

***WHAT EVERY
CHRISTIAN
WORKER
SHOULD KNOW***

PART # 1

Student Manual

Studies 1 - 13

STEPHEN NEMETH LECTURES

What Every Christian Worker Should Know

Part #1

Student Manual

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Stephen Nemeth Lectures

THE WORKER'S PRIVILEGE

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: 1 Chronicles 4:23

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

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

We are to think of the importance for a Christian -

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

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

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

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

By way of introduction, notice the following: -

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

He is greater than any earthly king -

1 Timothy 6:15 -

Revelation 17:14 -

He was born King -

Matthew 2:2 -

He declared Himself to be a King -

John 18:37 -

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

John 19:19 -

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

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

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

John 15:4 -

An Old Testament illustration is found in -

Psalms 91:1 -

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

This is emphasized in -

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

We are engaged in the King's business.

1 Samuel 21:8 -

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

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

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 -

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

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

Every Christian has been saved to serve.

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

What for?

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

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

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

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

Why has the Lord saved us?

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

Ephesians 2:10 -

but throughout eternity -

Revelation 22:3 -

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

Matthew 20:6 -

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

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

Notice the words -

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

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

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

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

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

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 -

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

Notice the importance of the little word *there* -

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

They served him just where they were.

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

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

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

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

What for?

1 Chronicles 4:23 -

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

a. In order to become like Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18 -

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

Acts 4:13 -

b. In order to be trained in His ways.

When the Lord chose His disciples, we read -

Mark 3:13-14 -

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

Communion must come before service.

Acts 6:4 -

c. In order to receive our instructions.

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

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

d. He wants our fellowship.

John 15:14-15 -

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

This kind of intimate fellowship has to be cultivated.

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

e. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

John 15:4-5 -

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

We have a wonderful picture in -

Mark 16:19-20 -

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

John 14:12 -

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

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 -

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THE WORKER'S COMMISSION

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: Matthew 21:28

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

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

First: that they should be holy.

Second: that they should be happy.

Third: that they should be helpful, or useful.

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

Matthew 21:28 -

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

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

1. SON - describes the basis of Christian service.

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

John 3:3 -

John 3:5 -

Relationship is the first qualification for service.

Sonship must precede service.

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

John 1:11-13 -

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

Titus 3:5 -

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

2 Timothy 3:5 -

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

2. GO - describes the authority of Christian service.

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

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

Matthew 28:19-20 -

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

Psalm 126:6 -

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

2 Kings 7:3-9 -

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

Luke 14:23 -

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

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

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

This is a solemn charge. Is it true?

Matthew 9:36-38 -

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

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 -

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

2 Corinthians 6:1 -

All around us men and women are filled with tremendous enthusiasm for the things that

they are doing. Are we enthusiastic for the things of the Lord?

4. TODAY - describes the time of Christian service.

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

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

Matthew 21:28 -

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

John 9:4 -

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

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

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

Ephesians 2:12 -

Truly, the King's business requires haste!

1 Samuel 21:8 -

Compare -

Hebrews 3:7 -

5. VINEYARD - describes the sphere of Christian service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The need of the lost -

Matthew 9:36 -

The need for labourers -

Matthew 9:37 -

The way to secure laborers -

Matthew 9:38 -

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

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

Can you say that?

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

to represent Him effectively for His glory.

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

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THE WORKER'S POSTURE

STUDY 3

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

Key Verses -

1 Chronicles 17:16 -

Luke 10:39 -

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

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

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

Matthew 15:8 -

for an indication of this terrible possibility!

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

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

Matthew 6:6 -

Compare -

Hebrews 10:25 -

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

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

a. Relaxation.

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

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

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

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

b. Submission.

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

At whose feet?

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

How great He is and how small they were.

Isaiah 57:15 -

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

c. Expectation.

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

How could this be?

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

Isaiah 6:1-8 -

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

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

a. We see His face.

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

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

Compare -

Psalm 34:5 -

2 Corinthians 3:18 -

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

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,*

*And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

b. We hear His word.

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

Psalm 85:8 -

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

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

1 John 1:9 -

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

Jeremiah 31:3 -

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

John 10:28-29 -

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

Hebrews 13:5-6 -

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

Philippians 4:19 -

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

Galatians 6:9 -

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

Isaiah 41:10 -

c. We receive His grace.

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

And Mary did.

Luke 10:38-42 -

And Paul did.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 -

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

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

2 Corinthians 9:8 -

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

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

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

Do you have a white handkerchief outside your *tent*?
David the king came and sat before the Lord.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet.

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

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THE WORKER'S CONFESSION

STUDY 4

Scripture Portion: Psalm 22:6

Key Verse -

Psalm 22:6 -

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jeremiah 17:9 -

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

What we need to do is to cultivate the Christian grace of humility, or recognizing that, of ourselves, we are absolutely nothing and that our place is to get down low at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

When we get there, He will say to us what He said to Jacob of old in:-

Isaiah 41:14 -

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

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

1. FIRST, HE CARES FOR WORMS.

Isaiah 41:14 -

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

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

Is that all?

No, look again at this verse - He is -

Isaiah 41:14 -

This should fill us with wonder, love and praise.

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

1 Peter 1:18-19 -

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

Yes, God cares for worms!

2. GOD ALSO SPEAKS TO WORMS.

Notice the words in -

Isaiah 41:14 -

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

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

He does, and the special thing He says is -

Isaiah 41:14 -

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

Isaiah 41:14 -

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

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

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

3. THEN, GOD TRANSFORMS WORMS.

Look again at -

Isaiah 41:14 -

To whom is it addressed?

It is addressed to Jacob, and Jacob was his real name. It was Jacob who was transformed by the Lord and re-named Israel. Jacob, the supplanter, became Israel, *a prince with God*.

Genesis 32:24-30 -

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

Think how wonderfully He transformed -

the life of Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 -

the life of David -

Acts 13:22 -

the life of Isaiah -

Isaiah 6:1-8 -

the life of Jonah -

Jonah 3:1-2 -

the life of Peter -

Luke 22:32 -

and the life of Paul -

Acts 9:1 -

Acts 9:5-6 -

Acts 9:17-18 -

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

God transforms worms.

