. *He must know the language of the people amongst whom he lives.*

An earthly ambassador must know at least two languages for he represents his government in a foreign. Apart from his own language, he needs to know the language of the people there.

God's ambassadors speak the language of this world, but they also need to know how to speak the language of heaven, especially the language of love.

Luke 10:29-37 - *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 *And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*

36 *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*

37 *And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

An earthly ambassador also needs to have an adaptability and a skill to get to know people. How much more do God's ambassadors need this adaptability and skill as they work in this *foreign* country of the world!

2. THE MESSAGE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.

What is this message?

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 - *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

20 *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

We are to proclaim the fact that, at infinite cost to Himself, God has made a way of reconciliation possible. He has done this by sending His own Son to die for our sin, that, through His sacrifice, the barrier of sin has been removed and that, by His atonement (His at-one-ment), God and man have been brought together in Christ.

This vital truth is presented to us in vivid and solemn terms in -

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

God has so dealt with the sin question that it is possible for Him to reach out to sinful men and women to receive them, to welcome them, to forgive them, to cleanse them, and to bring them back into His family circle and into fellowship with Himself.

Though not one of us can possibly enter God's presence as we are, yet, by the sacrifice

of Calvary, a way back to God has been made for every guilty sinner who will accept and avail himself of God's wondrous offer of salvation.

God has devised means whereby -

2 Samuel 14:14 - *For we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.*

This is the message that the ambassador for God is to proclaim to men and women. He is to tell them of God's terms for reconciliation and to press them to be reconciled to God.

The ambassador's message is, therefore, one of absolute certainty and of spiritual authority, for Paul tells us that it has been -

2 Corinthians 5:19 - *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

and we are to proclaim it -

2 Corinthians 5:20 - *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Its proclamation also calls for great fidelity on the part of the ambassador. Philip was a great ambassador for we read -

Acts 8:5 - *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

Acts 8:35 - *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

3. THE MOTIVE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.

What is it that constrains God's ambassador to live for Him and to proclaim His glorious message?

There is a threefold constraint.

a. *The love of Christ.*

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

b. *The judgment seat of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 - *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Paul also tells us that -

Romans 14:12 - *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

1 Corinthians 3:13 - *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.*

c. *The dire need of the lost.*

2 Corinthians 5:11 - *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

The fact that men are lost and are bound for a Christless eternity should stir us to live so that we truly represent our Lord. More than that, it should stir us to proclaim with passion, the message that He has committed to us.

This passion was in the heart of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote -

Isaiah 62:1 - *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

It was certainly in the heart of the apostle Paul when he wrote -

Romans 9:2-3 - *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

It is the passion of our beseeching God that burns within us, that becomes a part of us and that finds its expression as we pray men *in Christ's stead* that they be reconciled to God.

*The Master calls! Arise and go!
How blest His messenger to be.
He who has given thee liberty,
Now bids thee set the captives free.
Proclaim His mighty power to save,
Who for the world His life blood gave.*

THE WORKER'S EXAMINATION

STUDY 12

Scripture Portion: Lamentations 3:40

Key Verse -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

The book of **Lamentations** contains the five elegies of Jeremiah the prophet. It is not surprising, therefore, that it makes sorrowful and melancholy reading.

Yet, when we come to the heart of the third chapter, a great change takes place. We read words which are tender, encouraging and reassuring.

Lamentations 3:22-26 - *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

Lamentations 3:31-33 - *For the Lord will not cast off for ever:*

32 But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

33 For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

We are in constant need of encouragement. God is not slow to give this to us in His Word. But there is something else which we need all the way through our Christian lives, and that is to search our hearts, to examine ourselves. It is to this which is referred to in -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

This is a challenging call to us to get alone in the presence of God and to ask Him to search us through and through.

It ties in with the prayer of David in -

Psalm 139:23-24 - *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

We must, of course, beware of morbid introspection, always looking at ourselves and being preoccupied with ourselves. This can only lead to discouragement, indeed, to disaster.

For every one look at ourselves, we must take one thousand looks at our Saviour.

