

WYBREAK SERIES



JAN.-MAR./1981

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

THE CHURCH — SERVANT TO THE WORLD



How much can a nine-year-old do with one Investment dollar?



Nine-year-old Desiree Cameron had just one dollar to start an Investment project. The dollar was given to her by her Sabbath School Investment leader.

"What can I do with only a dollar?" thought Desiree. "I'll just have faith that God can bless it!" Then she heard her mother talking about people at work who wanted a healthy lunchtime snack. Her Investment idea began forming.

Desiree bought some fresh fruit with her dollar, carefully made a "For Sale" sign, put the fruit and sign into a basket, and placed it on her mother's desk. The people at work eagerly purchased the fruit, and Desiree used the profits to buy more fruit. Soon, a regular little Investment business had begun.

After the first eight months of investing, Desiree took time to joyfully reflect on her success. In that short time she had already contributed \$103.60 to the investment fund of her Rolling Hills, California church.

Why not join Desiree in letting God multiply *your* investment? (*Not to mention your faith.*)

**Desiree
& Co.**

An Investment Firm
for God

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

AFRO-MIDEAST DIVISION

Dear Sabbath School Members:

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EASTERN AFRICA

The East African Union with 150,000 members in Kenya and Uganda is the second largest union conference in the world. With a further 70,000 members in the neighboring countries of Tanzania and Ethiopia, there are almost 250,000 church members without a senior college for their youth.

Because of this urgent need for a senior educational institution, the General Conference has approved plans for the development of the University College of Eastern Africa on a 334-acre agricultural estate in the highlands of Kenya near Eldoret and has agreed that the Special Projects Offering for this quarter may be used exclusively for this project.

In anticipation of what we hope will be the largest Sabbath School offering ever received by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the College Board moved forward in faith and commenced building. Dr Percy Paul, the college president, and his corps of teachers and staff have worked valiantly under difficult conditions to launch this new Adventist educational institution. Students from several countries began classes in January, 1980. Your offerings will help to complete the modest buildings which are needed to provide the facilities to operate a college effectively and help establish an institution which will accelerate the preparation of national workers for important leadership positions for the church in Africa.

The members, faculty and students, present and future, thank you for your continuing interest, prayers and support.

Yours truly,



Charles D Watson
President
Afro-Mideast Division

Box 2043, Nicosia, Cyprus Telephone 50711/2 Telex 3204 AMD CY Cable 3204 Adventist



7 days without Christ makes one weak.

What holds top priority in your life? TV, sports, entertainment, recreation, food?

We do need food and exercise to keep us strong and healthy.

We also need spiritual food.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Sabbath School lesson is designed to supply the daily food necessary to keep you strong and healthy spiritually.



Contents

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. God Still in Control | 7. Called to Be Saints |
| 2. Built on the Rock | 8. United in Christ |
| 3. The Called of God | 9. Disciplined by Love |
| 4. Marks of the Church | 10. Called to Serve |
| 5. The Church in Pictures | 11. Order for Efficiency |
| 6. A Chosen People | 12. Servant Leaders |
| 13. Working While Waiting | |

The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is directed by a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors.

Editorial Office: 6840 Eastern Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012

Lesson Author: G. Arthur Keough

Editor: Gordon M. Hyde

Editorial Secretary: Florence L. Wetmore

Circulation Manager: Arthur R. Mazat

Art and Design: Pacific Press

Braille lessons available. See page 112.

Adult Sabbath School Lesson (standard edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 Villa Street, Mountain View, California 94042, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$2.40; single copy, 60 cents. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$3.20; single copy, 80 cents. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Mountain View, California 94042, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

Copyright © 1980 by Pacific Press Publishing Association



**Here is the church;
here is the steeple.
Open the doors;
see all the people.**

People. They make up the church and give it its personality. Friendly. Aloof. Cynical. Sincere. Committed. Lukewarm. And always far from perfect. Which means the critics will never run out of ammunition.

But even for all its flaws, the church survives. It's more than a social gathering of people with common interests. It represents God's activity in the world and man's response.

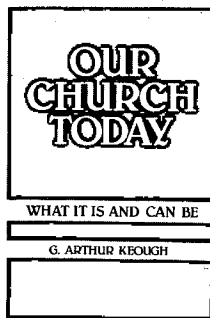
OUR CHURCH TODAY: WHAT IT IS AND CAN BE, by G. Arthur Keough, was written to help explain the Sabbath School lessons for first quarter, 1981, and to point out the potential for good that exists in an organized, motivated, committed group of Christians, better known as the church.

Find **OUR CHURCH TODAY: WHAT IT IS AND CAN BE** at your nearest Adventist Book Center. Or order by mail from ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 59, Nashville, TN 37202. In Canada send to Box 398, Oshawa, Ontario L1H 7L5. Please include sales tax for your state and add 10 percent (minimum, 75¢) for postage and handling.

Special introductory price!

Get **OUR CHURCH TODAY: WHAT IT IS AND CAN BE** and save US\$1.00 off the regular price. Only US\$3.95 through the end of March. Get yours today.

Southern Publishing Association
Where Value Counts



THE CHURCH—SERVANT TO THE WORLD

Introduction

Many books have been written about the church because, despite its faults, it occupies an important place in society and in human lives. Yet the church remains a "mystery" in the biblical sense, defying simple explanations. Since it partakes of the nature of both the human and the divine, it is difficult to dissect it fully and lay bare all its properties.

The lessons this quarter look at the church, including your church and mine, from the viewpoint of the biblical revelation concerning it. We believe without shadow of doubt that the Bible is the Word of God and that in it we find a true representation of God's character and purpose and of His dealings with His people through the centuries.

The view of the writer of these lessons is that the church can best be understood and appreciated in the light of God's intelligence and love. God wanted a universe that worshiped Him freely and with understanding. In order to have this He had to allow even for freedom to choose the wrong. This involved a tremendous risk, which was taken. Sin, in terms of misunderstanding God and misusing His entrusted properties, did indeed arise. The church is a key part of God's great plan to vindicate His character and to take away sin without detracting from the freedom which God's love requires in the universe.

The church exists wherever we find God's people, from the beginning of time to the present and on into eternity. But in these lessons we are thinking of the church primarily in terms of God's activity after the birth of Jesus.

The first lesson emphasizes that God is in control in every situation. Sin, whether in heaven or on earth, did not take Him by surprise. He had a plan to meet it, one consistent with His justice and replete with His mercy. The church is part of that plan, being the arena and means of His activity.