4. ANOTHER THING: GOD USES WORMS.

Isaiah 41:15-16 -

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 -

2 Corinthians 4:7 -

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

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

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

Compare -

John 3:30 -

1 Peter 5:5-6 -

5. FINALLY, GOD EXALTS WORMS.

We learn this from the last part of -

Isaiah 41:16 -

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

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

Ephesians 2:6 -

Compare -

Isaiah 33:16 -

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

Colossians 1:18 -

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

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

Psalm 22:6 -

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

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

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

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THE WORKER'S IMPORTANT LESSON

STUDY 5

Scripture Portion: John 3:30

Key Verse - **John 3:30** -

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

In this chapter, the Lord Jesus is presented as -

the Son of Man -

John 3:13 -

the Atoning Saviour -

John 3:14 -

the Bestower of eternal life -

John 3:15 -

the Son of God -

John 3:16 -

the Anointed One -

John 3:28 -

the Bridegroom -

John 3:29 -

the One Who is above all -

John 3:31 -

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

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

Luke 1:7 -

Luke 1:13 -

Luke 1:18 -

Luke 1:24 -

Luke 1:57 -

He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth -

Luke 1:15 -

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

Isaiah 40:3 -

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

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

John's disciples were upset about this.

John 3:25-26 -

But John had the answer -

John 3:27-30 -

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

What have these challenging words to say to us?

They immediately place before us several propositions.

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

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

the carnal and the spiritual -

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 -

the conquered and the conquerors -

Romans 7:18-25 -

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

2 Timothy 2:20-21 -

those who walk carelessly and those who walk worthily -

Colossians 1:10 -

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

Romans 8:2 -

or, in other words, those in whose lives self is increasing, or Christ is increasing.

This is very solemn, for we all come somewhere in these categories.

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

What is a Christian?

A Christian is: CHRIST - IN.

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

NO!

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

- not only to be resident but to be President,

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

or to sum up -

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

This is the meaning of -

Galatians 4:19 -

Ephesians 3:19 -

1 Thessalonians 4:3 -

4. THESE WORDS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ALSO DESCRIBE THE

DEEP LONGING OF EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN.

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

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

In Theodore Monod's hymn,

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

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

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

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

This expresses the desire of every true Christian.

Another of our hymns puts it like this:

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

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 15:9 -

later as the least of all saints!

Ephesians 3:8 -

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

1 Timothy 1:15 -

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

Acts 13:9 -

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

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

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

It was Tauler who said,

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

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

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

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

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

5. HOW CAN I DECREASE AND CHRIST INCREASE?

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

a. *We must die to ourselves.*

This is what Paul meant in -

Galatians 2:20 -

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

Romans 6:11 -

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

b. *We must depend upon the Holy Spirit.*

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

Read carefully the following references.

Romans 8:2-5 -

Galatians 5:16 -

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

c. *We must delight in the Lord.*

John the Baptist spoke of the Bridegroom -

John 3:29 -

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

Romans 7:4 -

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

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

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

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

She decreases and he increased.

This is the lesson we all have to learn.

NOTES

THE WORKER'S CONFLICT

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: Colossians 2:1

Key Verse - Colossians 2:1 -

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

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

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

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

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

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

-

Colossians 2:1-5 -

1. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT.

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

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

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

Doubtless, the guards in Paul's hired house -

Acts 28:30 -

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

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

Romans 9:1-3 -

2. THE INTENSITY OF THE CONFLICT.

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

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

In his writings, the apostle frequently referred to the Greek races and games.

This idea is contained in the following references -

1 Corinthians 9:24-26 -

1 Timothy 6:12 -

Hebrews 12:1 -

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

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

Ephesians 6:12 -

Colossians 1:29 -

3. THE SUBJECTS OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:1 -

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

Colossians 1:28 -

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

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

Romans 10:1 -

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

Do we share this concern for the welfare of the babes in Christ? There would be fewer

losses from our assemblies and memberships if more Christians knew more of this kind of conflict.

4. THE NECESSITY OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:4 -

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

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

Colossians 2:8 -

Do such dangers exist today? They certainly do!

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

In addition to the unbelief of many professing Christian teachers and leaders, there is the presence on every hand of false cults.

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

Do we feel the same?

5. THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFLICT.

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

Colossians 2:2-3 -

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

a. That they might be ENCOURAGED.

The word *comforted* means *encouraged* -

Colossians 2:2 -

Discouragement is the first enemy that attacks the new convert.

b. That they might be ENAMORED.

Paul prayed that their hearts might be -

Colossians 2:2 -

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

c. That they might be ENRICHED.

Paul prayed that they might be -

Colossians 2:2 -

Ephesians 1:3 -

Colossians 2:9-10 -

d. That they might be ESTABLISHED.

Paul prayed that they might have -

Colossians 2:2 -

Compare -

1 Thessalonians 1:5 -

Hebrews 6:11 -

e. That they might be ENLIGHTENED.

Paul prayed that they might -

Colossians 2:2 -

Colossians 2:3 -

6. THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CONFLICT.

Colossians 2:5 -

Though Paul was separated from these Christians by a long distance geographically, he was actually with them in spirit.

As one translator rendered it -

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

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

7. THE SECRET OF THE CONFLICT.

Who is sufficient for these things?

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

The answer is in -

2 Corinthians 3:5 -

<i>NOTES</i>

THE WORKER'S PERIL

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: Luke 9:55

Key Verse -

Luke 9:55 -

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

What do our Lord's challenging words tell us?

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

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

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

We, too, have been called and chosen by Him. Perhaps we have walked in fellowship with Him for many years,, yet it may be true that, in many respects, we are out of touch, out of harmony and out of sympathy with Him.