We do need to look at ourselves, however, to examine ourselves; otherwise, we shall become careless and just drift along in our spiritual life.

One of the Holy Spirit's ministries is to bring us to a sense of need, to show us how far short we have fallen, and how great is the standard of Christ's righteousness.

We can never know these things unless the Holy Spirit exercises His gracious ministry in our lives, by convincing us of our shortcomings, by revealing to us our sins and failures, and by leading us to the place of confession, forgiveness and renewal.

If anyone should be tempted to say, *I'm not backsliding*, I would say to him, *Obey the injunction of -*

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

You will be surprised to find how far you come short of God's standard for your life.

Are we where He would have us be, and what He would have us be? I do not think many would say, *Yes, I am!* We need to, therefore, *search our ways*, because it is so easy for us to get out of touch with the Lord. When this happens, we no longer enjoy the sunshine of His love and grace in our hearts.

I remember that some years ago, after I had been preaching, a lady came to me and expressed her gratitude for the address I had given.

She then said, *It was very searching, wasn't it? Very searching indeed. But, you know, I like being searched!*

Now I knew this lady very well, and I believe she was absolutely sincere when she said that. I also believe that her confession was a healthy one.

If we are really going on with the Lord, we shall come before Him and ask Him to put His finger on anything which is displeasing to Him. We shall do it in order that we may deal with those things which He points out. Only then shall we be -

2 Timothy 2:21 - *.....a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

In this tender, yet urgent appeal which is brought before us in -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

Jeremiah urges us to do three things.

1. WE ARE TO REVIEW OUR LIVES.

Notice the wording -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways,.....*

Did you notice the words *try our ways*? We are not to examine other people. We are to examine ourselves.

In two places, the apostle Paul reminds us of the need to review our own lives before we review the lives of others.

In the first of these, he is speaking about the order and significance of the Lord's Supper, he says -

1 Corinthians 11:28 - *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

Let a man examine himself..... before attending this sacred and solemn service. He does not say *Let a man examine other people.....*

It is ourselves we have to examine. It is *our ways* which have to be reviewed.

The second instance where Paul calls for self-examination is in a word which he wrote to the same church in Corinth -

2 Corinthians 13:5 - *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

How prone we are to examine other people! Even when we are listening to a preacher, we are tempted to let his words fly over our own heads as we think of someone else who needs the message much more than we do.

Now, when are we to review our lives and do this work of self-examination?

Following are three answers to this question.

a. *We are to do it regularly.*

The exhortation, which we have already noticed relating to those who come to the Lord's table, reminds us of the regularity with which we are to examine ourselves. We are to remember the Lord in His death regularly and frequently.

When we come to His Table, we look back to Calvary, we look up to the throne, and we look on to our Lord's second coming.

But, as we approach the Table, we are also to look within to examine ourselves, not in order that we might stay away from the Table for the scripture plainly says -

1 Corinthians 11:28 - *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

not - *so let him stay away.*

The examination, therefore, which must take place regularly is with a view to closer fellowship with the Lord and to greater blessing and to further usefulness.

But there are other times when we should review our lives. Many people take stock of themselves at the end of the old year or at the beginning of the new year, or when they attend a convention. This is good, it is necessary.

But we should review our lives in times of prosperity as well, to make sure that, by receiving greater temporal benefits, these have not led us to be forgetful of God and to be slack in His service. We should also search our hearts and review our lives in times

of adversity.

Sometimes God's children suffer because they have been living carelessly and have been bringing grief to Him.

If we backslide, the Lord will surely discipline us. This means we should search our hearts and try our ways in adversity, to see if we can discern any connection between the trial which has come upon us and any disobedience on our part.

We should examine ourselves regularly to see whether we have failed and come short of what God requires of us. We should certainly examine ourselves regularly if we are serving the Lord and seeing very little fruit from our labours.

This leads to a second step.

b. We are not only to review our lives regularly, but we are to do it thoroughly

It is important to notice the words *search* and *try* in -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

How exactly are we to do this?