We see that the church is based on a firm foundation—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, recognized and made known by divine revelation. Jesus Christ has built the church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The agency for bringing the benefits of the Father and the Son to the New Testament church is the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus to His disciples. (See John 14 through 17.)

How can we recognize the church? What are its characteristics? We will seek answers to these questions in Scripture. We will notice that the church is best understood in terms of relationships. Yet no purely human relationship can encompass all that is involved.

One aspect of the church is the tension between its call to holiness and its involvement in sin. To emphasize the one without denying the other is important. Can we do that? How can a Christian be a saint and a sinner at the same time? Do we need to redefine our terms?

No area of church life is more debated than that of its structure. Structure and organization it must have. But what should be its lines of authority? Unfortunately, history has not shown the church at its best, because emphasis on hierarchy has sometimes taken the place of service. Is there a way that we can have order and yet not reduce the spirit? Can we involve all members of the church, and not merely the clergy, in organization? These and other questions reveal the importance of our subject.

May God grant that in the study of these lessons we will discover our role in the church and by our faithfulness cooperate more fully with God's plans.

**Part 1
FREEDOM
TO SIN**

How did sin enter the universe?

**"How you have fallen from heaven,
O morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth,
you who once laid low the nations!" (Isa. 14:12, NIV).**

When we look at the universe of which we are a part, there is much that can be characterized by sweetness and light. But there is also much that is ugly and hateful. How has this come about?

Many answers have been given, among them these:

1. The universe is evolving; it is progressing from the simple to the complex. Many mistakes are made on the way, but in time perfection will be reached.
2. The universe was created by an inferior god—a demiurge—who, because of his imperfection, created an imperfect world.
3. The universe is composed of two conflicting principles—good and evil—that will last throughout eternity. We shall always see them in conflict.

Are both creationism and evolutionism expressions of faith?

The fact is that science cannot tell us how the world began. Philosophy can present us with only theories. Only a revelation by One who was present at the beginning—One who is above and beyond the universe—can inform us about origins.

The Christian believes that such a revelation exists and that it is to be found in the Bible. There he finds these truths:

1. God is perfect and all good (Ps. 89:5-18).
2. Everything He creates is very good (Gen. 1:31).
3. Sin entered the universe and has brought all our woe (Gen. 3:17-24).

How sin could enter a perfect being is hard to understand. No reason can be given for sin. But one thing is clear: God has given His created beings the freedom to choose sin. (See Gen. 2:17; 3:11.)

In only one way could God prevent sin from entering the universe: He could limit freedom. But in doing so He would have created beings who were no better than machines—automatons who could not worship freely or love independently.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways do you think personal freedom is worth all the risks involved?

FURTHER STUDY

John 8:44-51; Matt. 25:41-46; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 33-43.

Part 2
CHOOSING
TO SIN

How did our first parents exercise their choice in the Garden of Eden?

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it" (Gen. 3:6, NEB).

With one exception, Adam and Eve were free to eat from any tree in the garden. They were not to eat from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17).

The reason for this restriction was that they might continue to live in peace and joy. Death would be the consequence of eating of the forbidden tree. No real hardship was involved. But the tree symbolized the exercise of their freedom; they could obey God and live or disobey Him and die.

Do you think God could have prevented sin from entering the world had He not placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden? To think so would be incorrect, because sin had already entered the universe through Lucifer. Also, the absence of the tree would have meant an absence of choice.

God decided that our first parents must have freedom of choice. By exercising this freedom in the right way, a loving relationship would exist between the Creator and man. Man's dedication and worship would be meaningful.

How did our first parents fall into sin? 1 Tim. 2:14.

Eve admitted that she had been deceived by the serpent. Adam placed the blame on the woman and, indirectly, on God. (See Gen. 3:12, 13.)

Adam listened to his wife and placed his desire to be with her above obedience to God. (See verse 17.) Thus he made a choice which brought the consequences of sin.

All true freedom involves restriction. The law of love must govern all of God's creation. Only then can His created beings interact with mutual confidence. Only then can perfect harmony prevail. But the moment one rejects the provisions of the God of order, chaos must result. And since God cannot permit continuing chaos, a decision to live out of harmony with God's laws means final extinction.

THINK IT THROUGH

Give examples showing the connection between freedom and careful observance of law.

FURTHER STUDY

1 John 3:4; James 1:15; Rom. 6:23; 5:12; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52-62.

**Part 3
RESPONDING
TO SIN**

How did God respond to man's sinful condition?

"And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever' " (Gen. 3:22, NIV).

God cannot condone evil in any part of His universe. (See Hab. 1:13.) The time must come when all evil will be eradicated.

Meanwhile God is considerate of His creatures. For Adam and Eve He made garments of skin. (See Gen. 3:21.) These were far more adequate than the aprons of fig leaves our first parents hurriedly put together when they realized they were naked. The whole world would be changed as a result of the curse of sin. They would need something to shield them.

What words of God gave our first parents hope for One who—even though it caused Him to suffer—would crush the serpent's head? Gen. 3:15.

Our first parents now realized that they had been wholly mistaken in supposing that God had withheld anything that would contribute to their happiness and development. The serpent had been wholly wrong in his accusations against God. Now they could see God as He really was—a God of love, a forgiving God, a God not taken by surprise by what had happened in the garden, a God prepared for the salvation of Adam and Eve should it be necessary. (See 1 Peter 1:20).

How does Paul refer to God's grace in relation to man's sin? Rom. 5:20.

We are always aware of the heinousness of sin, but are we also aware that God's grace can bring victory over even the greatest sins?

We all regret the havoc that sin has caused through the centuries. We often wish that it had never reared its ugly head. But since it did, God found it necessary to vindicate His character. He had to show that sin was neither impossible to forgive nor impossible to overcome. In His provision for man's salvation He has gone to a limit of self-sacrifice that is totally beyond our comprehension.

THINK IT THROUGH

Consider God's banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden as an expression of God's love.

FURTHER STUDY

Isa. 53:5; 1 John 3:5-8; Rom. 5:8, 9; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63-70.

**Part 4
PEOPLE
AND
PROPHETS**

On what basis could God expect His people to keep His commandments?

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2, NIV).

God was well aware of the misery of the children of Israel in Egypt. (See Ex. 3:7.) He had chosen Moses to bring them out. He had performed many miracles, and now they stood before Sinai. Since He had done so much for them, could He expect them to respond in obedience to His laws?

What are the characteristics of a covenant?