We are so unlike Him, for we have a wrong spirit and the Lord has to rebuke us and say, *Your spirit is wrong.*

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

1. THE PROFESSIONAL OR OFFICIAL SPIRIT.

Luke 9:12 -

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

Luke 9:6 -

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

Luke 9:12 -

How different was our Lord's loving concern.

Luke 9:13 -

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

2. THE IMPULSIVE, UNDISCIPLINED SPIRIT.

Luke 9:33 -

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

John 18:26 -

Notice the last five words in -

Luke 9:33 -

Peter was out of touch and spiritually blind.

He suggested building three tabernacles. In making this suggestion, he missed the deep

significance of the occasion because he was only concerned about the external things.

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

3. THE FAITHLESS AND PRAYERLESS SPIRIT.

Luke 9:37-41 -

What had happened to these disciples?

The Lord had given them -

Luke 9:1 -

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

Luke 9:41 -

Matthew 17:19-21 -

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

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

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

4. THE BLIND, UNDISCERNING SPIRIT.

Luke 9:44-45 -

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

John 16:12 -

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 2:10 -

1 Corinthians 2:14 -

5. THE SELF-SEEKING, AMBITIOUS SPIRIT.

Luke 9:46 -

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

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

Is it possible that you are like that?

Notice what Jesus did in dealing with this wrong spirit.

Read carefully -

Luke 9:47-48 -

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

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

6. THE SECTARIAN SPIRIT.

Luke 9:49-50 -

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

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

Galatians 3:28 -

7. THE VINDICTIVE, INTOLERANT SPIRIT.

Luke 9:54 -

Now read -

Luke 9:55-56 -

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

We must certainly, in this day of apostasy -

Jude 3 -

But also heed -

2 Timothy 2:24-25 -

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

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

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

Psalm 51:10 -

Psalm 19:14 -

NOTES

THE WORKER'S MARKS

STUDY 8

Scripture Portion: Galatians 6:17

Key Verse -

Galatians 6:17 -

The Apostle Paul wore a badge which marked him out as being a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

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

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

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

So Paul compared himself with these judaizing teachers, who were subverting the Galatian believers.

He asked, *Have they the marks of the Lord Jesus upon them? No? But I have!*

What is the proof of our attachment to Christ? Is it the words we speak?

Yes, but there should be other distinctive marks about our lives which identify us as Christians.

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

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

Paul had in mind a common custom in the olden days, namely, that of branding certain people with a hot, searing iron.

For example - slaves were branded as a mark of ownership, or as a mark of shame. If a slave ran away and was recaptured, his master would brand him as a mark of shame and ignominy.

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

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

Philippians 1:1 -

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

1 Corinthians 9:22 -

They were brand marks of the soldier -

2 Timothy 4:7 -

And they were marks of devotion and fidelity -

2 Corinthians 5:14 -

But what were the actual marks?

They were the bodily scars and blemishes that he bore as the result of persecutions which he had encountered because of his faithfulness to Christ.

A description of the fearful physical suffering which the apostle endured is listed in -

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 -

Notice five kinds of suffering mentioned.

a.in prisons more frequent.....

Compare -

Acts 16:23 -

Ephesians 3:1 -

b.in deaths oft...

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

Acts 14:19-20 -

Compare with -

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 -

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

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

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

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

Acts 16:22-23 -

e.once was I stoned.....

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

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

Do these scars put us to shame?

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

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

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

Acts 5:40-42 -

Revelation 2:10 -

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

The immediate application of Paul's words cannot be made to many of us.

But there is a spiritual application which applies to each and all who are Christ's true disciples.

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

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

a. A cluster of fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23 -

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

b. A spirit of meekness.

Galatians 6:1 -

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

Galatians 5:26 -

Compare -

Matthew 11:28-30 -

c. A willingness to share the burdens of others.

Galatians 6:2 -

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

d. A willingness to help support those who minister.

Galatians 6:6 -

Compare -

1 Corinthians 9:7-15 -

e. A life made up of well doing.

Galatians 6:9-10 -

Do we go about *doing good*?

Acts 10:38 -

f. A complete separation from the world.

Galatians 6:14 -

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

John 17:15-16 -

g. A glorying in the cross.

Galatians 6:14 -

What does this mean?

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

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

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

Luke 22:42 -

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

2 Timothy 4:6-8 -

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THE WORKER'S VICTORY

STUDY 9

Scripture Portion: **Ephesians 6:10**

Key Verse - **Ephesians 6:10** -

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

They are to be -

Ephesians 6:10 -

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

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

Compare the following references in **Ephesians** -

2:2 -

2:10 -

4:1 -

4:17 -

5:2 -

5:8 -

5:15 -

Wives -

Ephesians 5:22-24 -

Husbands -

Ephesians 5:25-31 -

Children -

Ephesians 6:1-3 -

Fathers -

Ephesians 6:4 -

Servants -

Ephesians 6:5-8 -

Masters -

Ephesians 6:9 -

All these people are told how to walk!

But, suddenly, the apostle changes the metaphor.

Ephesians 6:10 -

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

Romans 8:37 -

as we -

Ephesians 6:11 -

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

Ephesians 1:1 -

children -

Ephesians 1:5 -

believers -

Ephesians 1:13 -

and servants -

Ephesians 6:5 -

but we are also soldiers.

Compare -

Ephesians 6:11 -

1 Timothy 6:12 -

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

1 Timothy 6:12 -

2 Timothy 4:7 -

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

1. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT.

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

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

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

a. It is a real warfare.

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

Ephesians 6:11-12 -

b. It is a conflict between real antagonists.

Who are they?

The Lord on the one hand -

Ephesians 6:10 -

and *the devil* on the other hand -

Ephesians 6:11 -

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

Ephesians 6:10 -

and as *saints* in -

Ephesians 6:18 -

The allies of Satan are described in -

Ephesians 6:12 -

c. It is a fierce conflict.

Ephesians 6:12 -

shows us how deadly a fight it is.

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

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

Ephesians 6:12 -

This implies close-up fighting.

e. It is a spiritual conflict.

