

What Every Christian Worker Should Know

PART #2
TEACHER MANUAL
Studies 1 - 13

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

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THE WORKER'S BEST BOOK

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: Psalm 119:1-16

Key Verse -

Psalm 119:11 - *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

The theme that predominates this longest psalm in the Psalter is the writer's reference to the Word of God, which he variously describes as God's -

testimonies -

Psalm 119:2 - *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

precepts -

Psalm 119:4 - *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

statutes -

Psalm 119:5 - *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

commandments -

Psalm 119:6 - *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

and judgments -

Psalm 119:7 - *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

All these are gathered up in the key verse of this study -

Psalm 119:11 - *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

It would seem, from these words, that David had a very great desire and longing to please

God. He had a consuming passion to be holy, to be delivered from sin in every shape and form and to live a God-glorifying, sanctified life.

Surely this is the right desire of every true child of God.

What is your greatest desire in life? As a Christian believer? Do we not long to please God, to live a life that is Christlike and glorifying to Him?

How is this possible?

Our key verse tells us. In this one verse, we read about -

- the best of Books,
- in the best of places, and
- for the best of reasons.

Let us consider these three simple points.

1. THE BEST OF BOOKS

The best of books is described here as -

Psalm 119:11 - *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

There are very many wonderful books in the world, but the Bible is supreme. It is unique for it is quite different from every other book. As one has said -

It is worth more than all the others put together.

Another has said -

The Bible is a book in comparison with which all others are of minor importance.

What is there about the Bible that makes it so different from other books? Why is it the best of books?

a. Because of its source.

The Bible is the best of books because of its origin. Where does it come from? It comes from God Himself as the psalmist tells us - *Thy Word.....*

These two words indicate the divine origin of the book. God is the Author of the Bible.

There were, of course, many writers employed in compiling it, nearly forty to be exact. These forty writers wrote over a period of 1600 years. But God was superintending their writing, as we learn very clearly from -

2 Timothy 3:16 - *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

2 Peter 1:21 - *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

This is the first reason why the Bible is different, why it is the best of books.

b. Because of its stability.

The Bible is absolutely up-to-date, although it was written centuries ago. This is a very remarkable thing. Man's writings are always in need of revision, but God's, never! Compare -

Psalms 119:89 - *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

1 Peter 1:24-25 - *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:
25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

and the words of Jesus in -

Matthew 24:35 - *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Thus, because God is the Author, it is authoritative, reliable and accurate. Indeed, it is the best of books.

c. Because of its sufficiency.

The Bible contains everything we need for faith and for practice; that is, for what we

believe and for what we do.

There is no demand that is made upon us in this life but that we shall find help, guidance and wisdom in this best of all books.

Thus we see that the Bible is the best of books because of its source, its stability and its sufficiency to help us in every circumstance and situation.

Now notice next what the psalmist did with the best of books.

We are told that he hid God's Word in his heart.

We suggest, therefore, that he hid the Bible -

2. IN THE BEST OF PLACES

Psalm 119:11 - *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

David said these words. He did not hide it in a cupboard, in a drawer or in an old trunk, but he hid it and stored it up in his heart. This means that David placed the Word of God at the very centre of his life, at the core of his being.

David, of course, had a very small Bible compared with our Bible. It probably consisted only of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), the historical books and some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

But, he said, I have buried it deep down in the very centre of my being. I have hidden it in my heart.

This raises the question - How can we put, or *hide*, the Bible in our hearts?

There are three things that we must do if we are to hide the Word of God in our hearts.

a. We must take it in our hands.

That is to say, we must secure a good copy of the Bible, well bound, with good print, a copy that we shall treasure, preferably a King James version, though many other versions can be used for reference. This is the first step.

b. We must get it in our heads.

This means that we must read it, learn it and inwardly digest it. We must do this regularly as we pray the prayer -

Psalm 119:18 - *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

But we must have the Bible not only in our heads, we must notice the exact thing that David says here in our key verse.

This is the second step.

Psalm 119:11 - *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

c. We must hide it in our hearts.

That is, we must let it drop right down into the very centre of our being. How do we do this?

Psalm 119:15 - *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

We must meditate in the Word of God.

Job 23:12 - *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

Jeremiah 15:16 - *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*

Ezekiel 3:1-3 - *Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.*

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

This is the third step.

Here, then, is the best of books, hidden in the best of places. But why should we hide the best of books in the best of places?

This leads us to consider the third point of this study.

3. FOR THE BEST OF REASONS

David tells us that the reason he hid God's Word in his heart was that he -

Psalm 119:11 - *.....might not sin against thee.*

In other words, the psalmist tells us here that the Word of God hidden in the heart has a sanctifying effect upon the life.

How does the Bible produce this sanctifying effect in us if we hide it in our hearts?

a. It causes us to recognize sin.

Our tendency is to excuse sin, but once we begin to read and meditate in the Word of God and to hide God's Word in our hearts, then we begin to see sin for what it is - the horrible thing that God hates and that made it necessary for the Lord Jesus to die upon the cross. We then discover that God requires truth in the inward parts -

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

As we read the Word of God, we pray the prayer *quicken my conscience till it feels the loathsomeness of sin.*

It is the Bible, read and received into the heart, that does this quickening work -

Psalm 119:25 - *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

b. It makes us hate sin.

It is a very wonderful thing when a man begins to hate sin, when he begins to read and meditate in the Word of God and then finds himself loathing sin.

By nature, we love sin, but once we begin to dwell deeply in the Word of God, we find ourselves loving all that God loves and hating all that He hates. That is holiness.

c. It leads us to turn from sin.

What a glorious thing it is when the Holy Spirit ministers to us through the scriptures and

turns our hearts away from those things that grieve God.

Psalm 119:9 - *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

Compare the following -

Genesis 39:7-13 - *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

Proverbs 28:13 - *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

d. It points us to the One Who has made an end of all our sins.

As we read the scriptures, we are pointed -

to the Sin-bearer Himself -

John 1:29 - *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

to the One Who is ready and willing to forgive our sins -

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.*

to our great Advocate above -

1 John 2:1 - *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:*

to the One Who is willing to deliver us and to give us the power to live an entirely new life -

John 8:11 - *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

What a wonderful book the Bible is!

It is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to effect our sanctification, to make us holy, to make us like the Lord Jesus.

So in conclusion:

Let us take the Best of Books - God's Word -

Let us hide it in the best of places - deep down in our hearts, and

Let us do this for the best of purposes - that we may become the men and women God wants us to be!

*Hide God's Word in your heart,
Hide God's Word in your heart,
His Word of love sent from above,
Hide God's Word in your heart.*

THE WORKER'S LIGHT

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: **Philippians 2:1-16**

The theme of this series of studies is based upon a striking phrase taken from -

Philippians 2:16 - *Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

In this second study of the series, we are to consider the section of this epistle in which these words occur -

Philippians 2:14-18 - *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

15 That ye may be 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;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

It is important to notice that Christians are spoken of as -

Philippians 2:15 - *.....the sons of God,.....*

It is well that we should emphasize the fact that, while all people everywhere are the children of God in a *creative sense*, only real Christians are His children in a *redemptive sense*.

Compare the following -

Malachi 2:10 - *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

Acts 17:28-29 - *For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

John 1:12-14 - *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.*

Galatians 3:26 - *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

The Apostle Paul tells us that as *sons of God* we are to -

Philippians 2:15b - *.....shine as lights in the world;*

or, as the New English Bible puts it - *like stars in a dark world.*

We are to be *luminaries* as the word really means. Just as the stars shine in the heavens, so we, a heavenly people, are to shine for the Lord.

Compare the following -

Numbers 6:24-26 - *The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:*

25 *The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

26 *The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

Proverbs 4:18 - *But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

We are to shine as Moses did -

Exodus 34:29 - *And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.*

as the Lord did -

Matthew 17:2 - *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

as John the Baptist did -

John 5:35 - *He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.*

and as Stephen did -

Acts 6:15 - *And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.*

Now read -

Matthew 5:16 - *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

To shine for the Lord is the very essence of Christian service, and all can do it. The following comparison makes it clear just how we may shine.

John 8:12 - *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

Matthew 5:14 - *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

1. WHERE ARE WE TO SHINE?

a. We are to shine in the world.

Philippians 2:15 - *That ye may be 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;*

This refers to the inhabited world in which we live. But it also refers to the *world system*- all that is opposed to Christ and that excludes Him and which we are forbidden to love.

1 John 2:15-17 - *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

As Christians, we are in the world, but we are not to be of it.

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

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

b. We are to shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (generation).

Philippians 2:15 - *That ye may be 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;*

The word *crooked* means *not straight*.

Compare -

Proverbs 2:13-15 - *Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;
14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;
15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:*

Isaiah 53:6 - *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

It also describes this generation as *perverse*, which means *distorted*.

What a dreadful spiritual and moral darkness engulfs this generation of mankind! On every hand there is an appalling ignorance of God and of spiritual things. God's indictment against the human race, as recorded in **Romans 1:21-32**, is still up-to-date.

Gross moral darkness covers the face of the earth.

Sin abounds on every hand, as is indicated by the increase in divorce, drink, drug addiction, gambling, crime, sexual offences and corruption generally.

Genesis 6:5 - *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

This is true of this generation. It should be read in conjunction with -

Matthew 24:37 - *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

It is in the midst of this dense darkness that we are to shine for the Lord -

in public -

Matthew 5:14 - *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

and in private -

Matthew 5:15 - *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

socially and domestically.

2. HOW ARE WE TO SHINE?

Often the light in a lamp is ineffective because the wick needs attention, or it is obscured because the glass is smoky.

Philippians 2:14 - *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

tells us of two things that smoke up the glass.

Philippians 2:15-16 - *That ye may be 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;*

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

tells us of five characteristics of the life that is brightly shining for the Lord.

How are we to shine?

a. By not murmuring.

Philippians 2:14 -*Do all things without murmurings.....*

The word *murmurings* really means *mutterings*.

Numbers 20:2 - *And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.*

Numbers 21:5 - *And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.*

Compare with -

Acts 6:1 - *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.*

1 Corinthians 10:10 - *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

b. By not disputing.

Philippians 2:14 -*and disputings:*

The thought here is of going to one another and creating disaffection by unwise talk and gossip.

Disputing is *murmuring* let loose, infecting others with careless talk.

c. By being blameless.

Philippians 2:15 -*That ye may be blameless.....*

This simply means being free from blame so that no one is able to accuse us.
An illustration of this is found in -

Daniel 6:4 - *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel*

concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

d. By being harmless.

Philippians 2:15 -and harmless,.....

This means being free from adulteration or being sincere and without guile.