The making of a covenant involves two parties: one may be the initiator, and the other the acceptor. At Mount Sinai God made a covenant with His people. He said to them: These are My requirements. The people responded: "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey" (Ex. 24:7, NIV). The covenant was ratified with blood so that it was binding (verse 8).

Unfortunately, the people did not keep their part of the covenant. Even Aaron was involved in the making of a golden calf for their worship. (See Ex. 32:1-8.) The promises man makes are as weak as ropes of sand.

Hence it was necessary to draw attention to a "new" covenant—an everlasting covenant based on the promises of God. (See Jer. 31:31-34.) Only this kind of covenant could be effective, because man had only to accept the provisions made for him and God would do the rest. Once again we see God adapting Himself to man's needs in order that man might be saved.

In trying to keep His people doing the right things, what instruments did God use? Hosea 6:5.

God's people did not live up to the light they had, in spite of the instruction they received and the warnings that were sent to them. God was anxious that His people would be blessed and be a blessing to those who lived around them. But they failed so often that God had to permit their captivity.

After their return from Babylon, the people for a time were zealous to build the temple and obey God's laws. But soon even this slackened off, and for 400 years God did not communicate with His people through prophets.

THINK IT THROUGH

What alternatives were available to God when His people did not respond to His overtures of love?

FURTHER STUDY

Deut. 4:1-6, 9; Hosea 2:14-23; 4:1, 2, 6; 8:12; 11:3; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 109-116; 570-581.

Part 5
GOD
WITH US

What conditions must Messiah meet to be "with us"?

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, 'God with us' " (Matt. 1:23, NIV).

And when Immanuel came, how was He received? In the parable of the tenants, Jesus told of the landowner who planted a vineyard, and at the time appointed for the harvest he sent his servants to collect the fruit from the tenants. But the tenants killed the servants. They later killed the landowner's son, who also had come to collect the fruit. (See Matt. 21:33-41.)

What was the meaning of the parable of the tenants? Mark 12:1-12.

In this parable Jesus "pointed to the rich blessings bestowed upon Israel, and in these showed God's claim to their obedience. He set before them the glory of God's purpose, which through obedience they might have fulfilled. Withdrawing the veil from the future, He showed how, by failure to fulfill His purpose, the whole nation was forfeiting His blessing, and bringing ruin upon itself."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 284.

Jesus was the One now coming to the children of Israel expecting faithful stewardship. But when He came to His own, His own people rejected Him. (See John 1:11.) Jesus therefore announced the solemn judgment that the kingdom of God would be taken away from them and given to a people who would produce the necessary fruit. (See Matt. 21:43.)

What caused the Old Testament prophets to fail in their mission?

The prophets failed to accomplish God's purposes through them, not through any fault of their own, but because the children of Israel rejected the messages from God. Now Jesus, as God's unique Son, came to give a message of God's love. Would the children of Israel accept Him? The gospel story, told four times over, indicates how tragically the Jewish people turned against Him. (See Matt. 16:18.)

And thus the church is born and a new era sets in. An association of men and women from every race rather than from one people, it will be God's chosen agency to witness to His love and favor and to the supreme sacrifice made for man's salvation. Will the church fail to do its task?

THINK IT THROUGH

Will the church succeed where Israel failed in working out God's purposes for the world?

FURTHER STUDY

Mark 1:9-11; Acts 10:38; Luke 4:14-22; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 284-306.

**Part 6
INTO ALL
THE WORLD**

What did God seek to accomplish by sending His Son into the world?

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17, NIV).

Jesus has made every provision for man's salvation. He is anxious that every person have the opportunity of making a choice leading to salvation. Therefore He set up an organization that would proceed to evangelize the world. This organization was first composed of a group of His disciples, whom He commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel. (See Matt. 28:19, 20.)

What program of outreach was entrusted to the disciples? Acts 1:8.

This group of disciples was to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power—the power of the Holy Spirit. Then they were to go to Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the "uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Thus a new era began. God was to work through men and women from among both Jews and Gentiles, representing every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. This group was to have a new foundation, Jesus Christ. It was to grow out of the Jewish faith, as represented in the Old Testament, but it was to be distinct from it. It was to be the era of the church.

The church is thus the means God is using to reach men and women in their need for a Saviour. He has promised it His presence and has given to it His authority.

What figure of speech is used to indicate the care and protection that Jesus gives to His church? Rev. 1:12-20.

The seven messages given to the seven churches indicate Christ's concern for His people. He wants to be sure they do not lose their first love. (See Rev. 2:4.) He commends them when they are "faithful unto death" (verse 10). He desires that they separate themselves from all heresy and all immorality (verse 14). He knows when they are dying, and He wants them to wake up and strengthen what is about to die. (See Rev. 3:2.)

For Him the church is not only the object of His supreme regard but also the agent of reconciliation and the means of preparing a world for His second coming. The church can best be understood in this context—the context of God's activity and man's response.