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

Luke 12:4 -

This is not far-fetched or fanciful. It is God's revealed truth.

Let us accept it, for only by so doing shall we be fortified for the fray and spurred on to -

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

2. THE CHARACTER OF THE ENEMY.

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

a. *He is a real person.*

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

Compare the following references.

Job 1:6 -

Isaiah 14:12 -

Matthew 4:10 -

Matthew 6:13 -

Matthew 9:34 -

Matthew 10:25 -

Matthew 25:41 -

Luke 4:12 -

John 8:44 -

John 12:31 -

2 Corinthians 2:11 -

1 Thessalonians 2:18 -

1 Thessalonians 3:5 -

b. He occupies an exalted position.

Ephesians 2:2 -

indicates his control as prince and ruler over evil spirits.

John 12:31 -

John 14:30 -

John 16:11 -

show his domination in the lives of -

Ephesians 2:2 -

He has a kingdom -

Matthew 12:26 -

He is -

2 Corinthians 4:4 -

He counterfeits true Christianity -

1 Corinthians 10:20-21 -

2 Corinthians 11:14 -

Revelation 2:9 -

c. He is very powerful.

Acts 26:18 -

His power is subtle -

2 Corinthians 11:14 -

sinister -

Colossians 1:13 -

active -

Ephesians 2:2 -

supernatural -

2 Thessalonians 2:9 -

and destructive -

Hebrews 2:14 -

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

What, then, is the secret of victory?

3. *SECRET OF VICTORY.*

Ephesians 6:10-18

reveals the following threefold secret.

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

Go through -

Ephesians 6:10 -

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

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

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

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

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

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

Luke 9:62 -

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

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

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

Psalm 51:6 -

John 8:32 -

3 John 4 -

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

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

This covers very vital organs.

We must stand firm in Christ Who is our righteousness. We must be righteous in our life.

1 John 3:7 -

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

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

Isaiah 26:3 -

Philippians 4:7 -

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

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

Romans 1:17 -

2 Corinthians 5:7 -

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

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

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 -

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

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

Matthew 4:4-10 -

Compare -

Hebrews 4:12 -

c. We must maintain our communion with Christ.

This is brought before us in -

Ephesians 6:18 -

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

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THE WORKER'S CONFIDENCE

STUDY 10

Scripture Portion: Romans 14:8

Key Verse -

Romans 14:8 -

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

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

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

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

Romans 14:8 -

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

Compare -

Psalms 90:9-10 -

Proverbs 27:1 -

James 4:13-15 -

1 Peter 1:24 -

What we do know, however, is that -

Romans 14:8 -

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

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

1. THE PRIVILEGE WE ENJOY.

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

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

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

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

Genesis 5:21-24 -

to talk with Him like Moses -

Exodus 33:9 -

to be guided by Him like David -

Psalms 32:8 -

to be provided for by Him -

Psalm 37:25 -

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

Philippians 4:4-7 -

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

John 20:28 -

b. Think of the privilege of serving the Lord.

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

Luke 2:49 -

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

John 20:21 -

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

2 Corinthians 5:20 -

We are witnesses unto Him.

Acts 1:8 -

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

Matthew 28:18-20 -

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

2. THE APPOINTMENT WE KEEP.

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

It is referred to in

Hebrews 9:27 -

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

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 -

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 -

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

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

a. Death is a blessed experience for the Christian.

Link together -

2 Corinthians 5:8 -

Philippians 1:23 -

Revelation 14:13 -

and you will see this fact clearly stated.

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

Psalm 116:15 -

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

Philippians 1:21 -

b. The Lord Jesus has conquered death and has removed

death's sting.

We learn this by a comparison of -

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 -

Romans 14:8-9 -

We must all keep this appointment. But we need not be afraid, for all will be well - that is, if we really belong to the Lord. There is no need to be fearful of death or of the Lord's return, if it should be our privilege to go without dying, for the One Who is coming for us is *this same Jesus*.

John 14:1-3 -

Acts 1:9-11 -

3. THE CONFIDENCE WE HAVE.

What is our confidence? This does not mean that we shall not suffer, that we shall have no pain or that we shall escape trials. Our confidence is that *we are the Lord's* and that is all that matters. We belong to Him.

We can say -

Song of Solomon 6:3 -

Song of Solomom 7:10 -

a. *We are the Lord's here and now.*

While we live upon the earth and serve Him, we are His -

by election -

1 Peter 1:2 -

by choice -

John 15:16 -

by redemption -

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 -

and by our own decision -

Luke 15:5-6 -

We are His now!

b. *We are the Lord's for ever.*

We are eternally His, and nothing can ever alter this fact.

John 10:28-29 -

Romans 8:35-39 -

Nothing on earth or in hell can alter this wonderful fact - we are His, and His for ever!

Turn to -

1 Peter 1:3-5 -

and rejoice in the glorious truth of the believer's security in Christ.

So, *whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's!*

Richard Baxter must have had these words in mind when he wrote:

*Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live.
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.*

*If life be long, I will be glad
That I may long obey;
If short, yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?*

*My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.*

NOTES

NOTES

THE WORKER AN AMBASSADOR

STUDY 11

Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 5:20

Key Verse -

2 Corinthians 5:20 -

In this classic passage of scripture, the apostle Paul is speaking of himself as an ambassador for Christ, though, by his use of the pronoun *we*, he is inferring that every Christian is to be an ambassador for Him.

1. WHAT IS AN AMBASSADOR?

An ambassador is a **REPRESENTATIVE** of the throne and of the government of the country of which he is a citizen.

It would be impossible for our Queen (or for any Head of State, for that matter) to represent her government in all the countries of the world, so she sends representatives who are known as her ambassadors.

An ambassador, therefore, represents a person and a people. The British ambassador in a foreign country represents the royal throne.

Now, Christians are the representatives of the throne of heaven. They represent the Lord, the King of heaven. They are living down here in the world, but they are the Lord's representatives in this *foreign* land.