John 1:47 - *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

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

The special reference is to our motives. It is never the wrong things that we do or say that are the most serious offences. It is the wrong motives that prompt our actions and words that are the greatest sin.

e. By being without rebuke.

Philippians 2:15 -without rebuke,.....

The idea here is of living in such a way that we do not have to be checked, corrected or chastened by the Lord because of carelessness and because of failure to judge ourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:30-32 - *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

f. By holding forth the Word of Life.

Philippians 2:16 - *Holding forth the word of life;.....*

This refers to our active witness in preaching the gospel and making known God's wondrous way of salvation through faith in Christ.

We may *hold forth the Word* by preaching, by personal witness, by tract distribution, by informal meetings, by letter writing, and by many other different ways.

Above all, such *holding forth* must be accompanied by a consistent life, as indicated in points (a - e) above.

g. By living in the light of the day of Christ.

Philippians 2:16 - *.....in the day of Christ,.....*

The apostle closes this brief exhortation by referring to the Judgment Seat of Christ. Thus he reminds us that we are to live and labour day by day in the light of this solemn time of reward or loss.

Romans 1

THE WORKER'S JOY

STUDY 3

Scripture Portion: Psalm 89:15-18

Psalm 89:15-18 - *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

17 For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

18 For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

John Nelson Darby, in his 1890 translation of the Old Testament renders the opening words of this section of scripture as follows:

Blessed is the people that know the shout of joy.

The word, *blessed* simply means *happy*. Here we are reminded that Christians are happy people and, because of their inward happiness, they shout for joy.

When the man at the Gate Beautiful experienced healing and came to know the Lord, he shouted for joy, and went on shouting for joy, for we are told that -

Acts 3:8 - *And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.*

God's people should be happy, joyful people. Their joy is inward and spiritual, whereas ordinary happiness is outward and is only a temporary thing.

There is a sense, of course, in which God's people are a sad people. Jesus said -

Matthew 5:4 - *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

This seems to contradict what we have just been saying.

What it means, of course, is that even if we are passing through trials and testings such as bereavement, we can know inward joy and true blessedness because the Lord will comfort and uphold us.

It is an interesting fact that we have no record of Jesus laughing. We are told that He was a Man of Sorrows -

Isaiah 53:3 - *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

but this was written in anticipation of the sufferings He was to endure at Calvary as our Sin-bearer.

On the other hand, the Lord spoke of *My joy* -

John 15:11 - *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

His desire for His own disciples was that they should experience His joy.

Is this desire of His being fulfilled in us? Are we happy, joyful Christians?

Over and over again in the Bible we read of the blessedness of God's people. We have a fine example of this in -

Psalm 89:15-18 - *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

17 For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

18 For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

where we are told why Christians are, or should be, happy people.

Why are Christians happy people? Read again **Psalm 89:15-18**.

Consider some of the reasons the psalmist mentions.

1. CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY
KNOW THE JOYFUL SOUND.

Psalm 89:15 - *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.....*

The reference here is to the blowing of trumpets.

Just as it is customary for church bells to be rung in order to call the people of our land to worship, so in olden days trumpets were blown to call the people to worship God.

When they heard the trumpets being blown, they rejoiced because they were at once reminded of the spiritual blessings symbolized by the feasts which were being held to celebrate the Lord's dealings with His people.

The important word in **Psalm 89:15** is the word *know*. He does not say, *Blessed is the people that hear the joyful sound*.

This tells us that God's people are happy because they have spiritual discernment. They have come to see and to realize the truth of -

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.*

Some years ago, I went to an exhibition of modern art. While I was gazing at one fantastic effort consisting of a few straight lines and a few daubs of paint, a *modern* artist came up to me and asked how I liked the picture.

I told him I could not understand it at all, to which he replied, *Excuse me, sir, you haven't been initiated.*

He was right. I had not, and still have not, been initiated!

And to understand the mystery of the gospel and the things of the Spirit, you have to be initiated. This is made clear in -

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.*

The things of the Spirit are hidden from the undiscerning, as we learn from Jesus' prayer in -

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

We need to be shown the path of life for we do not know it for ourselves, nor can we find it without divine help.

Psalm 16:11 - *Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

If you invite a worldly man to go to a prayer meeting or take a non-Christian to an evangelistic service or give your testimony to someone who does not know the Lord, what is the result?

Out of politeness, these people may attend the meeting or the evangelistic service, or listen to the story of your conversion, but, until they become Christians, they do not know the joyful sound. Their heart does not leap as they contemplate the things of God.

They have no shout of joy.

Do we have a shout of joy? Does it thrill us as we meditate upon the love and the tender mercy of God? Do we raise to Him a joyful sound and song of thanksgiving because He has sought and found and saved us who are such unworthy and unlovely sinners?

2. CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY WALK IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE.

Psalm 89:15 - *.....they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*

One translation renders this: *They live within the sunshine of Thy favour.*

This means that God's people live in the sunshine of His smile. No wonder they are so happy!

This is not true of the unbeliever.

There are some very solemn words in the Bible which describe the position and the condition of the man who is not a Christian.

He is said to be lost -

Luke 19:10 - *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

He is perishing -

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.*

He is condemned -

John 3:18 - *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Then we read in -

Psalms 7:11 - *God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*

This is very solemn indeed for it ties up with -

John 3:36 - *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

Unconverted, unregenerate men are at enmity with God. It is only when a man turns in repentance to Christ and trusts Him as his Lord and Saviour that he can rejoice in the truth of -

Colossians 1:21 - *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*

Those who are not Christians do not love the Lord. They do not obey Him or serve Him because of their sin.

Ephesians 4:18 - *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

But Christians have been -

Romans 5:10 - *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

and God's smile is resting upon them because they have been -

Ephesians 1:6 - *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

They have -

Romans 5:1 - *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

They experience -

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

No wonder they shout for joy! No wonder they are happy! Do we share this joy, this happiness, this blessedness?

2. CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY
CONSTANTLY REJOICE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Why do they rejoice in this? Because His Name represents His person, His character, His attributes and His work.

What do we know about the person of our Lord, the character of our Lord, the attributes and the work of our Lord?

We find the answers to these questions in the earlier verses of **Psalm 89**.

a. *He is merciful.*

Verse 1 - *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever:.....*

b. *He is faithful.*

Verse 1 - *.....with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*

c. *He is a covenant-keeping God.*

Verse 3 - *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,*

d. *He is incomparable.*

Verse 6 - *For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?*

Verse 8 - *O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?*

e. ***He is the Lord of nature.***

Verse 9 - *Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*

f. ***He is Creator of heaven and earth.***

Verses 11 & 12 - *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.*

12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

g. ***He is the Sovereign Lord enthroned above.***

Verse 14 - *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

Is this what the worldly man rejoices in? Does the very mention of God and of His Name cause the unbeliever to shout for joy?

No!

But it is so different with the believer, the true child of God. The very mention of the Name of the Lord, and the very thought of all that that Name signifies, causes the Christian to shout for joy.

Do we feel like shouting for joy?

4. CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY ARE EXALTED IN CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

There are some very wonderful words at the end of -

Psalm 89:16 - *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall*

they be exalted.

What do they mean?

They refer to our acceptance in Christ and to our being clothed with His righteousness.

By nature -

Isaiah 64:6 - *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

But the moment we put our trust in Christ as our Saviour, God imputes His righteousness to us. He clothes us in the righteousness of His Son.

Read the following verses and rejoice afresh in the wonderful thing which God has done for all those who have put their trust in Christ as their Saviour.

Isaiah 61:10 - *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Romans 3:20-22 - *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Romans 4:5-8 - *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Thus we read in -

Romans 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

that is, to those who are clothed in Christ's righteousness.

We can therefore sing with Charles Wesley -

*No condemnation now I dread, Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ
my own.*

Or we can sing, with a shout of joy, the words of Count Zinzendorf -

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years.
No age can change its glorious hue,
Its glory is for ever new.*

*Thou God of power, Thou God of love,
Let all the world Thy mercy prove;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress
Jesus the Lord, our righteousness.*

So, if you are a Christian and if your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you are clothed in His righteousness and seated with Him in the heavenlies. What a blessed thing this is!

Surely, as

THE WORKER'S STRENGTH

STUDY 4

Scripture Portion: Deuteronomy 33:24-25

Deuteronomy 33:24-25 - *And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.*

25 Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Anybody needing encouragement will certainly find it in the closing words of this small section of scripture, indeed, in the whole of **Deuteronomy 13**. This chapter speaks of

-

Deuteronomy 33:1 - *And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

All these blessings are ours today through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as we learn

from -

2 Corinthians 1:20 - *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

What is the message of these verses for ourselves?

1. WE LEARN THAT, AS CHRISTIANS, AS BELIEVERS, AS CHILDREN OF GOD, WE ARE TRAVELERS ON A JOURNEY.

This is clearly implied in -

Deuteronomy 33:25 - *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;.....*

by the use of the word *shoes*. What are shoes for? They are for walking, for journeyings.

And the Christian life is most certainly a journey which begins on earth and ends in heaven, though, of course, really it never ends. It goes on in heaven through all eternity!

This journey begins at conversion, and, so far as this earthly life is concerned, it concludes either at death or at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Within the context of **Psalm 23**, the journey begins in -

Psalm 23:1 - *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

and ends in -

Psalm 23:6 - *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

In the New Testament, this idea of the Christian life being a journey is clearly taught, for Christians are described as pilgrims who are passing through this earthly scene - *pilgrim(s) through this barren land.*

Hebrews 11:13 - *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that*

they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

1 Peter 2:11 - *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*

and as those who are walking in a new way -

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

So the word *shoes* reminds us that we are travelers journeying on to a better land.

2. WE LEARN THAT WE, AS CHRISTIANS, ARE JOURNEYING OVER VERY ROUGH COUNTRY.

The people to whom God made this promise had rocky, flinty mountain roads to negotiate. Leather shoes would have been useless, for they would have worn out at once and their feet would have suffered. The Lord most graciously provided shoes made of iron and brass -

Deuteronomy 33:25 - *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;.....*

This reminds us that we, as Christians, are traveling on a very rough road. No preacher needs to remind his congregation of this fact, for it is self-evident. The Lord has wonderfully blessed us -

by saving us -

Hebrews 7:25 - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

by giving us eternal life -

1 John 5:11-12 - *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

by making us citizens of heaven -

Philippians 3:20 - *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

But the journey to heaven is a rough one. We are constantly beset by trials and testings. The Lord has never promised that it would be different from this.

Compare -

Psalms 34:19 - *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

John 16:33 - *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Philippians 1:29 - *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

1 Peter 4:12 - *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

Perhaps you are experiencing the roughness of the way now. If so, this is part of the journey prescribed for you by the Lord Himself.