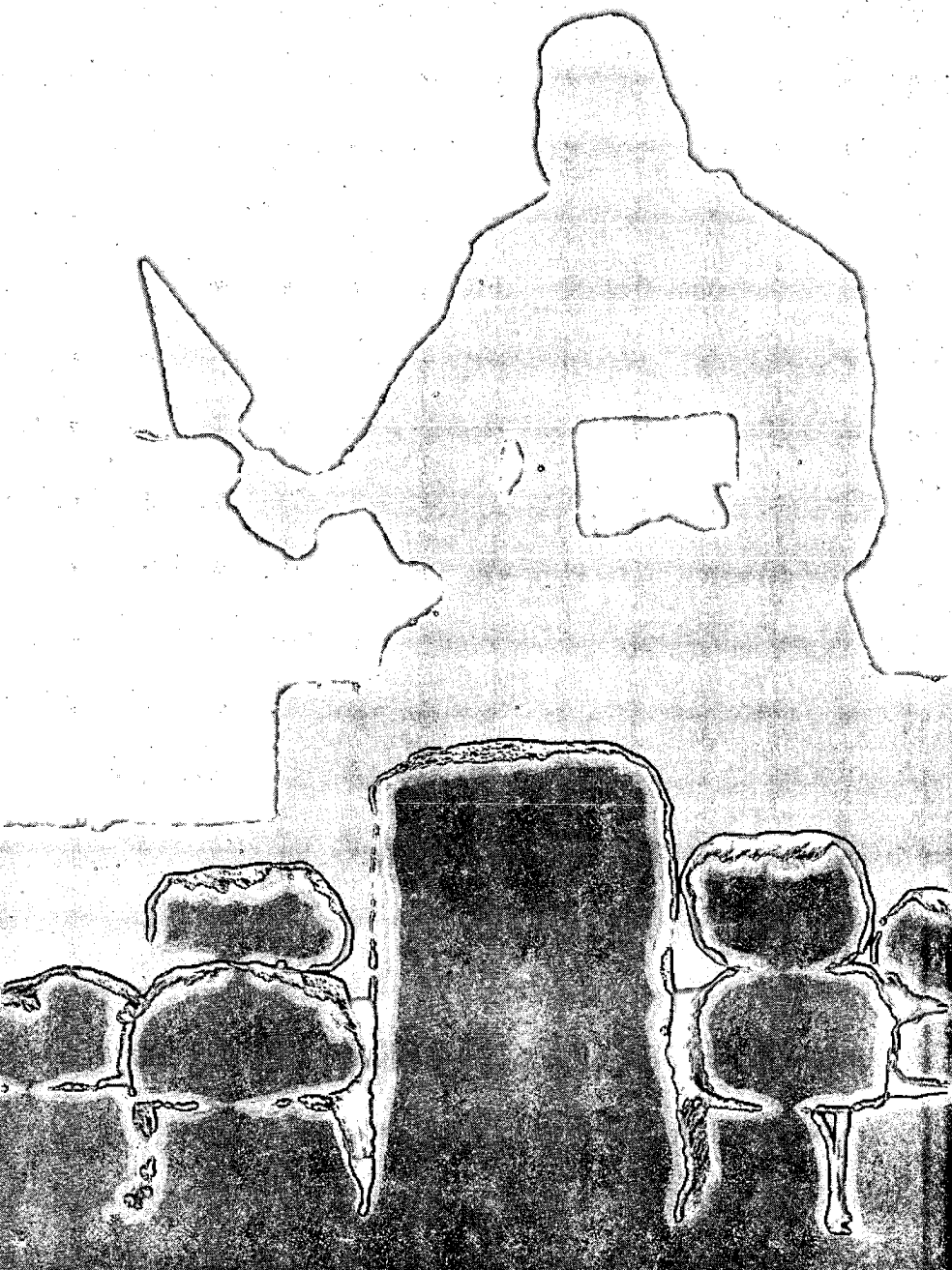
THINK IT THROUGH

What is the basis for the assurance that the church will yet achieve God's purpose in the world?

FURTHER STUDY

Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 24:14; Isa. 52:7; Ps. 126:6.

2 / Built on the Rock



“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

Jesus taught that the wise man builds his house upon a rock—a solid foundation. (See Matt. 7:24.) Only in this way can he be sure that his house can withstand the force of wind and rain and flood. The same principle is true for the church; only as it is soundly based can it be expected to stand up to all the opposition it is likely to receive, and having done all, to stand.

Jesus is everything to the church: He is the Founder and Builder, the Source of life and power. Because of who He is, He is the Rock on which the church is built.

Many people will recognize that Jesus was a great teacher on earth. They will place Him in the line of the great prophets. But they fail to recognize Him as the Son of God, they ignore His Deity. Because of this they fail to see the significance of His life, and they deny the reality of the resurrection. Consequently, they fail to appreciate the importance of the church of which He is the foundation.

A recognition of who Jesus is does not come by human reasoning. It depends on a revelation from God. It comes to those whose minds are open to the evidence and who are willing to accept the implications of the truth presented. Blessed is the one who has received the insights that only a revelation can give.

To see Jesus as the Rock upon which one can build all one's hopes and to see Him as the Cornerstone of the church which He Himself will build helps us to understand the importance of the church and the power available to us through it. Nothing can prevail against the church, neither death nor all the

forces of the evil one. Death is an enemy that seems able to overcome every one of us; but through Christ and the resurrection we can all shout with praise: O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Because of this power in the church, martyrs have willingly given up their lives, and their death has been the seed of the church.

The authority granted to the church is staggering: the keys of the kingdom. Can it be true that there is binding and loosing? That what is done on earth is confirmed by decree in heaven? At first sight this may seem to be an authority that could be abused. And perhaps in times past the church has exerted an authority beyond what has been granted it. But the divine purpose for the church is not to lord it over people and decide their destinies. Rather, the church on earth should be in such close touch with the plans and purposes of God in heaven that there is unity of thought and operation. The church cannot ever be boastful of its position. But it can be positive as it takes its stand for revealed truth, and people may decide their fate as they take their stand with the church or against it.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Inadequate Answers (Matt. 16:14)**
- 2. A Basic Confession (Matt. 16:16)**
- 3. Truth Revealed (Matt. 16:17)**
- 4. The Rock Foundation (Matt. 16:18)**
- 5. Power to Survive (Matt. 16:18)**
- 6. Authority Confirmed (Matt. 16:19)**

Part 1
INADEQUATE
ANSWERS

In what different ways did some Jews identify Jesus of Nazareth?

“And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets” (Matt. 16:14).

These statements came in answer to Christ's question to His disciples. He was about to tell them of His coming sufferings. “Before doing this, He gave them an opportunity of confessing their faith in Him that they might be strengthened for the coming trial. He asked, ‘Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 411.

Let us look at the answers given and their implications:

John the Baptist: John the Baptist was well known because a large part of the population of Judea—including Sadducees and Pharisees and people in Jerusalem—had gone out to hear him and had confessed their sins. (See Mark 1:5; Matt. 3:6, 7.) John had been put to death as a result of an embarrassing request made by Herod's wife and her daughter. (See Matt. 14:6-9.) It was Herod who told his servants that he thought Jesus was John risen from the dead (verse 2). But the people should have known otherwise. For one thing, their genealogy was different, and people knew Jesus' family connection. (See Matt. 13:55.) Furthermore, John had pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God. (See John 1:29.)

Elias: This is Elijah, a highly regarded prophet among the Jews. To associate Jesus with Elijah was thought to be a compliment. Elijah had been translated to heaven, and presumably he had now returned to earth. Furthermore, Malachi had promised that Elijah would come before “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). But Elijah was not the Messiah, although it was thought that he would be the precursor. Calling Jesus Elijah might be an honor, but it was not the real identification. In fact, John the Baptist had fulfilled the role of Elijah.

Jeremias: This is an interesting answer, because it may indicate an association of the message of Jesus with Jeremias' promise of a new covenant. (See Jer. 31:31-33.) What it does not indicate is that Jesus is more than His message. He is the Maker of the new covenant.