If you are a Christian, you are Christ's representative in the world, His ambassador. Wherever you live and work, whether it is in the home, in an office, in industry or in one of the professions, you are a representative there of the King of heaven and of the throne of God.

You are God's ambassador just where He has placed you. Think of this in its spiritual significance.

There are two representations going on.

In heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ is representing US -

Hebrews 9:24 -

Down here on earth, WE are representing Him. Just as He is our Representative in heaven, so we are to be His representatives on earth.

It is a great thing to be a Christian. It is a wonderful thing to know that your sins have been forgiven. It is just marvelous to know that you are a child of God and that heaven is your home.

But - have you realized that the Lord has left you here on earth to represent Him?

What a wonderful responsibility this is!

When we pause to realize the **RESPONSIBILITY** of our being involved as God's representatives on earth, we naturally cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

What are the **RESOURCES** available to us to enable us to discharge the responsibility of being the Lord's representatives?

None of us can rightly represent the Lord in our strength, but we have all the resources of heaven behind us, just as an earthly ambassador has behind him all the backing, the authority and the resources of the country he is representing.

As His ambassadors, we go forth in the name of the One who said -

Matthew 28:18-20 -

When an ambassador goes forth, all the resources of his earthly government are behind him. When we go forth in the Lord's name, all the resources of heaven and of the Lord Himself are available to us to enable us to be effective ambassadors for Him.

The Lord never sends us forth to do anything for Him without giving us all the power we need to carry it through.

Exodus 18:23 -

2 Corinthians 6:1 -

Years ago I saw the picture of an old fashioned saw.

After a tree had been felled, it was placed across a large hole in the ground. One man stepped down into this hole and took hold of one end of the saw while his partner stayed on the ground and grasped the other end of it.

Then, with the man below pulling downward and the man above pulling upward, the saw cut its way through the tree to produce logs of the correct length and size.

This is an illustration of what it means to be an ambassador for Christ. We work together with Him. He is above and we are below. Together we work in perfect harmony for the accomplishment of His will on earth.

The Lord is doing His part in heaven, and on earth, His ambassadors are doing their part. Each is necessary to the other.

2 Corinthians 5:20 -

Notice the following.

a. He must be a citizen of heaven.

No alien can ever represent our Queen or her government in a foreign country.

In like manner, and quite obviously, one who is not a Christian, a citizen of heaven, cannot possibly represent the Lord to others here in the world.

A true ambassador must -

2 Corinthians 5:17 -

He must be one who has been redeemed -

1 Peter 1:18-19 -

b. *He must be above reproach.*

Our Queen would never send forth as her ambassador, a man who was of doubtful character. The Lord requires that His ambassadors should be living lives which are above reproach.

They are to be, as Paul puts it when writing to the Christians at Philippi, living a life that is -

Philippians 2:15 -

An ambassador is the object of the closest scrutiny in moral conduct, in word, in manner. In every relationship he must be blameless

They may not want to be Christians, they may not agree with the teachings of Christ, but they must see at once that we believe on Him and are seeking to conform to His teachings.

There must be that about our daily walk that causes the people around us to recognize that we are Christians.

If we are to be the Lord's ambassadors, it must be seen that we are *BRAND NEW PEOPLE*, as a modern version renders -

2 Corinthians 5:17 -

c. *He must be selfless.*

An ambassador must be willing to sink his own interests completely if they conflict with the will of his Sovereign.

A Christian ambassador must not consider that he wants to do, but what his Lord wants him to do.

This is clearly brought before us in -

2 Corinthians 5:15 -

1 Corinthians 15:31 -

In other words, an ambassador must face up to and enter, by faith, into the experience of -

John 12:24 -

Are you living unto yourself, or are you living unto Him?

d. He must be in constant contact with the throne.

How can an ambassador be in continual contact with his sovereign's government if he is living hundreds of miles away? He does it by radio or telephone.

We, as Christian ambassadors, have a better method of communication. By prayer we can be in constant contact with the throne of God. How necessary this is if we are to be His true ambassadors.

In moments of crisis, the earthly ambassador sometimes has a private line from his government to his base in the foreign land.

We have an even more wonderful facility. We have a private line to the throne room of our King. We can be in constant touch with our Lord who waits to guide us and guard us as we, His ambassadors, seek to represent Him here below.

e. He must be steadfast and loyal.

Why?

Because living in a foreign country, he will be tempted in all kinds of ways to disaffection and disloyalty.

An ambassador must be steadfast and loyal at all times.

Paul is a great example in all this. Even when he was in prison he gladly suffered *bonds* for the sake of and out of loyalty to Christ.

Ephesians 6:20 -

f. He must be a man of diplomacy.

Diplomacy is the art of negotiation. You and I, by nature, have no wisdom of our own.

Jeremiah 10:23 -

But we have a wonderful promise that God will fulfill in us if we will ask Him -

James 1:5 -

g. He must know the language of the people amongst whom he lives.

An earthly ambassador must know at least two languages for he represents his government in a foreign. Apart from his own language, he needs to know the language of the people there.

God's ambassadors speak the language of this world, but they also need to know how to speak the language of heaven, especially the language of love.

Luke 10:29-37

An earthly ambassador also needs to have an adaptability and a skill to get to know people. How much more do God's ambassadors need this adaptability and skill as they work in this *foreign* country of the world!

2. THE MESSAGE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.

What is this message?

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 -

We are to proclaim the fact that, at infinite cost to Himself, God has made a way of reconciliation possible.

He has done this by sending His own Son to die for our sin, that, through His sacrifice, the barrier of sin has been removed and that, by His atonement (His at-one-ment), God and man have been brought together in Christ.

This vital truth is presented to us in vivid and solemn terms in -

2 Corinthians 5:21 -

God has so dealt with the sin question that it is possible for Him to reach out to sinful men and women to receive them, to welcome them, to forgive them, to cleanse them, and to bring them back into His family circle and into fellowship with Himself.

Though not one of us can possibly enter God's presence as we are, yet, by the sacrifice of Calvary, a way back to God has been made for every guilty sinner who will accept and avail himself of God's wondrous offer of salvation.