3. WE LEARN THAT WE TRAVEL ONLY A STEP AT A TIME, INDEED, A DAY AT A TIME.

The Lord promises shoes of iron and brass so that we may journey on over the rough roads. But, shoes speak of walking and we walk only a day at a time. Thus, the Lord says -

Deuteronomy 33:25b - *.....and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

He does not say *as thy weeks.....or months.....or years*, though that is true. But we travel only one day at a time, or as we are reminded - a step at a time -

Psalms 37:23 - *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

It is a merciful providence that we live only one day at a time, for, if we knew all that is in store for us in the remaining days of this year, next year and the years that follow, the burden would be intolerable. Immense fears would beset us. We would be overcome with apprehension.

Thus, on the rough journey of life, we who are Christians, have to learn to go one step at a time and to live one day at a time. We must not try to look into the veiled and distant future. We must endeavour to do what Jesus exhorts us to do -

Matthew 6:34a - *Take therefore no thought for the morrow:....*

In other words, do not be anxious about tomorrow for -

Matthew 6:34b -*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

or as The Amplified New Testament puts it -

Matthew 6:34 - *Do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.*

We often say, *How time flies!* In actual fact, the journey we take is a slow one.

Then the question arises, *How shall we find strength to meet all the demands of the journey?* Well, that is cared for in the wonderful promise before us.

4. WE LEARN THAT THE JOURNEY WE ARE TAKING TO
THE HEAVENLY CITY IS A JOURNEY FOR WHICH
STRENGTH IS SUPPLIED TO MATCH EACH AND EVERY DEMAND.

Read what the Lord says -

Deuteronomy 33:25b -*and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

This is what Alexander MacLaren meant when he said -

The two sums of *thy days* and *thy strength* keep growing side by side, the one as fast as the other, and no faster.

In others words, if the days increase, so will the strength increase. If the burdens are heavier, then the supply of grace will be greater.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - *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.*

Notice this wonderful fact.

This guarantee of sufficient strength to support and sustain us is applicable to each one of us in three spheres -

a. In our home and family life.

Surely there is a reference to this in -

Deuteronomy 33:24 -*Let Asher be blessed with children.....*

What demands are made upon those whose main task is to be in the home - to the mother, or perhaps to the father!

What does God say to those who are pressed on every hand in the domestic sphere?

He says -

Deuteronomy 33:25b -*and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

b. In our church and assembly life.

This is referred to the words in -

Deuteronomy 33:24-*let him (Asher) be acceptable to his brethren,.....*

How can I, as a Christian, be a help to my brethren, my brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I have fellowship and with whom I engage in service in my church?

How can I be sufficient for this, to be a dedicated, Spirit-filled and, therefore, a humble, kind and loving Christian?

The Lord says -

Deuteronomy 33:25b -*and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

c. In our daily walk.

The words in -

Deuteronomy 33:24b -*let him (Asher) dip his foot in oil.*

refer to the process of extracting the oil from the olives by foot presses, by treading out the oil. This was very hard work. Where did those who were engaged in it find their strength?

The Lord answers -

Deuteronomy 33:24b.....*and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

How wonderful the Lord's promise is, and how sufficient His strength will be for every demand that is made upon us!

Of course, we must appropriate that strength as it is offered to us by the Lord and in the Person of the Holy Spirit Who indwells us if we are true believers.

Compare -

Zechariah 4:6 - *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

John 14:16-17 - *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

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.*

THE WORKER'S BURDEN

STUDY 5

Scripture Portion: Psalm 55:22

Psalm 55:22 - *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

All of us have to carry burdens. This is a world of burden-bearing. Sorrow and trouble come alike to all mankind.

Compare -

Job 5:7 - *Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

Job 14:1 - *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*

There is a Spanish proverb which says, *There is no home anywhere which sooner or later does not have its hush.*

It is true also that some people have to carry heavier burdens than others. Some are handicapped and frustrated at every turn of the road. Some carry hidden burdens which others, including their own friends, do not know they are bearing, for many a breaking heart is hidden behind a smiling face.

Often the deepest and most poignant burdens carried by men and women are those which are not seen. All this is true of Christian people as well as of people who are not Christians. We are reminded of this in -

Psalm 34:19 - *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

A quiet reading of **Psalm 55** will soon convince us that the writer of the psalm was a very burdened man. Perhaps one word in -

Psalm 55:5 - *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.*

emphasizes the intensity and the weight of the burden he was carrying.

It is the word *overwhelmed*. This leads us to ask our first question.

5. WHAT KINDS OF BURDENS DO PEOPLE CARRY?

They are too varied to be enumerated with any degree of completeness, but we may mention the following -

a. Burdens to do with the home.

To most people, home is *sweet* - but not to all. In many homes there is poverty, sickness, sorrow and dislocation.

b. Burdens that have to do with business responsibilities.

c. Burdens in connection with the Lord's work.

For one example, turn to -

2 Corinthians 11:28 - *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

d. Burdens to do with our friends.

This kind of experience is described in -

Psalm 55:12-14 - *For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:*

13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

e. Physical burdens.

An example of this is found in -

2 Corinthians 12:7 - *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.*

f. Temperamental burdens.

These make us prone to fear, anxiety, worry, depression, and even despair.

g. Burdens connected with loss and bereavement.

For instance -

John 11:19 - *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

h. The burden of disappointment.

i. The heaviest burden of all - the burden of sin.

What a heavy burden is the burden of unforgiven sin, or an unruly tongue, or an uncontrolled temper -

Romans 7:24-25 - *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.

There are so many burdens that we are called to bear. We have mentioned only a few, but our next question is this -

2. WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THESE BURDENS?

In this psalm we are told several things which we are not to do in relation to our burdens.

a. We are not to doubt God.

Psalm 55:1 - *Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.*

How easily doubt assails us when trouble comes upon us! But we must *never doubt God!* No relief can be found this way, but only an increase of trouble.

b. There is the temptation to complain and to indulge in self-pity.

We have an illustration of this in -

Psalm 55:2 - *Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;*

Here is something to avoid, for there is no relief from our burdens in complaining and self-pity.

c. We must guard against the danger of despair.

There is no doubt that -

Psalm 55:4-5 - *My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.*

5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

describe a man who was in great despair. There is no relief from our burdens by getting into this condition.

d. We must not yield to the desire to escape.

If we run away, we carry our burdens with us, though it is natural to want to run away.

Psalm 55:6-7 - *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*

7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.

No relief from our burdens can be found here.

e. We must not become embittered against others, as the psalmist did.

Psalm 55:15 - *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

How, then, can we find relief when we are heavily burdened? What can we, and what should we, do with life's burdens?

Three things are clearly indicated in the wonderful promise at the head of this study.

6. WE ARE TO ACCEPT THE BURDEN FROM THE LORD.

The word *burden* here literally means *that which He hath given thee*, or the word may simply mean *gift*. Did you ever think of your burden as a trust from God?

To understand this is to take the first step in the transformation of trouble! That trial, that disappointment, that loss - is that God's doing?

Yes. He has permitted it, child of God. He has trusted you with it for some very wise and loving purpose.

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

It has not come because of *fate* or *bad luck*. It is not simply *just one of those things*. Therefore, accept it from His hands.

One very sure reason why God gives us burdens to bear is that they may draw us closer to Him.

Psalms 55:19b - *.....Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.*

How easily we forget Him and how slack we get sometimes when things go *smoothly*, where there are no *changes*! Your burden, whatever it is, will you accept it from the Lord? Will you take it from His dear hand? This is the first thing to do with life's burdens.

7. WE ARE TO CAST THE BURDEN UPON THE LORD.

The word *cast* here literally means *fling* or *hurl*. It requires and denotes action and effort. Daniel was cast into the lions' den. Read **Daniel 6:7-16**.

Jonah was cast into the sea -

Jonah 1:15 - *So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.*

John the Baptist was cast into prison -

Matthew 4:12 - *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;*

The devil will be cast into the lake of fire -

Revelation 20:10 - *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and*

night for ever and ever.

And you and I are to cast our burdens upon the Lord -

Psalm 55:22 - *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

He is the great Burden-bearer. His gracious word to sinner and to saint is found in -

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.

Here we see a further reason why He gives us these burdens - that in our weakness we may prove His strength and the all-sufficiency of His grace. He wants us to learn the great twofold lesson that - we cannot, but He can.

Read about Paul's heavy burden: from whom it came, why God permitted it, how Paul prayed for it to be removed and what God said to him.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9a - *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.*

Now see what Paul was able to say after God had spoken to him -

2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 - *.....Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

10 *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Your burden, whatever it is, will you cast it upon the Lord? Will you let Him carry it for you? It is too heavy for you!

3. WE ARE TO LEAVE THE BURDEN WITH THE LORD.

Once we have cast our burden upon the Lord, He assumes full responsibility for the burden and for us. He promises to sustain, or uphold, us. How wonderful this is!

Psalm 55:22 - *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

He shall sustain thee, and more - He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Never? No, never!

Psalm 55:22 - (The Amplified Bible) - *Cast your burden on the Lord (releasing the weight of it) and He will sustain you. He will never allow the (consistently) righteous to be moved - made to slip, fall or fail.*

THE WORKER A STEWARD

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: 1 Peter 4:10

1 Peter 4:10 - *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

In the course of my travels I have stayed in hundreds of homes. Some of these have been magnificent, some were less grand, and some were quite humble, but, in every case, I have enjoyed much kindness and wonderful fellowship.

What were all my hosts and hostesses doing? They were opening their homes and extending to me their gift of hospitality.

The Apostle Peter, in -

1 Peter 4:10 - *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

is urging his readers to use this wonderful gift of hospitality. In effect he says, *Some of you have homes in which you live. Now, your homes are a gift from God. You are stewards to use that gift for the blessing of others and for the extension of His kingdom.*

Peter then goes on to say that all Christians should be 'good stewards of the manifold grace of God', or as this expression really means*the many sided grace of God.*

Every Christian is a servant of God, but he is also a steward. There must, therefore, be a distinction between a servant and a steward.

What is this distinction?

A servant is one who serves and is in subjection to his master. A steward is also a servant, but the word 'steward' includes the idea of special responsibility.

God has entrusted certain things to us. We are responsible to Him to use them properly.

For example -

Genesis 15:2 - *And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?*

We are told that Eliezer was the steward of Abraham's household. In other words, Abraham had placed all the affairs of his household and property into the hands of this capable man and had made him responsible for managing all his affairs.

1 Chronicles 28:1-2 - *And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.*

2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

Here we have a beautiful account of the way in which David gathered together all the key people needed in order to undertake the plans for building the temple.