One of the prophets: The indefiniteness of this suggestion is an apparent refusal to think any further. There is a willingness to recognize in Jesus the authority of a prophet, but no more. On the other hand, the suggestion may have reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, in which case it would be more to the point. Jesus would then be *the prophet* (John 7:40)—the one to whom the people of Israel should listen.

THINK IT THROUGH
FURTHER STUDY

Does the Messiahship of Jesus require His divinity?

Micah 5:2; Luke 1:35; John 10:30; Rev. 22:12, 13.

Part 2
A BASIC
CONFESSION

What response did Peter give to the question Jesus asked?

"Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

Jesus now turned to the disciples and asked them to state their understanding of Him and His ministry. Peter spoke up—Peter, who was always sure of himself, always ready to commit himself. He not only expressed a personal conviction, but he also voiced the conviction of his fellow disciples.

Early in the ministry of Jesus, what was the witness of John the Baptist to the Messiahship of Jesus? John 1:34.

Andrew was one of the two who followed Jesus after John had pointed out the Lamb of God (verses 37, 40); and it was Andrew who told his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah" (verse 41). When Peter first met Jesus, he was told, "Thou shalt be called Cephas" (verse 42). *Cephas* is the Aramaic for "stone," or in the Greek, *Petros*, from which we get the English *Peter*.

As the Messiah, Jesus would have roots in the Old Testament prophecies. He was the Son of David. He was to restore the kingdom of Israel. His reign would usher in an everlasting kingdom of peace that would not only rival the kingship of David and Solomon, but would outshine it in glory and power.

What evidence is there of the limited understanding of the disciples as to the nature and timing of Christ's kingdom? Acts 1:6.

Peter and his fellow disciples would doubtless have some of these thoughts coursing through their minds. Did they have a true concept of what Jesus was going to do? This is very doubtful, because even after the resurrection they were still thinking in terms of a kingdom on earth that might overthrow the hated Roman Empire.

But the assertion that Jesus was the Christ was nevertheless true, and that He was the "Son of the living God" was a recognition of His origin and authority that left no room for doubt. Here is a basic understanding about Jesus of Nazareth. No other concept is adequate. Because Jesus is the Son of *God*, He can speak with authority and reach down to man. Because He is the Son of *man*, He is able to draw men up to God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it fortunate that OUR ideas of truth do not decide what is the truth?

FURTHER STUDY

Heb. 1:8; Matt. 3:17; Col. 2:9; John 1:1-14; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 132-143.

Part 3
TRUTH
REVEALED

What did Jesus say was the basis of Peter's inspired statement?

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

Peter had not arrived at his conclusions about Jesus merely by human reasoning. No human being had persuaded him. He did not have to acknowledge his indebtedness to any scholar or religious leader. His insight came as a revelation from God.

In common with Peter, how dependent are all men upon divine revelation for a saving knowledge of God? Heb. 1:1-3.

Jesus is telling Peter, his fellow disciples, and all those who will follow His teaching that the Source of their insights and understandings is God. Human reasoning can lead men astray, even as it did the Jewish leaders of Christ's time. Reason and scholarship both have their place in the search for truth; but, when all is said and done, we can know about God and His plans, about Jesus Christ and His part in man's salvation, only through revelation.

What do the following texts tell of God's willingness to reveal Himself to us individually and personally? Deut. 30:11-14; Ps. 85:9; 145:18; Deut. 29:29.

Peter's experience was not an isolated occurrence. God is willing and ready to reveal Himself to all who will accept His revelation. To know Him does not require a dream, a vision, or any supernatural manifestation. The Word of God is near to every one of us.

No greater joy exists than that of knowing the truth. Such knowledge provides a sense of stability. By contrast, the one who is not sure of where he came from or where he is going, of whether the God of the universe is friendly or not, of how to decide between right and wrong—such a man lives in a constant state of fear and uncertainty. He may even be lonely and frustrated. "Blessed art thou," said Jesus to Peter, because now he knew what was right. And not only he, but all the disciples of Jesus. (See Matt. 13:16.) Before certain knowledge there must be a willingness to hear (2 Cor. 8:12) and a willingness to do (John 7:17).

THINK IT THROUGH

What truths presented by the church, if any, would you consider dependent on time and culture?

FURTHER STUDY

Deut. 8:3; John 6:32, 33, 35, 57, 58, 63; Jer. 15:16; John 5:39, 40; *Steps to Christ*, "What to Do With Doubt," pp. 105-113.

**Part 4
THE ROCK
FOUNDATION**

In addressing Peter, what did Jesus say was His plan?

"I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

This verse has been construed many different ways. We will study it and try to understand it in its context.

First of all, Jesus refers to Peter's additional name. Peter had been named Simon (Greek form), or Simeon (Hebrew form). He was the son of Jona and so was known as Simon (Simeon) Bar-Jona, or son of Jona.

In what setting did Peter receive the name *Cephas* (Aramaic for "stone"), which in Greek would be *Petros*, a masculine Greek form of *Petra*, meaning "rock"? John 1:42.

Why did Jesus do this? The Gospels do not give us a clue. The context of the first meeting suggests that Jesus was establishing a friendly rapport. Perhaps He was laying the foundation for a future relationship. Jesus established a personal tie with every individual. Does this tell us something about the relationship of Jesus to every church member?

Perhaps Jesus saw in Simon the characteristics of a rolling stone. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.) The name Peter would then be a kind of nickname used in love and appreciation. If this is the case, then we see how Jesus looks at us. He sees us, not so much for what we are, but for what we might become by His grace.

What is the connection between the name Peter and the rock on which Jesus says He will build His church? Matt. 16:18-23; 1 Cor. 3:11.

Obviously Jesus would not build His church on an individual—even one as good as Peter. Peter had some excellent characteristics, perhaps suggested by the name Peter; but he also had some outstanding weaknesses. (See Matt. 16:23; 26:34; Gal. 2:11-13.) Paul sees with masterful insight that Jesus is Himself the foundation of the church.

Peter made a basic confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This is the basic confession to be made by every member of the church. Such an acknowledgment is a rock that cannot be moved. It is the basis of every true doctrine and of every proper relationship between disciple and Lord, as Peter indicated in his epistle. (See 1 Peter 2:4-9.)

THINK IT THROUGH

In view of the description of the church as built on a rock, what characteristics may we expect to find in the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Matt. 7:24-29; Num. 20:7-13; 1 Cor. 10:4; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 412-414.