God has devised means whereby -

2 Samuel 14:14 -

This is the message that the ambassador for God is to proclaim to men and women. He is to tell them of God's terms for reconciliation and to press them to be reconciled to God.

The ambassador's message is, therefore, one of absolute certainty and of spiritual authority, for Paul tells us that it has been -

2 Corinthians 5:19 -

and we are to proclaim it -

2 Corinthians 5:20 -

Its proclamation also calls for great fidelity on the part of the ambassador. Philip was a great ambassador for we read -

Acts 8:5 -

Acts 8:35 -

3. THE MOTIVE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.

What is it that constrains God's ambassador to live for Him and to proclaim His glorious message?

There is a threefold constraint.

a. The love of Christ.

Romans 5:8 -

b. The judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 -

Paul also tells us that -

Romans 14:12 -

1 Corinthians 3:13 -

c. The dire need of the lost.

2 Corinthians 5:11 -

The fact that men are lost and are bound for a Christless eternity should stir us to live so that we truly represent our Lord. More than that, it should stir us to proclaim with passion, the message that He has committed to us.

This passion was in the heart of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote -

Isaiah 62:1 -

It was certainly in the heart of the apostle Paul when he wrote -

Romans 9:2-3 -

It is the passion of our beseeching God that burns within us, that becomes a part of us and that finds its expression as we pray men *in Christ's stead* that they be reconciled to God.

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

NOTES

THE WORKER'S EXAMINATION

STUDY 12

Scripture Portion: Lamentations 3:40

Key Verse -

Lamentations 3:40 -

The book of **Lamentations** contains the five elegies of Jeremiah the prophet. It is not surprising, therefore, that it makes sorrowful and melancholy reading.

Yet, when we come to the heart of the third chapter, a great change takes place. We read words which are tender, encouraging and reassuring.

Lamentations 3:22-26 -

Lamentations 3:31-33 -

We are in constant need of encouragement. God is not slow to give this to us in His Word. But there is something else which we need all the way through our Christian lives, and that is to search our hearts, to examine ourselves. It is to this which is referred to in -

Lamentations 3:40 -

This is a challenging call to us to get alone in the presence of God and to ask Him to search us through and through.

It ties in with the prayer of David in -

Psalm 139:23-24 -

We must, of course, beware of morbid introspection, always looking at ourselves and being preoccupied with ourselves. This can only lead to discouragement, indeed, to disaster.

For every one look at ourselves, we must take one thousand looks at our Saviour.

We do need to look at ourselves, however, to examine ourselves; otherwise, we shall become careless and just drift along in our spiritual life.

One of the Holy Spirit's ministries is to bring us to a sense of need, to show us how far short we have fallen, and how great is the standard of Christ's righteousness.

We can never know these things unless the Holy Spirit exercises His gracious ministry in our lives, by convincing us of our shortcomings, by revealing to us our sins and failures, and by leading us to the place of confession, forgiveness and renewal.

If anyone should be tempted to say, *I'm not backsliding*, I would say to him, *Obey the injunction of -*

Lamentations 3:40 -

You will be surprised to find how far you come short of God's standard for your life.

Are we where He would have us be, and what He would have us be? I do not think many would say, *Yes, I am!* We need to, therefore, *search our ways*, because it is so easy for us to get out of touch with the Lord. When this happens, we no longer enjoy the sunshine of His love and grace in our hearts.

I remember that some years ago, after I had been preaching, a lady came to me and expressed her gratitude for the address I had given.

She then said, *It was very searching, wasn't it? Very searching indeed. But, you know, I like being searched!*

Now I knew this lady very well, and I believe she was absolutely sincere when she said that. I also believe that her confession was a healthy one.

If we are really going on with the Lord, we shall come before Him and ask Him to put His finger on anything which is displeasing to Him. We shall do it in order that we may deal with those things which He points out. Only then shall we be -

2 Timothy 2:21 -

In this tender, yet urgent appeal which is brought before us in -

Lamentations 3:40 -

Jeremiah urges us to do three things.

1. WE ARE TO REVIEW OUR LIVES.

Notice the wording -

Lamentations 3:40 -

Did you notice the words *try our ways*? We are not to examine other people. We are to examine ourselves.

In two places, the apostle Paul reminds us of the need to review our own lives before we review the lives of others.

In the first of these, he is speaking about the order and significance of the Lord's Supper, he says -

1 Corinthians 11:28 -

Let a man examine himself..... before attending this sacred and solemn service. He does not say *Let a man examine other people.....*

It is ourselves we have to examine. It is *our ways* which have to be reviewed.

The second instance where Paul calls for self-examination is in a word which he wrote to the same church in Corinth -

2 Corinthians 13:5 -

How prone we are to examine other people! Even when we are listening to a preacher, we are tempted to let his words fly over our own heads as we think of someone else who needs the message much more than we do.

Now, when are we to review our lives and do this work of self-examination?

Following are three answers to this question.

a. *We are to do it regularly.*

The exhortation, which we have already noticed relating to those who come to the Lord's table, reminds us of the regularity with which we are to examine ourselves. We are to remember the Lord in His death regularly and frequently.

When we come to His Table, we look back to Calvary, we look up to the throne, and we look on to our Lord's second coming.

But, as we approach the Table, we are also to look within to examine ourselves, not in order that we might stay away from the Table for the scripture plainly says -

1 Corinthians 11:28 -

not - so let him stay away.

The examination, therefore, which must take place regularly is with a view to closer fellowship with the Lord and to greater blessing and to further usefulness.

But there are other times when we should review our lives. Many people take stock of themselves at the end of the old year or at the beginning of the new year, or when they attend a convention. This is good, it is necessary.

But we should review our lives in times of prosperity as well, to make sure that, by receiving greater temporal benefits, these have not led us to be forgetful of God and to be slack in His service. We should also search our hearts and review our lives in times of adversity.

Sometimes God's children suffer because they have been living carelessly and have been bringing grief to Him.