I suggest that it means that we are to ask the Lord to search us and to reveal to us any sin in our lives, especially to show us our secret sins in the light of His countenance.

Psalm 90:8 - *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*

Let me remind you of what happens when you go to the dentist.

He finds a decayed tooth which is not bad enough to be extracted. What does he do? He drills out the decayed part, taking great care to remove all traces of disease. This leaves a fairly large cavity in the tooth, which he then fills with cement and the tooth is as good as new.

It may be a painful experience for you, but how worthwhile it all is. The tooth has been saved and will go on doing its good work maybe for years ahead.

In the same way, we have to search and try our ways. We have to do it very thoroughly.

When a detective arrives at a house with a search warrant, and announces that he is *to go through the house with a fine tooth comb* he means (to change the metaphor) that he is going to leave no stone unturned in order to find what he looking for.

This is painful work, disturbing work, but it is necessary work.

So our work of self-examination must be done thoroughly if we are to maintain communion with God and usefulness in His service.

c. Then we are to review our lives HONESTLY.

Have you ever realized that there are four estimates of your life? There is the world's estimate - what people around you think of you.

There is the estimates of your loved ones - what the members of your own family and household think of you.

There is God's estimate and this is the important thing.

2. THE OBJECT OF REVIEWING OUR LIVES, OF SELF-EXAMINATION IS TO SEE OURSELVES AS GOD SEES US.

That is, to see ourselves as we really are, not as others think we are and not as we think we are. It is possible to hide many of our failures from our friends and even to appear to be saintly, but we cannot hide from God.

David tells us this in -

Psalm 139:1-4 - *O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.*

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

So there is no escape from the all-searching gaze of God when we come before Him.

Jeremiah 23:24 - *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.*

It can be a very disturbing experience to pray the prayer - *Search all my senses and know my heart. Let the deep, the hidden part, of me be fully shown.*

But it is a wonderful prayer to pray, for God waits to forgive and to cleanse us from our sins and to make us the men and women He would have us to be.

We are to review our lives, then to do it regularly, thoroughly and honestly.

There is another aspect mentioned in this word of prophecy. We are to recognize our failures!

Notice that the verse says -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

If we need to *turn again to the Lord*, then obviously we have turned away from Him.

It is a humbling and a difficult thing to recognize and confess our failures as the Lord reveals them to us.

Think what it meant for Samson as we read of him in **Judges, chapter 16**, when, alone in the presence of God, he realized that, because of his unbridled passion, the Spirit of God had departed from him.

He was now helpless, powerless and the laughing stock of his enemies. How tragic!

Think what it meant for David as we read of him in **2 Samuel 12**, when, after the awful experience recorded in **chapter 11**, Nathan came to him and pinpointed the whole matter of his adultery with Bathsheba and brought David on his face before God with a confession upon his lips.

What a story to make angels weep!

Think what it meant for Elijah as we read of him in **1 Kings, chapter 19**, when he was over-strained, depressed and actually praying that he might die to get out of it all.

Think what it meant for Isaiah as we read his testimony in **Isaiah, chapter 6**, when God searched him through and through until he realized his uncleanness and confessed it.

Think of the solemn scene brought before us in **Matthew, chapter 26**, where, at the Last Supper, when all the disciples were present, Jesus said -

Matthew 26:21 -*Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

and they all asked -

Matthew 26: 22 -*Lord, is it I?*

Think what it meant for Peter as we read of him in **Luke, chapter 22**. After his sad denial and feelings of complete desolation, how quickly he was brought to recognize his awful failure.

There are instances and examples of men of God who were brought to the place where they were led to *search and try* their ways, to recognize and admit their backslidings, their failures and to acknowledge and confess them to the Lord.

It may be that right now you have to put yourself into the picture at one point or another. The Holy Spirit is convincing you and you are recognizing your failures.

So what? Can nothing be done about them? Must you go on, depressed, discouraged and enjoying far less than the best of God's provision for you as a Christian?

You must get back into the place of blessing!