**Part 5
POWER TO
SURVIVE**

What assurance is given that the church will be able to survive?

"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

The Greek word translated "hell" is *hades* and means the same as the Hebrew *sheol*—the grave, the abode of the dead. Modern versions bring this thought out: "the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (RSV); "the powers of death shall never conquer it" (NEB). What is indicated here is that the church cannot be restricted or contained by death.

Furthermore, the resurrection of Jesus ensures the resurrection of every believer. Thus death is not a barrier to enjoying fellowship with Christ throughout eternity.

How have true Christians looked at death? Rev. 14:13; 12:11.

Many have looked upon death as a release from the woes of this present world. When threatened with death, they preferred to die rather than to give up their faith. Thus the church grew as persecution increased, and it was truly said that the "blood of martyrs is the seed of the church."

What could be more frustrating to the enemies of the church than that the strongest weapon available against man—death—is useless? Dan. 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:54, 55.

No wonder that the devil is angry (Rev. 12:12) and the members of the church are victorious. No wonder that all heaven rejoices to see men and women faithful to their Lord and Master even unto death.

Death is the wages of sin. The gift of God is eternal life. Therefore all those who renounce sin and accept the provision God has made for their salvation have no fear of death. In Christ the church never ceases to exist. Men may come and men may go, but the church goes on forever.

The spirit of the church is exemplified in the words of Latimer to Ridley when both men were being tied to the stake for their faith: "Be of good comfort, we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."—*Works of Hugh Latimer*, vol. 1, p. xiii; quoted in *The Great Controversy*, p. 249.

THINK IT THROUGH

If you wanted to overturn the church, what method would you try other than threatening believers with death?

FURTHER STUDY

Ps. 23:4; Rom. 8:35, 37.

Part 6
AUTHORITY
CONFIRMED

What extraordinary powers did Jesus extend to His church?

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).

Since Jesus delegated this same authority to the disciples on a later occasion (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23), no one should suppose that it was limited to Peter.

Keys certainly imply authority—ability to open and close doors. But when we consider that this authority is controlled by Heaven, the likelihood of arbitrariness or injustice is lessened.

How might one view the claim that Peter alone opened the doors of the kingdom to the crowds assembled at Pentecost and to those at the home of Cornelius? Acts 2:14; 10:44.

Peter definitely took a leading role at Pentecost and later opened doors of faith to Gentiles and Jews (Acts 2:14-47; 10; 11:1-18). He was not alone in leadership, however, and in some areas other disciples carried the gospel "keys." When people hear the gospel and accept it, their sins are forgiven; and thus they are loosed from the condemnation of death. If, however, the hearers reject the testimony given them, they are still bound in their sins.

What is the relationship between knowledge of truth and responsibility for truth? John 9:41.

Jesus made it clear to the Pharisees that a person who is blind cannot be held responsible for what he does not see. But if a person sees and says that he sees, then he is responsible for responding properly to what he has seen.

Why did Jesus tell His disciples not to make it known that He was the Messiah? (See Matt. 16:20.)

There are apparently times when truths held by the church should not be openly discussed because of prejudice, unbelief, and other hindrances. Timing can be a key factor in the progress of "present truth."

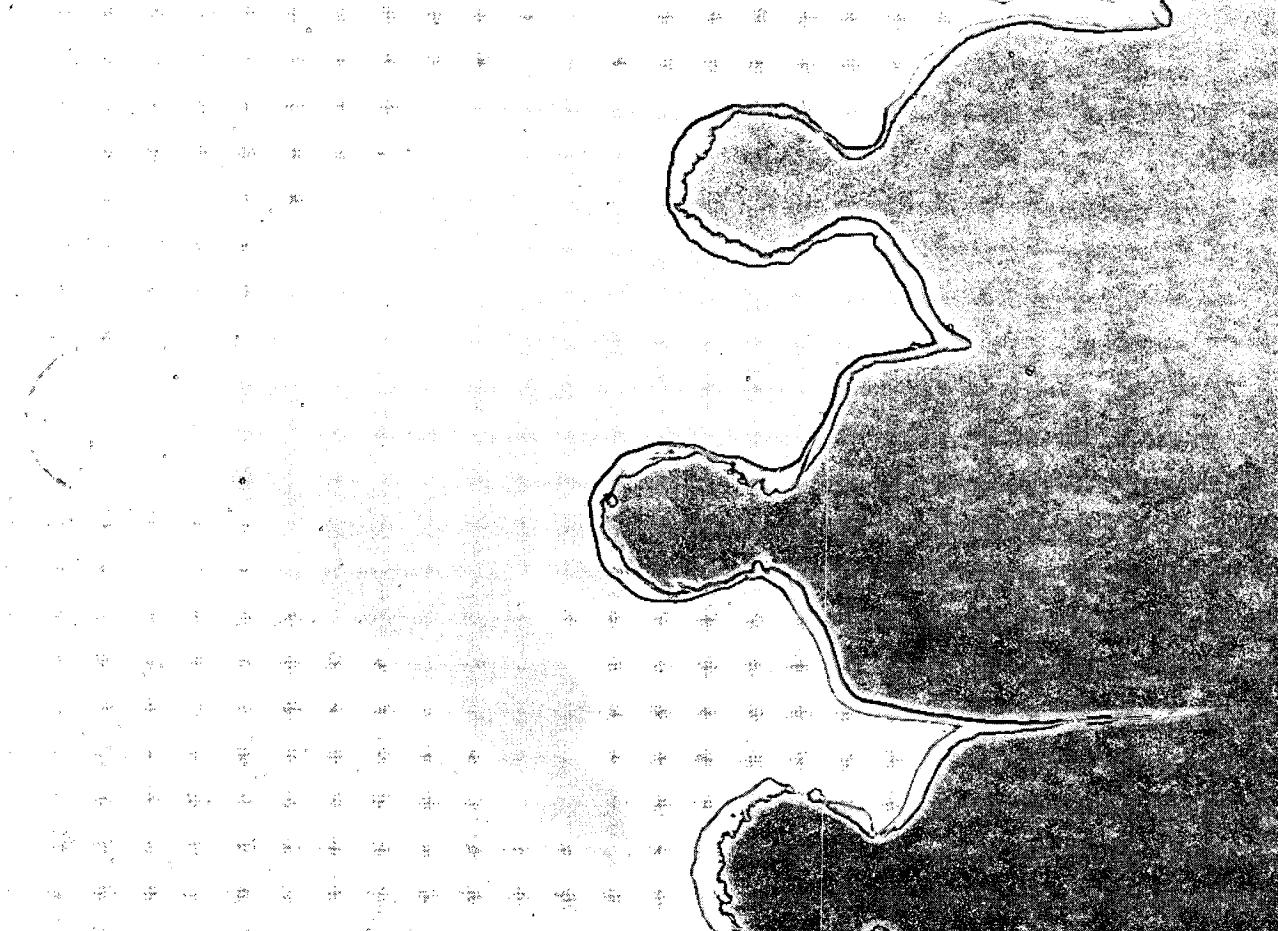
THINK IT THROUGH

Why is being brutally frank seldom, if ever, a Christian virtue?