If we backslide, the Lord will surely discipline us. This means we should search our hearts and try our ways in adversity, to see if we can discern any connection between the trial which has come upon us and any disobedience on our part.

We should examine ourselves regularly to see whether we have failed and come short of what God requires of us. We should certainly examine ourselves regularly if we are serving the Lord and seeing very little fruit from our labours.

This leads to a second step.

b. We are not only to review our lives regularly, but we are to do it thoroughly

It is important to notice the words *search* and *try* in -

Lamentations 3:40 -

How exactly are we to do this?

I suggest that it means that we are to ask the Lord to search us and to reveal to us any sin in our lives, especially to show us our secret sins in the light of His countenance.

Psalm 90:8 -

Let me remind you of what happens when you go to the dentist.

He finds a decayed tooth which is not bad enough to be extracted. What does he do? He drills out the decayed part, taking great care to remove all traces of disease. This leaves a fairly large cavity in the tooth, which he then fills with cement and the tooth is as good as new.

It may be a painful experience for you, but how worthwhile it all is. The tooth has been saved and will go on doing its good work maybe for years ahead.

In the same way, we have to search and try our ways. We have to do it very thoroughly.

When a detective arrives at a house with a search warrant, and announces that he is *to go through the house with a fine tooth comb* he means (to change the metaphor) that he is going to leave no stone unturned in order to find what he looking for.

This is painful work, disturbing work, but it is necessary work. So our work of self-examination must be done thoroughly if we are to maintain communion with God and usefulness in His service.

c. *Then we are to review our lives HONESTLY.*

Have you ever realized that there are four estimates of your life? There is the world's estimate - what people around you think of you.

There is the estimates of your loved ones - what the members of your own family and household think of you.

There is God's estimate and this is the important thing.

2. THE OBJECT OF REVIEWING OUR LIVES, OF SELF-EXAMINATION IS TO SEE OURSELVES AS GOD SEES US.

That is, to see ourselves as we really are, not as others think we are and not as we think we are. It is possible to hide many of our failures from our friends and even to appear to be saintly, but we cannot hide from God.

David tells us this in -

Psalm 139:1-4 -

So there is no escape from the all-searching gaze of God when we come before Him.

Jeremiah 23:24 -

It can be a very disturbing experience to pray the prayer - *Search all my senses and know my heart. Let the deep, the hidden part, of me be fully shown.*

But it is a wonderful prayer to pray, for God waits to forgive and to cleanse us from our sins and to make us the men and women He would have us to be.

We are to review our lives, then to do it regularly, thoroughly and honestly.

There is another aspect mentioned in this word of prophecy. We are to recognize our failures!

Notice that the verse says -

Lamentations 3:40 -

If we need to *turn again to the Lord*, then obviously we have turned away from Him.

It is a humbling and a difficult thing to recognize and confess our failures as the Lord reveals them to us.

Think what it meant for Samson as we read of him in **Judges, chapter 16**, when, alone in the presence of God, he realized that, because of his unbridled passion, the Spirit of God had departed from him.

He was now helpless, powerless and the laughing stock of his enemies. How tragic!

Think what it meant for David as we read of him in **2 Samuel 12**, when, after the awful experience recorded in **chapter 11**, Nathan came to him and pinpointed the whole matter of his adultery with Bathsheba and brought David on his face before God with a confession upon his lips.

What a story to make angels weep!

Think what it meant for Elijah as we read of him in **1 Kings, chapter 19**, when he was over-strained, depressed and actually praying that he might die to get out of it all.

Think what it meant for Isaiah as we read his testimony in **Isaiah, chapter 6**, when God searched him through and through until he realized his uncleanness and confessed it.

Think of the solemn scene brought before us in **Matthew, chapter 26**, where, at the Last Supper, when all the disciples were present, Jesus said -

Matthew 26:21 -

and they all asked -

Matthew 26: 22 -

Think what it meant for Peter as we read of him in **Luke, chapter 22**. After his sad denial and feelings of complete desolation, how quickly he was brought to recognize his awful failure.

There are instances and examples of men of God who were brought to the place where they were led to *search and try* their ways, to recognize and admit their backslidings, their failures and to acknowledge and confess them to the Lord.

It may be that right now you have to put yourself into the picture at one point or another. The Holy Spirit is convincing you and you are recognizing your failures.

So what? Can nothing be done about them? Must you go on, depressed, discouraged and enjoying far less than the best of God's provision for you as a Christian?

You must get back into the place of blessing!

3. WE ARE TO RETRACE OUR STEPS.

Our verse reads -

Lamentations 3:40 -

But the question frequently arises: if we turn again to Him, will He receive us? Will He forgive us and cleanse us?

Well, the answer is abundantly clear in the scriptures. If we have turned away from the Lord and are willing to turn back to Him, He will most certainly receive us, forgive us and bless us abundantly.

As a matter of fact, Samson, David, Elijah, Isaiah, the disciples, Peter all experienced the Lord's welcome and restoration when they turned back to Him.

4. WHAT DOES THE LORD PROMISE TO DO FOR US

AFTER WE HAVE SEARCHED AND TRIED OUR WAYS?

What will He do after we have come to realize our need of Him and are willing to *turn to the Lord*?

Notice the following and rejoice afresh in the wonderful grace of God!

- a. He promises us that, if we will confess our sins to Him, He will cleanse us completely from the guilt and the pollution of our sins.*

We are assured of this because of -

1 John 1:9 -

- b. He tells us that He has made every provision for us so that we may not sin, but He has also made provision for us if we do sin.*

We are assured of this because of -

1 John 2:1-2 -

- c. He invites us and urges us to come back to Him and He guarantees that, when we do so, He will give us a full and a free pardon.*

We are assured of this because of -

Isaiah 55:6-7 -

- d. He pleads with us to return to Him and He offers us complete healing from our backslidings.*

We are assured of this because of -

Jeremiah 3:22 -

- e. His arms are open wide and He waits for us to come to Him.*

We are assured of this because of -

John 6:37 -

What more can be said?