Incidentally, David was not allowed to build it. This became his son Solomon's responsibility in later years.

However, we read that *David assembled all the princes of Israel.....and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king.* Thus we see from this verse what the Old Testament concept was of a steward.

The ten servants, of whom we read in our Lord's parable in -

Luke 19:12-13 - *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.*

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

were stewards. In another translation, the words 'occupy till I come' read 'trade with these until I return'.

Thus we see that these servants were given a responsibility. They were to trade with the pounds their master had given them for that purpose.

It is the custom for wealthy landowners to place their land, their farms and property into the hands and under the direction of a manager, or a steward. Such a man is responsible to care for and administer all the affairs relating to the estate.

But, if we are God's stewards, what has He entrusted to us to administer and dispense for

Him for which He will hold us responsible?

Our life

What a tremendous gift this is that God has bestowed upon us! What wonderful bodies He has given us, with minds to think, hearts to love, wills to choose, and with such infinite capabilities!

Do we recognize the responsibility of stewardship with regard to our lives, to our bodies?

Paul reminds us that -

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.*

If we are stewards of our bodies, we shall discipline our habits in regard to eating, sleeping, working and relaxing so that we become as fit as God would have us for His service.

Our influence

God has given this to all of us. He holds us responsible as to how we use it. Our influence is a trust from God. Paul says -

Romans 14:7 - *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*

We need to remember that, consciously or unconsciously, we all influence others by the way we live, the way we talk and the way we react in all circumstances. God has given to every one of us some power over other lives. This imposes upon us a mighty responsibility.

How are we influencing others? Do we recognize, in this aspect of our daily living, that we are the stewards of the Lord?

Our money and our possessions

As a matter of fact, we should not say 'our' at all, for all that we have is God's. We are only His stewards.

Do you have a bank balance and some investments? Do you own a house, a car, a shop, a business? You are only a steward of these things. God has entrusted them to you for

you to use for His glory. All these possessions of 'mine' are really His, and they are only lent to me.

Regarding my house, for example, I am only the caretaker. If you 'own' a business, you are only the manager of that business.

Do you recognize this trust in regard to the matter of possessions?

Our children

Those of us who are parents have been entrusted with a wonderful gift. If we are Christian parents, God has given us children as a holy trust from Himself. Many Christians recognize this.

When their children are born, they give them at once to the Lord. They act upon the principle that, first of all, these children are God's for Him to do with them what He sees best, and they dedicate them to Him for His special service. Many missionaries were thus given to the Lord on the day of their birth.

In effect, the parents said, *Lord, this lovely little one You have given to us is Yours first of all and You have lent him to us. Thank You for entrusting him to us. Please help us to bring him up in a way which will bring glory to You. As the years go by, please help him to fulfil Your plan for his life.*

A true steward will rejoice at the prospect of his son or daughter being called of God. Unfortunately, there have been occasions when the sacrifice has seemed too great and Christian parents have rebelled and have tried to turn their children away from the mission field as their lifework.

When this happens, it indicates a failure on the part of the parents to recognize that children are a trust from the Lord Who says, as did Pharaoh's daughter -

Exodus 2:9 - *And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.*

Our time

We all have time on our hands to use as we wish, but how do we use it? Paul says -

Ephesians 5:16 - *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

which literally means - 'buy up the opportunities'.

I believe that if every Christian recognized that his time is the Lord's, then there would be no scarcity of dedicated workers in our churches and Christian work generally.

It is a very sad thing that, when the need for workers is so great, the opportunities for service are so glorious and the time is so short, so few are willing to give much or any time to the things of the Lord.

Priorities can easily get mixed up. Time, which could be, and should be, invested for the kingdom of God, is frittered away on secondary, secular and, sometimes, sinful things.

In humble recognition of the lordship of Christ in our lives we need to remember His prior claim to each day as it opens and unfolds before us, and we should be willing as good stewards, to say with Frances R. Havergal -...*Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

Do we fit into this ideal? For it is God's ideal and not man's.

Special talents and gifts

God has endowed all of us with some special talents. These are a trust from Him. It may be a gift of speech, a gift of song or a gift of hospitality in a nice home where some of God's weary servants can find refreshment.

Multitudes of men and women in the forces, students away from home, have been able to thank God for the Christian homes into which they have been welcomed and shown such love and kindness.

Many lonely people likewise, have benefited immensely from the kindness and love of those who have opened their homes to them. Why have these hosts and hostesses been so hospitable?

It is because they have recognized their stewardship in relation to their homes. Some of the talents which God has entrusted are very wonderful. Who, for instance, can estimate the value of a really fine singing voice?

Those who are blessed with beautiful voices face a real test. The world is quick to spot a good voice and to encourage the owner to make his mark on the stage or the concert platform. The financial offers are sometimes very considerable.

Some of the finest singers in the Christian world have turned down very many offers.

Why?

Because their first concern has been to use their gift for the Lord and to sing the gospel to as many people as possible.

The gospel of the grace of God

We have a responsibility to live the gospel, to preach the gospel and to send it forth to the ends of the earth.

The Apostle Paul wrote some very challenging words in -

1 Corinthians 4:1 - *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

He also wrote -

1 Thessalonians 2:4 - *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

All the way through his many years of service, Paul recognized that he was a steward of the gospel and that God had entrusted this message of salvation to him, not only that he might enjoy it and rejoice in its benefits, but that he might share it with others.

The good news that Christ Jesus had come into the world to save sinners and that salvation had been procured and was available to all men, was a holy 'deposit' which God had entrusted to His servant.

Paul acknowledged this in his letter to the church at Rome. He not only said *I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome* and *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*, but he said - *I am a debtor.....*

In other words, he said, *I owe to all men to preach the gospel to them.*

Romans 1:14-16 - *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This is the vision we need to capture, or, if we have lost it, we need to recapture it.

I owe the gospel to my family, to my friends, to my colleagues and to all and sundry.

I am in debt to them.

I am a steward of the gospel. I have been put in trust with the gospel.

Now, as we look further into this important matter of being faithful stewards of the Lord Jesus, and as we look at the various relevant scriptures, we learn some very interesting lessons.

1. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A STEWARD.

There are a number of scriptures which make this perfectly clear. For example, Paul says -

1 Corinthians 12:7 - *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

Again, after he has mentioned a few of the gifts that have been 'given' to Christians, he goes on to say -

1 Corinthians 12:11 - *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

1 Corinthians 12:14 - *For the body is not one member, but many.*

He says much the same thing when he is writing to the Christians at Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:7 - *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

The Apostle Peter also underlines the same truth that every Christian is a steward, for he says -

1 Peter 4:10 - *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

If we are Christians then we are stewards and God has entrusted us with responsibilities for which we are accountable to Him.

8. CHRISTIANS MAY BE GOOD STEWARDS OR BAD STEWARDS.

It is significant to notice that Peter uses the qualifying word 'as *good* stewards of the manifold grace of God'.

In the Bible we are told that there are two kinds of Christians - spiritual and carnal -

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

There are two kinds of servants - faithful and unfaithful -

Matthew 25:21 - *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

There are two kinds of vessels - some to honour and some to dishonour -

2 Timothy 2:20 - *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.*

And there are two kinds of stewards - good stewards and bad stewards.

9. THE PERIOD IN WHICH WE ARE TO EXERCISE OUR STEWARDSHIP S UNTIL THE LORD COMES.

We are here for only a limited time. One day, and it may be soon, our earthly span will be completely ended. Moreover, one day soon the Lord will come. Then the opportunity for exercising and fulfilling our stewardship down here on earth will be over.

What Jesus said in relation to Himself is also true in relation to each one of us -

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.*

The period for exercising our stewardship is until we die or until the Lord comes.

10. WE ARE TO EXERCISE OUR STEWARDSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST AND OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

This thought adds urgency to the whole matter. It challenges us to be diligent, for every Christian will have to give an account of his stewardship. It would be dreadful to be found wanting.

In that day, we shall either receive a reward or we shall suffer loss.

1 Corinthians 3:14-15 - *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

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

Daniel Webster was once asked, *What is the greatest thought that has ever occupied your mind?*

His immediate response was, *The thought of my personal accountability to God.*

He was thinking, of course, of -

Romans 14:12 - *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

If we were to live more in the light of this truth, we would live more carefully and with a greater discipline. Our giving would be different. We would be more loving and considerate in our dealings with others lest we should be -

1 John 2:28 - *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

11. THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENT IN A STEWARD IS NOT SUCCESS , BUT FAITHFULNESS .

It is great to be successful, but our chief concern should be to be faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2 - *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

There is great encouragement here. When we stand before the Lord, He will not speak about our successes but of our faithfulness. To many He will say -

Matthew 25:21 - *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

Will He say that to you?

It is faithfulness and not success which will be rewarded.

6. THE SPECIAL MARK OF A STEWARD IS THAT HE MUST BE WITHOUT BLAME.

Perfection is not the requirement for a steward, nor is this possible.

God demands that we should be blameless, without blame, and this is possible!

Titus 1:7 - *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God;.....*

This equally refers to every believer. This means that we are to live day by day in such a way that no one can point the finger of blame against us for inconsistencies in our lives.

When I was a small boy, I spent some months with an aunt in her home in the country.

One day, when she and my cousins were out, I went into the garden and decided to do some digging.

I was successful - I found a potato!

Excitedly, I went on digging until I had unearthed and stacked up quite a pile of potatoes.

I was elated. But when my aunt returned, I learned, to my consternation, that those 'seed' potatoes had only been planted the day before!

I was wrong, although my intentions were good. But, as a boy of six, I was quite blameless.

12. FAITHFULNESS IN STEWARDSHIP IN THIS LIFE
QUALIFIES US FOR SPECIAL SERVICE IN THE LIFE TO
COME.

In the parable of the nobleman, the faithful servant was commended -

Luke 19:17 - *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been*

faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

So does service down here qualify us for service to which God will appoint us when we get to heaven?

Yes, it means just that.

In his modest way, the servant said -

Well, I've done very little down here since I came to know the Saviour. But it is wonderful to think that I'll be able to serve Him up there forevermore!

Whatever service we are seeking to do for the Lord now, if we discharge our responsibility faithfully, this will qualify us for greater service in glory.

The Lord is looking for faithful stewards.

He is the worthy Lord of the stewards, so let us give Him such devotion and dedication that, in that day, when we shall see His face -

Revelation 22:3-4 - *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:*

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

we shall hear Him saying to us -

Well done.....!

THE WORKER'S CREED

A.D. 46 and TODAY

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: Acts 15:11

Acts 15:11 - *But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

It is very important to believe the right things, and then to have full assurance concerning what we believe.