FURTHER STUDY

2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 14:19; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 161-165.

3 / The Called of God



“The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

The church is basically the group of people which has responded when God has called.

The Bible makes it clear that God takes the initiative in calling. Thus when Adam and Eve had sinned, it was God who came into the garden and called them (Gen. 3:9). He does not forsake people in their sins. He does not take delight in the destruction of the wicked (Eze. 33:11).

God saw the affliction of the children of Israel in Egypt and called a leader to care for their interests (Ex. 3:4-10). Later on God called Moses to go to the top of Mount Sinai to receive instructions (Ex. 19:20). God called Aaron and Miriam to give them a rebuke (Num. 12:5). When God called Cyrus to a special task, He called him by his name, thus indicating a personal relationship and revealing God’s intimate knowledge of every individual (Isa. 45:1-3).

In New Testament times Jesus called His disciples in a direct and personal way (Mark 2:14, 15). He even gave a special name to Peter—Cephas—a name that was later to have special significance (John 1:42). Peter in his letter says that we are all called “unto his eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10).

However, Jesus warned that many are called but few are chosen. All are called, but not all respond to the call (Matt. 20:16; 22:14). Here is where man’s responsibility comes in; he needs to answer the call.

In the lesson this week we see how God has called certain individuals with a special purpose in mind. We see Abraham called to leave his family and friends and a city that was wholly devoted to false worship. We see his descendants being called to be a special people for God. We see that God’s call to people results in great blessing to them, because they are called out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of the gospel. We see how Jesus called His disciples and how one did not accept the call because he felt it involved too much hardship and sacrifice. God’s call is to service, and He desires that we walk worthy of the calling by which we are called.

Only the love of Christ, implanted in the believer’s heart, can bring into the life that fine balance between being *in* the world and not being *of* the world. Christ’s purity was unstained, yet He was not aloof from sinners.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **To Leave the World**
(Heb. 11:8)
2. **To Be God’s People**
(Ex. 19:5)
3. **From Darkness to Light**
(1 Peter 2:9)
4. **To Be Disciples**
(John 1:43)
5. **Called to Serve**
(Matt. 10:1)
6. **To Walk Worthily**
(1 Thess. 2:12)

**Part 1
TO LEAVE
THE WORLD**

In preparing Abraham to be a witness for Him, what did God ask him to do?

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8).

In the days of Abraham, God had to make a new beginning. Although idolatry and rebellion in the building of the Tower of Babel had been checked by the confusion of languages (Gen. 11:1-7), idolatry was once again becoming widespread; and even the family of Abraham was being influenced by the heathenism all around.

In order to preserve the true faith, God called Abraham out of his home country to go to a land where he would be a stranger. There he could witness to the true God and provide an example of true worship. Abraham obeyed, although in doing so he did not know where following the call would lead him. He exercised an exemplary faith, which was to be the secret of success in all his relations with God.

In this experience note the following:

1. God takes the initiative. It is God who calls; men and women merely follow instructions.
2. God has a plan and a purpose. He wants to preserve a knowledge of truth.
3. God uses the human instrument to achieve His objectives.
4. God does not always reveal the details of His plans. Man must act in faith, trusting God all the way.
5. The result of trusting obedience is a life of blessing.

What promise does God make to those who hear His call and obey it? Isa. 41:8-10.

The promise is made to Israel and the descendants of Abraham in particular, but it applies to all who obey God. Unfortunately the children of Israel did not live up to their privileges, and they were rejected as a people (not as individuals). Now it is those who truly accept Christ who are heirs of all the promises. (See Rom. 10:9-13; Gal. 3:29.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it always necessary to leave home in order to witness for God? What must a person be willing to leave in order to receive a proper preparation for witnessing?

We must not allow the love of the world to come between us and God.

FURTHER STUDY

Gen. 12:1-8; 13:1-4, 14-18; 17:1-8; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 125-131.

**Part 2
TO BE
GOD'S
PEOPLE**

What does God want us to be in relation to Him?

"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5).

God wants a special people to whom and through whom He can reveal truth and salvation. He is the owner of all the earth; so in a sense all people are His. But He desires a special group which will enjoy a special relationship with Him. This group of people will be obedient to His commands and will accept the terms of a mutual agreement whereby they and all mankind will be benefited.

What does God say He will do for His people? Deut. 7:13-15.

God is in a position to give us more than we can ask or think. (See Eph. 3:20.) There is only one condition—accept His authority. When we recognize that God is God, it is foolish to go contrary to His wishes. When we know that God is love, we have no need to question His demands or wishes. It becomes a privilege to accept His promises and serve Him.

What does God expect of His people? 1 Peter 2:9-12.

God's people cannot engage in anything that defiles their characters. They are to be a holy people—that is, a people set apart for and by God. They must reflect God's holiness. (See 1 Peter 1:16.)

"Satan is using every means to make crime and debasing vice popular. We cannot walk the streets of our cities without encountering flaring notices of crime presented in some novel, or to be acted at some theater. The mind is educated to familiarity with sin. The course pursued by the base and vile is kept before the people in the periodicals of the day, and everything that can excite passion is brought before them in exciting stories. . . .

"Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 459.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why do some people consider it a hardship to be separate from the world? What compensations come to the righteous?

FURTHER STUDY

Ex. 19:1-8; Deut. 14:2; 1 Peter 1:1-9; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 288-293; 296-301.

**Part 3
FROM DARK-
NESS
TO LIGHT**

What contrast exists between those in the church and those outside it?

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

To be in darkness is to be in a state of ignorance. It is to live a life in which one has inklings of right and wrong but no certain knowledge—in which one may speculate as to his origin but can never be sure. It is a life in which one's destiny is also in doubt—in which pain and suffering have reality but no meaning. Since man is a reasoning creature, he finds such a life frustrating. In his efforts to know the truth about himself and the world in which he lives, he finds confusion.