What more needs to be said?

Only this -

Lamentations 3:40 -

Thank God, there is mercy and forgiveness with Him!

Mercy and forgiveness for the sinner, for the saint and for the servant of God.

NOTES

THE WORKER'S WORK

STUDY 13

Scripture Portion: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Verse -

1 Corinthians 15:58 -

This one verse, coming as it does at the end of a really great chapter, is full of challenge and appeal. It is surely meant to fill all who are engaged in the work of the Lord with joy and with quiet confidence.

Notice, to begin with, how careful Paul is to identify those to whom he is writing.

1. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED.

The apostle is not writing to all and sundry, but to his beloved brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ, his fellow-believers.

From this chapter we learn that Paul was writing directly to those who had received the gospel, who had believed, and who were, therefore saved.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 -

In the Lord's work, the workers must always be the Lord's people.

Matthew 21:28 -

Are you one of God's sons?

Galatians 3:26 -

Before you can serve, you must be a son, a child of God.

John 1:11-14 -

No one is qualified to be a worker for the Lord who has not first been born again.

John 3:3 -

John 3:5 -

2. THE REASON STATED.

Paul goes on to give a reason why we should engage in *the work of the Lord*. The reason is referred to by us use of the word *therefore* which takes us back over the whole chapter.

He says, *Therefore, because of these things, be ye stedfast.....*

Because of what things? What is our motive for serving God? What is it that constrains and impels us?

Paul gives another answer in -

2 Corinthians 5:14 -

The reason why we are to stand firm and to be constant and earnest in our service for the Lord is that we have a glorious gospel to proclaim.

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 -

The Lord is risen, is alive and is exalted - **1 Corinthians 15:4-20.**

We shall rise again - **1 Corinthians 15:21-50.**

The Lord is coming back again -

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 -

Death, sin, Satan and hell will have been overcome -

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 -

What use is it to preach the gospel and serve God if there is no resurrection, if sin and death and Satan and hell have not been conquered?

1 Corinthians 15:30 -

1 Corinthians 15:32 -

Compare -

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 -

But, the victory of Christ is complete!

So notice what follows.

3. THE WORK DESCRIBED.

Christian service is here described by the Apostle Paul as *the work of the Lord*.

Dr. Alexander MacLaren says that -

The work of the Lord is either the work that He is doing, or it is the work that we are doing in His Name.

But it is both!

It is His work, for He is the Great Worker -

John 5:17 -

It is also our work, for -

2 Corinthians 6:1 -

Mark 16:19-20 -

Here we have a perfect illustration of *the work of the Lord*. Do study these two verses carefully and see the picture:

Jesus is the Worker in heaven;

His servants going forth to do His work; and the Lord from heaven *working with them* doing things!

Thus we learn that the Lord's work is His work accomplished in and through us. It is our work entered upon and carried through with His enabling and with His blessing.

Notice five things about *the work of the Lord*.

1. IT IS A GREAT WORK.

See how the Lord's work is described in -

1 Samuel 21:8 -

Nehemiah 6:3 -

See how Jesus described *the work of the Lord* in -

Luke 2:49 -

2. *IT IS A SACRED WORK.*

To get a glimpse of the sacred nature of Christian work turn to -

Ephesians 2:10 -

How careful, prayerful and dedicated we should be in engaging in such work!

3. *IT IS A VARIED WORK.*

In God's estimation there is no division between sacred and secular.

Hiram was doing the Lord's work.

1 Kings 7:14 -

So was Nehemiah -

Nehemiah 6:3 -

So was Dorcas -

Acts 9:36 -

So was Lydia -

Acts 16:14-15 -

Acts 16:40 -

All these were doing the Lord's work, just as much as Peter and Paul were.

Compare the following scriptures.

Acts 2:14 -

Acts 17:22 -

Colossians 3:17-24 -

4. IT IS HARD WORK.

1 Corinthians 15:30-31 -

See how hard Paul found it to serve the Lord.

Compare -

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 -

God's work is never easy. Many today are finding the way very exciting, the enemy sees to that.

2 Corinthians 2:11 -

Many today are being frustrated on every hand as they seek to serve the Lord. They see little fruit for their labors. The work is so hard, but -

Galatians 6:9 -

5. IT IS EXCITING WORK.

Read the life story of the Apostle Paul, or of some of our modern apostles. Get the inside story of any one of millions of faithful workers who right now are abounding in the work of the Lord, and you will have an up-to-date illustration of the fact that to work for the Lord is a very exciting business.

Have you a testimony along these lines?

6. THE QUALITIES REQUIRED.

If we would be successful and well-pleasing servants of God, we must be: steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We must have three qualities.

a. Stability.

We must be steadfast, unmoveable.

Our characters are to be like this, so is our faith. We are to be men and women of settled conviction.

Galatians 6:6 -

Colossians 2:6-7 -

b. Fervency.

We are to be abounding in the work of the Lord, or, as one version renders it - *Always doing more than enough.*

Another version says - *Always working without limit.*

Many of the Lord's workers need a good strong infusion of enthusiasm!

Acts 8:30 -

God, make us to run to do Your glorious service!

c. Constancy.

We are to abound in the Lord's work always, not sometimes, but all the time; not in fits and starts, but with constancy.

As we serve the Lord in this way, we have a deep assurance concerning the worthwhileness of all that we are doing. We know that we are sowing for eternity.

7. THE ASSURANCE ENJOYED.

1 Corinthians 15:58b -

or, as one translator renders it -

Your labor is not futile, never wasted or to no purpose.

Because the Lord Jesus has died and risen, because He is our victorious Lord, we shall go to live with Him in glory.

We work by faith now -

1 Thessalonians 1:3 -

2 Thessalonians 1:11 -

But the work we do *in the Lord* will last for ever.

Mark 14:6-9 -

Matthew 25:42-45 -

If we are engaged in doing God's work in His way, doing it for His glory and honor, we can be confident that our efforts will produce fruit for eternity.

NOTES