Peter was engaged in a lively discussion which centered around the question of rites and ceremonies and whether or not these were necessary for salvation.

Acts 15:1 - *And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

Suddenly, he gave his answer in no uncertain terms -

Acts 15:11 - *But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

Here, then, was this apostle's creed. It is the creed of every true Christian. Everybody has a creed or system of belief of one kind or another.

What is the Christian's creed?

Here it is in clear and unmistakable terms. It is not, by any means, complete or comprehensive, but it contains several vital truths which may be described as basic Christian beliefs.

What are these?

13. WE BELIEVE THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF
PERSONS.

We learn this from the words 'even as they'. What do these three words signify?

By looking at -

Acts 15:7-9 - *And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.*

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And

THE WORKER'S WARFARE

STUDY 8

Scripture Portion: 1 John 3:8

1 John 3:8 - *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

A modern translation of these words reads -

The Son of God came to earth with the express purpose of liquidating the devil's activities.

In this one verse the writer gives us one great reason why the Lord Jesus came from heaven to earth. There were, of course, other reasons.

Matthew 5:17 - *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Luke 19:10 - *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

John 14:8-9 - *Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?*

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

Hebrews 9:26 - *For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Here, however, we are told that He came to liquidate the works of the devil!

Satan is a real person having the attributes and characteristics of personality.

What are *the works of the devil* and how does he try to work in the lives of God's people?

14. SATAN OPPOSES ALL REFERENCES TO THE SACRIFICIAL WORK THAT JESUS DID UPON THE CROSS OF CALVARY.

Matthew 16:21-24 - *From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

22 *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

23 *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

24 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Read these verses carefully and you will notice that Jesus came into the world to die and that, when Peter said, **No** to this, it was, in fact, Satan speaking through Peter, trying to turn the Lord aside from the purpose for which He had come into the world.

If there is one subject the devil hates, it is all references to Calvary. Why?

Because Calvary spells his doom.

Today he tries to get Christians, and preachers in particular, to leave out all references to the cross, or to minimize the significance of the Cross. But read again **Matthew 16:24**.

Satan also tries to get Christians to evade the true implications of the Cross, that is, death to sin and self.

God's plan for us is that we should die to ourselves, and dying by crucifixion is a very painful business.

The devil opposes this teaching and tries to prevent us from entering into the experience of -

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

2. SATAN SNATCHES AWAY THE GOOD SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD LEST IT SHOULD FIND LODGMENT IN THE HEART AND BRING FORTH FRUIT

Mark 4:15-16 - *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness.

Whenever the Lord is sowing His Word into the hearts of His people, the devil is there to snatch away the seed.

The Lord is the Sower.

Satan is the great enemy.

How active the devil is when the Word of God is preached, and after the Word of God has been preached! His great effort is to snatch away the good seed of the Word so that no fruit results from the ministry.

It is one thing for us to hear the Word, but quite another thing for us to receive the Word and to put it into practice.

Hebrews 4:2 - *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

Be careful, not only how you enter God's House, but how you leave it. Be on the lookout for Satan!

15. SATAN ATTACKS THE FAITH OF THE CHILD OF GOD.

Luke 22:31-32 - *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

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

The important word to notice in these two verses is the word **faith** . What does this mean?

It means that, in all the experiences of testing and of trial that the Lord permits in the lives of His children, the devil's great object is to get them to lose their faith in God.

When sickness comes, when reverses come, when we experience loss and bereavement, the great temptation comes to us to doubt God and to ask, *Does God Care?*

This is the devil's work. He always attacks the faith of God's people.

He did this with John the Baptist -

Matthew 11:6 - *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

He did this with the disciples who were crossing the sea -

Mark 4:40 - *And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*

Thank God, over against the devil's work, which is to destroy our faith, we have the Saviour's prayers that our *faith fail not* !

Hebrews 7:25 - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

16. THE DEVIL TEMPTS GOD'S PEOPLE TO MAKE A DEFECTIVE CONSECRATION AND TO COMPROMISE IN THE MATTER OF THEIR DEDICATION.

Acts 5:1-4 - *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,*

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Ananias and Sapphira were well known members of the church. There was a great deal of dedicated giving going on, so Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession, but, they made out that they were presenting all the money that they had received for it to the Lord, whereas, in fact, they were keeping back part of it.

They were insincere and dishonest. Their action was altogether hypocritical. Who was behind this action?

Acts 5:3 - *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

What a solemn possibility this is to be able to lie to the Holy Ghost! It is possible for us to do this even when we sing hymns -

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.*

Matthew 12:36-37 - *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

How easy it is for any Christian to keep back part of the price, to retain a little sin, a little of the world, when God says, *Destroy All!*

1 Samuel 15:3 - *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*

17. THE DEVIL TRIES TO FORCE THE CHRISTIAN TO BE
INCONSISTENT IN LIFE AND BEHAVIOUR.

Ephesians 4:25-29 - *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

But is the writer really addressing Christians when he speaks of lying, anger, wrath, stealing, *foul language*.....?

Yes! He is writing to Christians. Every time we are guilty of any of these sins, or any other sins that are not mentioned here, we *give place* to the devil. In other words, the devil gets a foothold in our lives.

2 Corinthians 2:8-11 - *Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

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

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 - *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

In this study, we have taken a glimpse of only some of the ways in which Satan gets to work in the lives of God's people.

Do you think this is a dismal study ? Does it make you feel discouraged? Do you feel that you are pretty helpless against such a powerful enemy?

If so, read again these words -

The Son of God came to earth with the express purpose of liquidating the devil's activities.

Did the Lord Jesus achieve His purpose or did He fail?

Thank God, when He died upon the Cross, He conquered Satan and dealt with sin, death, hell and every evil thing. What is more, we may be -

Romans 8:37 - *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*Jesus, the Name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.*

*Jesus, the prisoner's fetters breaks,
And bruises Satan's head.
Power into strengthless souls He speaks,
And life into the dead.*

THE WORKER'S WITNESS

STUDY 9

Scripture Portion: Acts 1:8

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.*

One of the great and deeply significant names given to Christians is that of *witnesses*. It is a word which appears many times in the Bible.

In **Isaiah 43:10-12** - *Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*

the Lord twice says it of His people, the Jews.

It was after His death and resurrection and just before His ascension that Jesus said, referring to Christians in this dispensation of grace -

Acts 1:8 - *.....ye shall be witnesses unto me.....*

How is the world to be evangelized?

The answer is given to us here, for in this one verse we have what we might rightly call - *The divine plan for world evangelization.*

God's plan is that His own people should be effective witnesses to His saving grace, wherever they are and wherever they go. This is to be the whole work of the whole church for the whole age.

Incidentally, we ought to notice that the word *witness* is the key word in the book of **Acts**. We only have to read this inspired history of the early church to see how readily and rapidly the first Christians got on with the job of witnessing.

Today, some people think the Church is going to sink beneath the waves of humanism, atheism and all the other 'isms' that are so prevalent, but NO!

God has His witnesses everywhere. He has had them through the darkest periods of human history. He has them today, sometimes in the most unlikely places.

In order to grasp the full significance of the privilege and responsibility of witnessing, it will be helpful if we emphasize five lines of truth which are clearly stated in -

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.*

1. THE PEOPLE GOD CHOOSES.

Who are the people whom the Lord chooses to be His witnesses? Notice the personal pronouns in **Acts 1:8** - *ye.....you.....ye.....*

In other words, God chooses men and women, not angels or supermen or even *special* people.

In the first instance, Jesus chose Peter, James, John and other ordinary men and women from the rank and file of life. They were to be His witnesses. They did, in fact, become His witnesses!

They were very ordinary people. On one occasion, their *ordinariness* was very much noticed, for we read in -

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

Have a good look around any church and see the variety of people who are present. These are the kind of folk God chooses to be His witnesses. Some of them may be uneducated or even illiterate. But, if they are Christians, they are qualified to be witnesses for Christ.

The great principle in relation to God's choice of those who serve Him and witness for Him is stated in how -

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 -*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.

Most of the Lord's witnesses, therefore, are ordinary people, though He also chooses some people of noble rank to be witnesses for Him.

The point for us to notice from all this, however, is that God expects every Christian to be a witness. Witnessing is a necessity of a truly saved soul. A light that doesn't shine, a spring that does not flow, a seed that does not grow, is not more an anomaly than a life in Christ that does not witness for Christ.

It is perfectly clear, then, that the people who God chooses to be His witnesses are all those who are saved by His grace.

Every Christian is to be a missionary. Being a missionary means being a witness for Christ and to His saving and satisfying grace and power. Wherever there are people, then witnesses are needed. Wherever Christians live and work, therefore, they are to be the Lord's witnesses.

If you work in a shop, therefore, you are just as responsible to the Lord to be His witness there as any missionary 'on the field'. You are one of the people chosen by God to be His witness. But how does all this work out in a practical way?

2. THE PLAN GOD ADOPTS.

Wherever there is a Christian, there is to be a witness. He wants airmen, soldiers, sailors, tailors, builders, grocers, bankers, nurses, chemists, etc., to be His servants.

What is a witness? A witness is one who gives a testimony that is based on personal knowledge. A witness must tell not what he thinks or supposes or overhears, but what he knows from personal experience.

He must give firsthand and up-to-date evidence. A witness must be able to say, *I know that is true. I was there when it happened.*

John 3:11 - *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

John 9:25 - *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

Acts 22:15 - *For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.*

God's plan, therefore, is that every one of us who loves Him and who belongs to Him should tell what we have seen and heard and what we know of Him and of His grace.

But notice that our testimony is to center upon the Person of Christ Himself.

Acts 1:8 - *.....ye shall be witnesses unto me.....*

We are not to witness to a church, a denomination, movement, a society, a system or a creed. We are to witness to the glorious Person of our Lord and Saviour Himself!

It is important to notice also that, in the case of the Christian, witnessing is not by any means to be only a matter of telling, but primarily it is to be a matter of living. We should certainly use our lips in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We so easily talk about everything else and everyone else, so why not talk about Him?

The psalmist said -

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

After our Lord had healed a man, He said to him -

Mark 5:19 - *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

But, first of all, it is our consistent lives that are to witness for Christ. Notice that our verse says -

Acts 1:8 - *.....ye shall be witnesses unto me.....*

What we are is more important than what we say. But if our lives are witnessing for Him, then our sayings will be effective and powerful. What a glorious plan this is which the Lord has adopted for the evangelism of the world!

Everyone of His children is to go forth into his ordinary sphere of life, and to live and speak for the Lord there.

All this presupposes that a Christian witness must have had a vital, personal experience of faith in Christ, otherwise he cannot be an effective witness by life and by lip. A nominal Christian can never be a true witness.