3. WE ARE TO RETRACE OUR STEPS.

Our verse reads -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

But the question frequently arises: if we turn again to Him, will He receive us? Will He forgive us and cleanse us?

Well, the answer is abundantly clear in the scriptures. If we have turned away from the Lord and are willing to turn back to Him, He will most certainly receive us, forgive us and bless us abundantly.

As a matter of fact, Samson, David, Elijah, Isaiah, the disciples, Peter all experienced the Lord's welcome and restoration when they turned back to Him.

4. WHAT DOES THE LORD PROMISE TO DO FOR US AFTER WE HAVE SEARCHED AND TRIED OUR WAYS?

What will He do after we have come to realize our need of Him and are willing to *turn to the Lord*?

Notice the following and rejoice afresh in the wonderful grace of God!

- a. He promises us that, if we will confess our sins to Him, He will cleanse us completely from the guilt and the pollution of our sins.*

We are assured of this because of -

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.*

- b. He tells us that He has made every provision for us so that we may not sin, but He has also made provision for us if we do sin.**

We are assured of this because of -

1 John 2:1-2 - *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

- c. He invites us and urges us to come back to Him and He guarantees that, when we do so, He will give us a full and a free pardon.**

We are assured of this because of -

Isaiah 55:6-7 - *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:*

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

- d. He pleads with us to return to Him and He offers us complete healing from our backslidings.**

We are assured of this because of -

Jeremiah 3:22 - *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.*

- e. His arms are open wide and He waits for us to come to Him.**

We are assured of this because of -

John 6:37 - *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

What more can be said?

What more needs to be said?

Only this -

Lamentations 3:40 - *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

Thank God, there is mercy and forgiveness with Him!

Mercy and forgiveness for the sinner, for the saint and for the servant of God.

THE WORKER'S WORK

STUDY 13

Scripture Portion: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Verse -

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

This one verse, coming as it does at the end of a really great chapter, is full of challenge and appeal. It is surely meant to fill all who are engaged in the work of the Lord with joy and with quiet confidence.

Notice, to begin with, how careful Paul is to identify those to whom he is writing.

1. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED.

The apostle is not writing to all and sundry, but to his beloved brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ, his fellow-believers.

From this chapter we learn that Paul was writing directly to those who had received the gospel, who had believed, and who were, therefore saved.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 - *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

In the Lord's work, the workers must always be the Lord's people.

Matthew 21:28 - *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.*

Are you one of God's sons?

Galatians 3:26 - *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

Before you can serve, you must be a son, a child of God.

John 1:11-14 - *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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.

No one is qualified to be a worker for the Lord who has not first been born again.

John 3:3 - *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

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.*

2. THE REASON STATED.

Paul goes on to give a reason why we should engage in *the work of the Lord*. The reason is referred to by us use of the word *therefore* which takes us back over the whole chapter.

He says, *Therefore, because of these things, be ye stedfast.....*

Because of what things? What is our motive for serving God? What is it that constrains and impels us?

Paul gives another answer in -

2 Corinthians 5:14 - *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

The reason why we are to stand firm and to be constant and earnest in our service for the Lord is that we have a glorious gospel to proclaim.

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 - *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

The Lord is risen, is alive and is exalted - **1 Corinthians 15:4-20.**

We shall rise again - **1 Corinthians 15:21-50.**

The Lord is coming back again -

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 - *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

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.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Death, sin, Satan and hell will have been overcome -

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 - *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What use is it to preach the gospel and serve God if there is no resurrection, if sin and death and Satan and hell have not been conquered?

1 Corinthians 15:30 - *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

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.*

Compare -

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 - *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority*

and power.

25 *For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

26 *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

27 *For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.*

28 *And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

But, the victory of Christ is complete!

So notice what follows.

3. THE WORK DESCRIBED.

Christian service is here described by the Apostle Paul as *the work of the Lord*.

Dr. Alexander MacLaren says that -

The work of the Lord is either the work that He is doing, or it is the work that we are doing in His Name.

But it is both!