Before anyone can be a true witness for Christ, he must really know, love and belong to Him. We have already noticed that every Christian is to witness just where he is.

Now we must see the worldwide significance of this.

3. THE PLACE GOD INDICATES.

Where are God's witnesses to go? In -

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 Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

a very definite geographical setting is indicated where the Lord told His early followers that they were to witness.

This was a repetition of His words in what we call the Great Commission. But, in a more specific form as to where they were to begin and how they were to extend the area of

their witnessing -

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.

True, a witness is not necessarily a preacher in the accepted formal sense of that word. Yet our Lord's intention was to make it clear that His people were to go to all people everywhere and tell them about Him and about the salvation which was now available through faith in Him.

This inevitably means that some witnesses must leave their homes and go to other places and other lands in order that they may obey the Lord's commission and to be His witnesses to peoples who have never heard of Him.

Acts 1:8 is our authority for sending out *foreign* missionaries. This commission is obligatory on all Christians in every age.

Obedience to the Lord's commission to take the gospel to all people and to all parts of the world, inevitably meant for the early Christians that some of them had to leave home and loved ones.

The same is true today.

In my early Sunday School days, we used to sing a hymn which began -

The whole wide world for Jesus.

That should be our vision: to make Christ known to people wherever they are!

This being so, consider the following three statements which are the natural application of this truth.

a. In the light of Acts 1:8, as His witnesses, every one of us should be willing to go anywhere for the Lord.

Whoever we are, whatever our age and whatever our circumstances, we should be willing to be the Lord's witnesses in the place of His choice.

He may want us to take a secular job in Africa, primarily in order that we may live there as His witnesses.

On the other hand, He may want us to have special training in order that we may be better qualified to serve Him as a witness in the ministry, or as a missionary, in our own country or overseas.

What He asks for is our willingness to obey Him and to do what He wants in the place of His choice.

Here is another consideration. He may want you to go into hospital to be His witness there. Have you thought of that?

Nobody is keen to go into hospital as a patient, but what an opportunity such an experience presents to a Christian to witness to doctors, nurses and the other patients!

b. In the light of Acts 1:8, young people under the age of thirty, should be especially exercised as to whether or not the Lord would have them be His witnesses where the need is greatest.

Undoubtedly, the need is greater in some lands than in others: in India, Africa or South America, for example, there are millions of people who have not yet ever heard of Christ.

Every young person who has health and strength should be willing to go wherever the Lord would have him go in order to live and to labour for Him there as His witness.

There are vast numbers of people scattered around this world of ours who need someone to go to them and tell them about our Saviour. Many of them are gripped by sin and bound by superstition. Many of them are worshipping false gods and are devotees of a false religion.

They need desperately to know of the One in Whom alone they will find pardon for their sins, peace with God and the power to live happy, holy and useful lives.

Who will go and tell them of Jesus? It is the job of every Christian to be a witness, but some must go where the need is greatest.

Perhaps a fellow or a girl reading these lines, is one whom God would have leave home, friends and a well paid job in order to go to some far off place where there are those needing to hear of Him and to know Him Whom to know is life eternal.

John 7:3 - *His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.*

c. In the light of Acts 1:8, all who would be His witnesses must begin in Jerusalem.

That is to say, we must begin at home. Those to whom our Lord first spoke these words were, in fact, quite literally to begin witnessing for Him in the city of Jerusalem. In obedience to Him, that is exactly what they did.

The application of this to ourselves is quite simple: we are to begin to witness for Christ just where He has placed us, where we live and work and among our own people.

If it is His will for us later to go to some other sphere to witness for Him there, we must nevertheless begin at home. Of course, what we are at home we shall be in any other sphere, no less and no more!

If we are not witnessing here, going there (wherever 'there' may be) will not have the effect of suddenly making us a witness.

Going to the mission field does not make a missionary. Before ever a missionary goes overseas to witness for Christ, he must be a witnessing Christian at home.

God's great heart of love yearns over the whole wide world. His method for evangelizing it is to send forth living witnesses.

I always find the following scripture very challenging -

Romans 10:13-15 - *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

In the light of these words, surely we should be filled with a holy enthusiasm to make Christ known. Being a Christian is the greatest thing in the world. The greatest favour we can do to anyone is to introduce them to Jesus Christ.

We need to ask ourselves - *Where would I be if Christ had never entered my life?* Then we need to think of some non-Christians who have none of the spiritual benefits which we enjoy. They are totally occupied with things which end with the grave.

But who is sufficient for these things? It is never easy to be a witness for the Lord. Indeed, in ourselves we do not have what it takes. Notice, therefore, the divine enabling for this task promised by our Lord Himself.

4. THE POWER GOD SUPPLIES.

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 Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

No one can be an effective witness without the power of the Holy Spirit. Before our Lord began His public ministry, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and He was able to say -

Luke 4:18 - *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

The Lord's first followers obeyed His command and waited for the promise of the Father, the enduement with power, before they began witnessing for Him.

Luke 24:49 - *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

They could not have witnessed in their own strength, any more than we can! An effective witness must have a personal Pentecost.

How does anyone, anywhere, witness effectively for the Lord? The secret is in -

Zechariah 4:6 - *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

But the time is short. Souls are in need and are dying. We must -

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.*

There is a great urgency in this matter of witnessing for Christ.

How long have we got to do it?

5. THE PERIOD GOD GIVES.

How much longer have we in which to evangelize the world?

Until the Lord comes again! **Acts 1:8** is followed by -

Acts 1:11 - *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.*

All these signs of the times proclaim the fact that the coming of Christ is imminent.

If you and I would be His effective witnesses we must be on the job now! The matter is urgent, the time is short, the need is great.

Millions are lost and the Lord Jesus says to each one of us -

I want you.....You.....YOU.....to be My witnesses. Go out into the world and live for Me. Show forth to others, just where you are, that you love Me and know Me.

Tell them who I am, how much I love them and that I long that they should love and know Me too.

Tell them that I died for them and that I rose again and live to be their Saviour and their Friend for time and eternity!

THE WORKER A SERVANT

STUDY 10

Scripture Portion: Acts 20:18-21

Acts 20:18-21 - *And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words which we underline for this study are *serving the Lord*.

In the context in which these words occur, we have an inspired portrait of a true servant of the Lord. Paul was giving his charge to the elders at Ephesus. In it he incorporated his own personal testimony concerning the way in which he had endeavoured to serve the Lord.

You see, we who know and love the Lord are not only His children and members of His family, but we are His servants.

This is not a self-imposed designation. It is not that with any kind of presumption we have taken it upon ourselves to call ourselves God's servants, but it is God Himself Who has made us and Who describes us and uses us as His servants.

The Apostle Paul speaks of himself and Timothy, his son in the faith, in this way in -

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:*

Here, therefore, were the older man and the much younger man, who worked together, prayed together and had fellowship together as fellow-believers, and both were *servants of Jesus Christ*.

The Lord Jesus is described in scripture as the Servant of Jehovah -

Isaiah 42:1 - *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

He is unique in this respect as He is presented to us as the Perfect Servant.

Among the Lord Jesus' followers, however, Paul the apostle was the divinely appointed servant *par excellence*. All that we see and learn of him in the record of his work and in the content of his writings, places him before us as the perfect example of a Christ servant.

We are, therefore, fully justified in looking at Paul and asking, *What are the marks of a true servant of the Lord?*

20. THE FIRST MARK OF A TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS A SURRENDERED WILL.

The phrase, *servant of the Lord*, has in it the whole idea of being a slave. Paul's will had been brought into complete subjection to the Lord's will for him.

In another place he describes himself as *the prisoner of Jesus Christ*.

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

Again, in reference to the Lord, he says -

Acts 27:23 - *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*

In other words, he describes himself as the Lord's *willing slave*.

This surrender of his will to the will of the Lord, this capitulation from the service of self to the service of Christ, took place right at the beginning of his Christian life when he said -

Acts 9:6 - *.....Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?.....*

He had come to realize his identification with the Lord Himself, Who, in the voice of prophecy, had said -

Psalms 40:7-8 - *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

This is the first mark of a true servant of the Lord. He realizes and enters into the truth

of George Matheson's words -

*My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine.
If it would reach the Monarch's throne
It must its crown resign.*

*It only stands unbent
Amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leant
And found in Thee its life.*

How do you fit into this pattern? Is your will laid down? Have you surrendered what you want? Have you bowed in subjection to what God wants?

So many of us call ourselves servants of the Lord, but do we, in fact, serve Him, or do we just serve ourselves or other people?

If we would be truly effective in the service of our Master and would enter into the true meaning of the Master-servant relationship, we must be ready to say with Frances Ridley Havergal -

Take my will, and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.....

We know this to be true in a theoretical sense, but do we know it by experience?

A true servant of the Lord is one who comes to the place where he can say, in the words of his Lord -

Luke 22:42 -*not my will, but thine, be done.*

2. THE SECOND MARK OF A TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS A HUMBLE MIND.

Paul tells us that he served the Lord -

Acts 20:19 -*with all humility of mind.....*

In other words, a servant of God must be like the Saviour Himself Who said,

Matthew 11:29 - *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.*

If there is any position or calling in the world where pride, self-esteem and self-importance should have no place, it is here in the service of the Lord.

The qualification for service is meekness, Christ-likeness. The man who is weak and powerless in himself, has no confidence in the flesh -

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

is the man who can become spiritually strong -

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

for such a man can say with Paul -

2 Corinthians 12:10 - *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Someone once asked an old saint what the first Christian virtue is.

Humility, was the reply.

What is the second virtue?

The old Christian replied, *Humility*.

And the third virtue? persisted the questioner, and the old saint answered again, *Humility*.

In the service of God there is no room for self-seeking, for self-importance or for the spirit of Diotrephes who loved to be first -

3 John 9 - *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

As we think about this mark of humility in the Apostle Paul, we are brought back again to Paul's Master, Who, though He was so glorious and so great, and was One with His Father God, in the 'stoop' of His incarnation He -

Philippians 2:7-8 - *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

This is the 'mind' that must be in us! Paul says -

Philippians 2:3 - *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

Philippians 2:5 - *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus once said -

Matthew 20:26-28 - *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;
27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:
28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Perhaps that is one of the most challenging and humbling statements in the Bible. Even Jesus, great though He was, came not to be waited upon. He came to wait upon and minister to others.

We see an illustration of this in **John, chapter 13**, where we are told that Jesus took a towel and washed the feet of His disciples.

John 13:4-5 - *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.
5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

What a manifestation of His lowliness!

What a need there is for us, who profess to be His servants, to be like Him in this respect!

This is a saving virtue in Christian work, for when there are tensions, upsets, or divisions

among those who are engaged together in the service of God, the cause is nearly always pride on the part of one of the parties.

Somebody wants to have his own way or to have the last word. Somebody is self-opinionated, intolerant, inflexible, PROUD.

Where there is a humble mind in a Christian servant, the devil can gain no ground, but where there is pride he can, and he will, come in like a flood.

Isaiah 59:19 - *So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*

Ministers, deacons and elders are sometimes proud. This is sad, for those who serve the Lord, in public or in private, must have a humble mind because -

Proverbs 23:7 - *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.*

21. THE THIRD MARK OF A TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS A COMPASSIONATE HEART.

Acts 20:19 - *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

Paul tells us that he served the Lord *with many tears*.

He also says -

Acts 20:31 - *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

Here this man of tears puts us to shame! How cold our hearts are and how dry our eyes. How few of us know what it is to weep over others!

Paul knew what it was to shed agonizing and copious tears over sinners who needed to be saved and over saints who had fallen by the way or who needed to know more of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

A Salvation Army officer once wrote to General Booth to tell him that in his most

difficult sphere of service he was distressed because he seemed to be getting no results from his labours.

The General sent back a message of two words: *TRY TEARS!*

It is -

Psalm 126:6a - *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,*

who will -

Psalm 126:6b - *.....doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

Soon after I became a Christian, I heard three preachers, each of whom was a great soul winner. I shall always remember their preaching, but most of all, I shall remember their tears. They were so different from one another, but each man preached with tears of compassion.

Is it any wonder that many souls were saved as the result of their clear, impassioned preaching of the gospel?

a. The first preacher was Gypsy Smith.

I was sitting about twenty feet away from him. When he came to the close of his sermon, he was brushing the tears off his cheeks between every sentence of his appeal.

b. The second preacher was Lionel Fletcher, a man of very different temperament.

He always invited those who would accept Christ to come forward and confess Him openly. When his hearers began to respond, the evangelist's tears began to flow.

c. The third preacher was Mel Trotter, a one time alcoholic who, after his conversion, founded many Rescue Missions on the North American continent.

I was sitting next to him on the platform at the Westminster Central Hall in London. Just before he stood up to preach, he turned to me and said, *Pray for me! I have got to change the message!*

He preached with dynamic eloquence and with a burning passion. Then he made an appeal for men and women to come to Christ. As they came from every part of that large building and stood at the front to indicate their need and acceptance of the Saviour, Mel Trotter was blinded by his tears.

Brethren, where are our tears? Where are my tears? Lord, give us back our tears!

As servants of God we need a surrendered will, a humble mind and a compassionate heart.

But Paul tells us of something else we need.

22. THE FOURTH MARK OF A TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS A STEADFAST SPIRIT.

Paul tells us -

Acts 20:19 - *.....temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.*

Did you ever know a servant of the Lord who was not tested?

What terrific testings came into Paul's life!

At every turn and in every circumstance he was put under intense pressure from the devil and from the enemies of the gospel - all of which were permitted by the Lord for the furtherance of the gospel and for the good of His servant.

We have a very powerful enemy. If he cannot get us down in one way, he will most certainly try to do so in another way. He never gives up, and we must never give way!

Romans 8:37 - *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

In the face of trials, adversities and testings, we need to be men and women of steadfast spirit, otherwise we shall soon give up.

Proverbs 24:10 - *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*

Thank God, we have a mighty refuge into which we can fly at such times!

Proverbs 18:10 - *The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

If we are to be qualified and effective servants of the Lord, we need grit as well as grace. If, for instance, we are called to be leaders in His work, we must recognize that leadership can be a very lonely business.

I shall always be grateful for the help given to me by a friend on one occasion. I was under great pressure at the time. I felt I could easily give up altogether. This good friend, however, knowing of the attacks which seemed to be leveled against me and of my temptation to faint heartedness, said - *Hold on! Leadership is always a lonely business, but the Lord is on your side and all His resources are yours!*

He had, for many years, been the captain of a ship and he knew from personal experience what he was talking about. He could well have given me his timely advice in the words of -

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.*

or he could have added another -

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

God's servants must be men and women of steadfast spirit. They must know how to be stayed upon Jehovah, how to be still and know God as their refuge and strength.

Psalms 46:1 - *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

Psalms 46:10 - *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

They must have the testimony of the psalmist -

Psalms 142:3 - *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*

Psalms 142:5 - *I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*

It is hard to be a true servant of the Lord. Only those who have been given grace by God to have a steadfast spirit are truly qualified for this office.

Paul's description of true servants of God is very comprehensive, as he gives it to us in -

Acts 20:19-21 - *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

He could have stopped at this point and said that those who serve the Lord must have a surrendered will, a humble mind, a compassionate heart and a steadfast spirit.

But he had something of vital importance still to say.

5. THE FIFTH MARK OF A TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

The apostle tells us that he -

Acts 20:20 - *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.*

to those to whom he ministered. This was a tremendous thing to say. All of us who serve the Lord should be able to say it.

See what Paul says in -

Acts 23:1 - *And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*

Acts 24:16 - *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

Paul was not perfect. He had made many mistakes. He often failed, but no one could justly point a finger at him and accuse him.

a. Paul had a clear conscience - EVANGELISTICALLY.

That is, he discharged his responsibility towards the lost.

Acts 20:20-21 - *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,
21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 20:26 - *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*

What a tremendous claim he made!

See what Peter had to say about this very thing.

1 Peter 3:15-16 - *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Have we a clear conscience with regard to lost souls around us? Are we seeking to pay our debt to them?

b. Paul had a clear conscience - DOCTRINALLY.

That is, he was faithful in his proclamation of the truth. We learn this from -

Acts 20:27 - *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

He did not withhold anything that was 'profitable'. A modern translation of this verse renders it -

I never shrank from letting you know the entire purpose of God.....

It is very easy to shrink. Think over the tremendous statement in -

2 Corinthians 4:2 - *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

c. Paul had a clear conscience - FINANCIALLY.

That is, he was not doing God's work for personal gain. We learn this from -

Acts 20:33-34 - *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

There were probably many wealthy people in Ephesus, but rather than take any step or be in any position where he could be criticized and where, by so doing, God's name could be brought into dishonour, Paul worked for his living and made tents so that no one could say that he was in the Lord's work for personal gain.

THE WORKER'S PRAYER THE PRAYER FOR DIVINE QUICKENING

STUDY 11

Scripture Portion: Psalm 80:18

The word we shall consider in this study is the word *quicken* (or quickened, quickeneth, quickening). This word, in one of its forms, occurs twenty-five times in the Bible.

Psalm 71:20 - *Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*

Psalm 80:18 - *So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*

Psalm 119:25 - *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Psalm 119:37 - *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.*

Psalm 119:40 - *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

Psalm 119:50 - *This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.*

Psalm 119:88 - *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*

Psalm 119:93 - *I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Psalm 119:107 - *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.*

Psalm 119:149 - *Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.*

Psalm 119:154 - *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*

Psalm 119:156 - *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.*

Psalm 119:159 - *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.*

Psalm 143:11 - *Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.*

John 5:21 (twice) - *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

John 6:63 - *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

Romans 4:17 - *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

Romans 8:11 - *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

1 Corinthians 15:36 - *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.*

1 Corinthians 15:45 - *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

Ephesians 2:5 - *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).*

Colossians 2:13 - *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,*

hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

1 Timothy 6:13 - *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.*

1 Peter 3:18 - *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

The word means *to bestow life and to preserve life*. This covers our basic need because we need to receive life and to be preserved by life.

We need to receive life initially, which takes place at the time of conversion, but we also need to be preserved by life continually, which refers to God's work of sanctification.

From several scriptures we learn two things.

a. The Holy Spirit is the Quickener.

John 6:63 - *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

1 Peter 3:18 - *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

b. The Word of God is the Instrument.

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to accomplish His quickening work. We learn this from many references in **Psalm 119**. For one example read -

Psalm 119:50 - *This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.*

23. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT QUICKENS US WITH NEW LIFE SO THAT WE BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

Ephesians 2:1 - *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

We are by nature spiritually dead. When the miracle of the New Birth takes place, we are born again by the quickening work of the Holy Spirit.

We learn from -

1 Peter 1:23 - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

2 Peter 1:4 - *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

that the Word of God is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to make us *partakers of the divine nature*. It is the *seed* of the new life which is dropped into our souls and which makes us *alive*.

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

Romans 6:13 - *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

A Christian is one who is 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 3:6 - *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

John 3:8 - *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

and who receives the new life of the risen Lord -

John 1:12-13 - *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.

An illustration of this is found in **Ezekiel 37:1-10**.

24. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT QUICKENS US IN OUR DESIRES TO PRAY AND GUIDES OUR PRAYING.

Psalm 80:18 - *So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*

It is in the indwelling Holy Spirit Who prompts us to pray. For an illustration of this, read -

Acts 9:11 - *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.*

Immediately after his conversion, and as an evidence that he really had been converted, Saul of Tarsus prayed! This is the first exercise of the new life.

Luke 18:13 - *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

As Christians, we are frequently conscious of the Holy Spirit within us urging us to pray. He leads us to the place of prayer and then He shows us how to pray.

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

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

Think how the disciples needed this quickening when they were in Gethsemane. Read **Matthew 26:36-44**.

3. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT QUICKENS US WHEN WE ARE IN DANGER OF GETTING SLACK, DULL AND CARELESS.

Psalm 71:20 - *Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*

The operative word is the word *again*. The psalmist had fallen and he needed to be lifted up. Often our spiritual life flags and we need to be revived.

It is easy to get spiritually out of touch with the Lord and -

to become disobedient -

Jonah 1:1-3 - *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.*

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

to deny the Lord -

Read **Luke 22:54-62**.

to turn away from Him -

John 6:66 - *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

to become carnal -

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?

to walk in the flesh -

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

Galatians 5:25 - *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

to allow wrong attitudes -

Philippians 4:2 - *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

to become lukewarm -

Revelation 3:15-16 - *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

At such times, we need the quickening work of the Holy Spirit to renew our love for the Lord and our determination to please Him.

Notice the significance of the word *so* and of what follows in -

Psalm 119:88 - *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*

25. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT
QUICKENS US WHEN WE ARE IN BONDAGE AND SETS US FREE.

Psalm 119:154 - *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*

How easy it is to get into bondage -

to sin -

Romans 6:12 - *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

to self -

Romans 6:16 - *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

to Satan -

Luke 22:31 - *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.*

The psalmist prayed -

Psalm 119:154 - *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*

This reminds us of the Saviour's present work of intercession on our behalf.