It is His work, for He is the Great Worker -

John 5:17 - *But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

It is also our work, for -

2 Corinthians 6:1 - *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Mark 16:19-20 - *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here we have a perfect illustration of *the work of the Lord*. Do study these two verses carefully and see the picture:

Jesus is the Worker in heaven;

His servants going forth to do His work; and the Lord from heaven *working with them* doing things!

Thus we learn that the Lord's work is His work accomplished in and through us. It is our work entered upon and carried through with His enabling and with His blessing.

Notice five things about *the work of the Lord*.

1. IT IS A GREAT WORK.

See how the Lord's work is described in -

1 Samuel 21:8 - *And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.*

Nehemiah 6:3 - *And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?*

See how Jesus described *the work of the Lord* in -

Luke 2:49 - *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*

2. IT IS A SACRED WORK.

To get a glimpse of the sacred nature of Christian work turn to -

Ephesians 2:10 - *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

How careful, prayerful and dedicated we should be in engaging in such work!

3. IT IS A VARIED WORK.

In God's estimation there is no division between sacred and secular.

Hiram was doing the Lord's work.

1 Kings 7:14 - *He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.*

So was Nehemiah -

Nehemiah 6:3 - *And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?*

So was Dorcas -

Acts 9:36 - *Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did.*

So was Lydia -

Acts 16:14-15 - *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 16:40 - *And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.*

All these were doing the Lord's work, just as much as Peter and Paul were.

Compare the following scriptures.

Acts 2:14 - *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.*

Acts 17:22 - *Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.*

Colossians 3:17-24 - (especially verses 17, 23-24) - **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.*

18 *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

19 *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

20 *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

21 *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

22 *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:*

23 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*

24 *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

4. IT IS HARD WORK.

1 Corinthians 15:30-31 - *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

31 *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*

See how hard Paul found it to serve the Lord.

Compare -

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 - *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

24 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

25 *Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

26 *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in*

perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

God's work is never easy. Many today are finding the way very exciting, the enemy sees to that.

2 Corinthians 2:11 - *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

Many today are being frustrated on every hand as they seek to serve the Lord. They see little fruit for their labors. The work is so hard, but -

Galatians 6:9 - *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

5. IT IS EXCITING WORK.

Read the life story of the Apostle Paul, or of some of our modern apostles.

Get the inside story of any one of millions of faithful workers who right now are abounding in the work of the Lord, and you will have an up-to-date illustration of the fact that to work for the Lord is a very exciting business.

Have you a testimony along these lines?

6. THE QUALITIES REQUIRED.

If we would be successful and well-pleasing servants of God, we must be: steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We must have three qualities.

a. Stability.

We must be steadfast, unmoveable.

Our characters are to be like this, so is our faith. We are to be men and women of settled conviction.

Galatians 6:6 - *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

Colossians 2:6-7 - *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

b. Fervency.

We are to be abounding in the work of the Lord, or, as one version renders it - *Always doing more than enough.*

Another version says - *Always working without limit.*

Many of the Lord's workers need a good strong infusion of enthusiasm!

Acts 8:30 - *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

God, make us to run to do Your glorious service!

c. Constancy.

We are to abound in the Lord's work always, not sometimes, but all the time; not in fits and starts, but with constancy.

As we serve the Lord in this way, we have a deep assurance concerning the worthwhileness of all that we are doing. We know that we are sowing for eternity.

7. THE ASSURANCE ENJOYED.

1 Corinthians 15:58b - *....forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the*

Lord.

or, as one translator renders it -

Your labor is not futile, never wasted or to no purpose.

Because the Lord Jesus has died and risen, because He is our victorious Lord, we shall go to live with Him in glory.

We work by faith now -

1 Thessalonians 1:3 - *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.*

2 Thessalonians 1:11 - *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.*

But the work we do ***in the Lord*** will last for ever.

Mark 14:6-9 - *And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.*

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9 *But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.*

Matthew 25:42-45 - *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:*

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

If we are engaged in doing God's work in His way, doing it for His glory and honor, we can be confident that our efforts will produce fruit for eternity.