Hebrews 7:25 - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

How is this prayer of intercession answered?

The Lord Jesus Himself, from the throne, is the great Liberator as we learn from -

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.*

The medium through which He works is the Word of God.

5. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT INSTRUCTS US IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ENABLES US TO PLEASE GOD.

Psalms 119:40 - *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

The psalmist's prayer was simply that God would show him the right way and enable him to walk in that way.

This is exactly what the Holy Spirit does as we turn to the Word of God with the desire to hear God speaking to us -

Psalms 119:18 - *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

as we meditate upon what we read -

Psalms 119:15 - *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

and as we compare scripture with scripture -

Acts 17:11 - *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

This is the only way to discover the kind of life God wants us to live and to receive the divine enabling to live it. This is why we must not neglect our Bible.

26. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WEANS US FROM WORLDLINESS AND SETS OUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE.

Compare -

Psalms 119:36-37 - *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

Colossians 3:1-2 - *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

How can we be weaned away from worldliness and become absorbed with those things which are glorifying to the Lord? It is so easy to become a worldly Christian. What a tragedy it is when this happens!

The psalmist prayed that he might have his eyes turned away from beholding *vanity*, which simply means *that which is vain, empty, unprofitable, useless and perishable*. What a description of the world!

1 John 2:15-17 - *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

7. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT COMFORTS US AND SUSTAINS US

IN TIMES OF TRIAL AND AFFLICTION.

Psalm 119:92-93 - *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

The writer seems to say, *If God hadn't quickened me when I was in the midst of trouble, I would have perished. But God did quicken me and He did it through His law.*

Compare -

Psalm 143:11 - *Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.*

We all experience trial, trouble and testing. At such times we should turn to the Word of God and wait for the Holy Spirit, through the Word, to quicken us with His sustaining grace.

1 Peter 4:14 - *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

Compare -

Psalm 119:49-50 - *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

50 This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

John 14:26 - *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

In concluding this study, please notice again that the Holy Spirit is the Quickener and that He quickens us through the Word of God.

This means that, in order to benefit from His quickening ministry, we must do two things-

1. **Ephesians 5:18** - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*
2. **Colossians 3:16** - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

THE WORKER'S REWARD

STUDY 12

Scripture Portion: Psalm 19:11

Psalm 19:11 - *Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

God promises a reward to all who keep His commandments. There is a reward for obedience. Some of God's children are disobedient. Alas, all of us are at times. But others are obedient. If, and as, and when, we obey Him, the Lord promises us a rich reward - A *GREAT REWARD*.

The reference is not primarily to future rewards, which we shall receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but to rewards that we receive here and now.

One day we must all appear before the Lord to be rewarded, or to suffer loss, according to the way we have lived and laboured for Him.

1 Corinthians 3:9-15 - *For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

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

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 5:10 - *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.*

But these words in **Psalm 19:11** speak of a reward of obedience that is to be received and enjoyed in this present life. Notice the words *in* and *is* in the actual process of doing God's will and of keeping His commandments - *there is great reward*.

If we obey God, we shall be rewarded in the very act of obedience.

Before we think about the reward which God promises and gives for obedience, let us look at -

Psalm 19:7-11 - *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

27.

THE WORKER'S JOURNEY

STUDY 13

Scripture Portion: Psalm 23:4

The Rev. John McNeill, the Scottish evangelist and preacher, likened this glorious **Psalm 23** to a well tuned harp of six strings. Each verse is a string and each string is so perfectly tuned by the divine Musician that any fingers that stray among the strings, however artlessly, should bring forth some music from them.

It is the fourth string I want to strum just now.

Psalm 23:4 - *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

The psalmist likens the Christian life to a journey.

Psalm 23:1 - *The LORD is my shepherd;.....*

Have you started the heavenly pilgrimage there? Can you say, *He is my Shepherd?*

The end of the believer's journey is in -

Psalm 23:6 - *.....and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

If you have started the journey in **verse 1**, you will finish it in **verse 6**. In between are all the varied and wonderful experiences through which you will pass as you journey on to the house of the Lord, where you will dwell for ever.

Take a good look at our text and notice -

28. THE PATHWAY ON WHICH WE ARE TRAVELING.

What kind of a pathway is it? See what David says -

Psalm 23:4 - *.....though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,.....*

The path along which you and I are traveling is a dark, gloomy valley.

David is thinking of those dark ravines with high towering walls that seem to go up to heaven, through which he had often led his sheep.

For all of us, this life is a valley of experiences. The road that leads from grace to glory must go by the way of the valley. It is a vale of tears and sorrows, trials and disappointments.

Come with me a moment and look into the valley through which we are traveling. Do you see that little home? The curtains are drawn. There is sickness. There is death.

Listen! What are those noises? A plane has crashed!

That is the valley, that is something we all encounter on the journey of life.

See how slowly that woman walks. She is in the valley of the shadow.

Why is that man walking with a crutch? He is in the valley, too.

Who is that - a policeman?

Yes, of course, we are in the valley! Whichever way we look we see the valley and the shadow. As one of our best known hymns puts it: *Change and decay in all around I see.....*

No traveler on the journey of life is exempt from the valley of the shadow experiences. Rich or poor, king or beggar, young or old, we are all in the dark, gloomy valley.

Jesus said -

John 16:33 - *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

But surely our text refers to death? Perhaps it does, but not exclusively. Even in life we are in the midst of death. There is no need to wait for death in order to experience the shadows and valleys of life.

Life for us all is a living death. We are dying all the time. Yes, we are traveling along a dark, gloomy pathway.

But David tells us in our text about -

2. THE PROSPECT THAT IS BEFORE US.

What a wonderful prospect the child of God has, for, with the Lord as our Shepherd, our future is bright indeed!

The words I want you to notice are - *walk through!*

Are you in the valley of sorrows, disappointments, trials or darkness? Are the dark shadows falling depressingly across your path? Is the part of the road along which you are at present traveling very rough?

Listen - you are traveling through!

There is radiant brightness and perfect joy for you at the end of the journey, *if* the Lord is your Shepherd.

In Damascus, there is a long, dark lane which ends in a tunnel. The traveler descends and passes through the tunnel. On the other side, he emerges into the courtyard of a beautiful oriental palace, flashing with color and sunlight!

We are now in the valley, the tunnel, but we are going through to the sunlight of our heavenly home.

What a prospect! Every day that passes, we are a day's march nearer home.

Have you ever stopped and thought of all the sin, sorrow and suffering there is in the valley of this life? Have you then asked, *Is this all God made us for? Is this the best He can give us? Must we only know 'blood and toil and sweat and tears? Will the doctor and the surgeon be always needed? Is there nothing better than this?*

Of course, there is! We are going through to the other side!

I knew a man in business who was a better churchman than he was a Christian. One day he said to me, *I want to tell you something that really amuses me.*

He then went on to tell me about a certain bishop who was convalescing after a very

serious illness. The thing which amused my friend was that he had heard that bishop preach on heaven and how marvelous it will be to be there.

Within a few days, the bishop became so ill that everyone thought he was going to heaven, but they called in doctors and specialists to do all they could to keep him alive on this earth.

When they had succeeded in saving his life, the bishop that was so keen to go to heaven went for a Mediterranean cruise so that he could get his health fully restored and stay on earth for a bit longer!

It seemed a great joke to my business friend.

If heaven is our home, and we are going there, and it is so much more beautiful and glorious than anything here, why are we so loath to go there?

It is because God has given us an instinct within us which makes us want to live on this earth as long as possible.

Thus, when we are sick, we strive to get better. But let us not lose the optimism that should characterize us as travelers to our heavenly home.

Notice a third thing in our text.

29. THE PERSON WHO GOES WITH US.

Psalm 23:4 -*though I walk through.....thou art with me.*

We are not alone in the valley. David knew that, whenever his sheep were going through the valley, he was there with them.

In the same way, if he was in the valley, then the Lord, his Shepherd, would be with him. How wonderful - he would never be alone!

Do we sufficiently count on the Lord's presence with us? Does the presence of our loved ones mean more to us than His presence? Is His presence as real as theirs?

It should be, and much more so. Let us, therefore, count on His presence more. There is never a shadow, but He is there. In every valley experience of life, He is there - our

Lord and Shepherd, the Mighty God.

THEN, the psalmist tells us in this text about -

4. THE PERIL WE OVERCOME.

Psalm 23:4 -*I will fear no evil.....*

I will fear nothing. No fear?

What is the greatest peril in your life and mine?

It is fear, and fear is our greatest peril because, while we fear we do not trust. Fearing and trusting are opposites.

How can I get rid of fear - fear of the past, the present and the future?

O, the havoc fear, and its twin brother worry, play in the lives of men and women!

Listen!

Psalm 23:4 -*I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.....*

Listen again!

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.

Isaiah 43:1-2 - *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Here is the antidote for all fear, worry and anxiety - the realized presence of Christ.

Do you remember when the disciples were crossing the lake, their little craft was tossed with the waves, the wind was contrary, they were troubled and they cried out in fear?

Then what happened? Jesus came and said,

Matthew 14:27 - *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*

When we realize His presence, fear and doubt and anxiety go.

Have you overcome this peril?

Once, when Paul was afraid to preach, the Lord said to him,

Acts 18:9-10 - *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Then Paul -

Acts 18:11 - *.....continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

The realized presence of the Lord banished Paul's fears. The same can be true of you. But there is something else our text emphasizes about the journey of life.

30. THE PROTECTION WE ENJOY.

Psalm 23:4b - *.....thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

David knew it. Very often, as he had been leading his sheep through the valley, a lion or a bear had lurked near to harm the sheep. Very frequently he had to protect his flock with his rod and staff. The rod was a heavy club with which to slay any animal. The staff was a shepherd's crook with which to restrain the sheep from wandering.

How we need this twofold protection!

First, we need the rod to protect us from all the outward attacks of Satan.

Second, we need the staff to keep us from all the inward waywardness of self.

We are such silly sheep - *Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.* But He gives to us His wonderful protection right to the end of the journey.

What a comfort!

Psalm 23:4b - *.....thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

An unbeliever once said to a Christian, *Supposing when you get to the end of life's journey, you find there is no such place as heaven after all?*

Well, said the Christian, *I shall say to myself, 'You've had a wonderful time getting here, anyhow!'*

We know that one day we shall have passed through the valley and we shall be -

Psalm 23:6b - *.....in the house of the LORD for ever.*

What a grand time we are having, even in the valley, with the presence of our Lord and Saviour ever with us!

*Thus, when we come to the end of life's journey,
Think of the battles we lost and we won -
Then we shall see it was worth all the conflict,
And, best of all, we shall hear His **Well done!***