By contrast, God has called a people to come out of ignorance, leaving behind all frustration and despair. These people now live in an atmosphere of understanding which is likened to wonderful light. God has revealed to them where they have come from, why there is conflict, what is right and what is wrong, how they can be freed from guilt and its burden, and the glorious destiny He has in store for them and for all who will believe. Life now has meaning and challenge.

Furthermore, they know what God is like, because they see Him in Jesus Christ and feel constrained to love and worship Him. They also know that in Christ they can have power to overcome sin and enjoy lives of usefulness and dignity.

How does Peter contrast the Christian with the non-Christian? 1 Peter 2:10.

To be among the people of God means to have a sense of belonging—to be part of an organization. It means to have a sense of identity—to be part of a recognizable group. One knows to whom he may go for help, where he may be "at home."

By contrast, some people outside the church have no group to which they can relate with confidence. They are individualized to such an extent that they feel they have to depend on themselves wholly for everything in life. It is a lonely feeling, a frustrating feeling of utter helplessness.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the source of light for the Christian? How can he be sure that he does not walk in darkness?

FURTHER STUDY

Eph. 5:1-17; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 363-373.

**Part 4
TO BE
DISCIPLES**

When Jesus met those who were honestly seeking to know God and His will, what did He ask them to do?

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me" (John 1:43).

When Jesus began His ministry, one of the first things He did was to call, as followers, men who were seeking the kingdom.

Who were the first two to follow Jesus after John the Baptist pointed out the "Lamb of God"? John 1:35-40.

The good news of finding the Messiah, Andrew brings to his brother Peter. Philip brings the same to Nathanael, and thus is formed a nucleus to which others are added.

The disciples were not learned men, but they were devout men. They had been influenced by the teaching of John the Baptist. They were students of the Old Testament and knew that the Messiah should come. With this as a basis they were receptive to the call. Their minds were open to light; and when they saw the evidence that Jesus had to offer them, they left all and followed Him. (See Matt. 4:18-22.)

Do we have an example of one who did not follow Jesus? Mark 10:17-22.

To follow Jesus is to recognize Him for what He is. The early disciples had no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. They also recognized His authority; and when they were invited to leave their occupations and join Jesus in His ministry, they did not hesitate but immediately conformed. They had many things yet to learn of Jesus, but they placed themselves in the right environment and listened to His teaching. They did not always understand what Jesus had to say, but they asked questions. Although they made mistakes, there was no question where their loyalty lay. Thus they were able to fulfill God's purpose for and through them.

By contrast, the young man who had great riches found it very difficult to follow Jesus. His priority was on his possessions rather than on doing the will of God. Jesus loved him (verse 21). He was a young man anxious to do what was right. He apparently had considerable self-control, keeping the commandments—outwardly, at least—all through his life. But he lacked one thing; and, so far as we know, that one thing kept him out of the kingdom.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the dedication of Christ's true followers be measured? Why is it difficult to give up one's possessions?

FURTHER STUDY

Luke 14:25-27; *Steps to Christ*, "The Test of Discipleship," pp. 57-65.

**Part 5
CALLED
TO SERVE**

What power and task did Jesus assign to His disciples?

“When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10:1).

The disciples were not merely to follow Jesus and rejoice in His presence. This might have been a pleasant experience, but it would have been a selfish one. They were given power to do the work Jesus had been doing—healing the sick, casting out devils, and announcing the advent of the kingdom of heaven. Since they had received these things freely, they were to offer them to others freely. (See Matt. 10:8.)

What instructions from the Lord were to guide His disciples in their missionary journeys? Matt. 10:1-20.

The disciples were not to impose themselves on others, although if they were welcomed they were to accept the hospitality. They were not to make elaborate provisions for themselves, because they were entitled to support for the service they offered. They were to maintain a certain dignity in their work and a sense of its importance, because God was behind it and would remember those who rejected their ministry.

They were to do their work circumspectly, because there would be those who would try to bring dishonor to their cause; but they were not to be afraid if brought before councils and governors and shamefully treated. They were not to worry about what to say on such occasions, because the Holy Spirit would give them words to speak. In other words, they were ambassadors for Christ, and their testimony would be the basis of judgment to those who heard them.

What is likely to result from the service of Christ's followers? Matt. 10:34-36.

Perhaps the hardest opposition to take is the persecution that comes from members of one's own family. But the lesson Jesus is teaching His disciples is that no earthly tie should separate one from a wholehearted dedication to the service of God. When it comes to our relationship to Him, this must take priority over everything else.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does the coming of the Prince of Peace so often mean the bringing of a sword into human relationships?

FURTHER STUDY

Rom. 12:1; Eph. 6:1-9; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 349-358.

**Part 6
TO WALK
WORTHILY**

How did Paul exhort the Thessalonians to behave?

“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12).

Since God has graciously called us to share His kingdom and His glory, it is only fitting that we live to show we deserve such an honor.

Paul has already indicated to the Thessalonians what he means by living lives worthy of God's call. (Read 1 Thess. 2:2-11.) He himself had set the example:

1. He had preached the gospel boldly, without error, with perfectly pure motives, and without deceit (verse 3).

2. He was not out to please men or to win their favor; he aimed to please God, who alone is our righteous Judge (verse 4).

3. He never used flattery; he did not pretend to be other than he was. He did not work for personal gain or hide his motives (verse 5).

4. He did not seek the gifts of men or even their praise. In fact, though he had every right as an apostle to be supported by them, he scrupulously avoided being a burden (verse 6).

5. He was solicitous of others' welfare and cared for them so much that he was willing not only to share the good news with them, but also to spend and be spent for their sake (verses 7, 8).

6. He worked day and night, living a holy, righteous, and blameless life. He was like a father in his constant care for his spiritual children (verses 9-12).

What other characteristics does Paul enumerate as part of being true to our calling? Eph. 4:1-3.

1. *Humility.* Being called by God is a great privilege, but we have done nothing to deserve it. It should never be a basis for pride.

2. *Gentleness.* This comes from a strong desire not to hurt anyone. We recognize how fragile some aspects of life can be; so we touch gently and lovingly.

3. *Patience.* People do not always act as they ought; they do not react as quickly as we would like. Hence we need to be patient. If we are truly loving, we can bear many things.

4. *Maintaining unity and peace.* How easy it is to quarrel and fight. Blessed are the peacemakers and those who know how to bring about peace between contending parties.

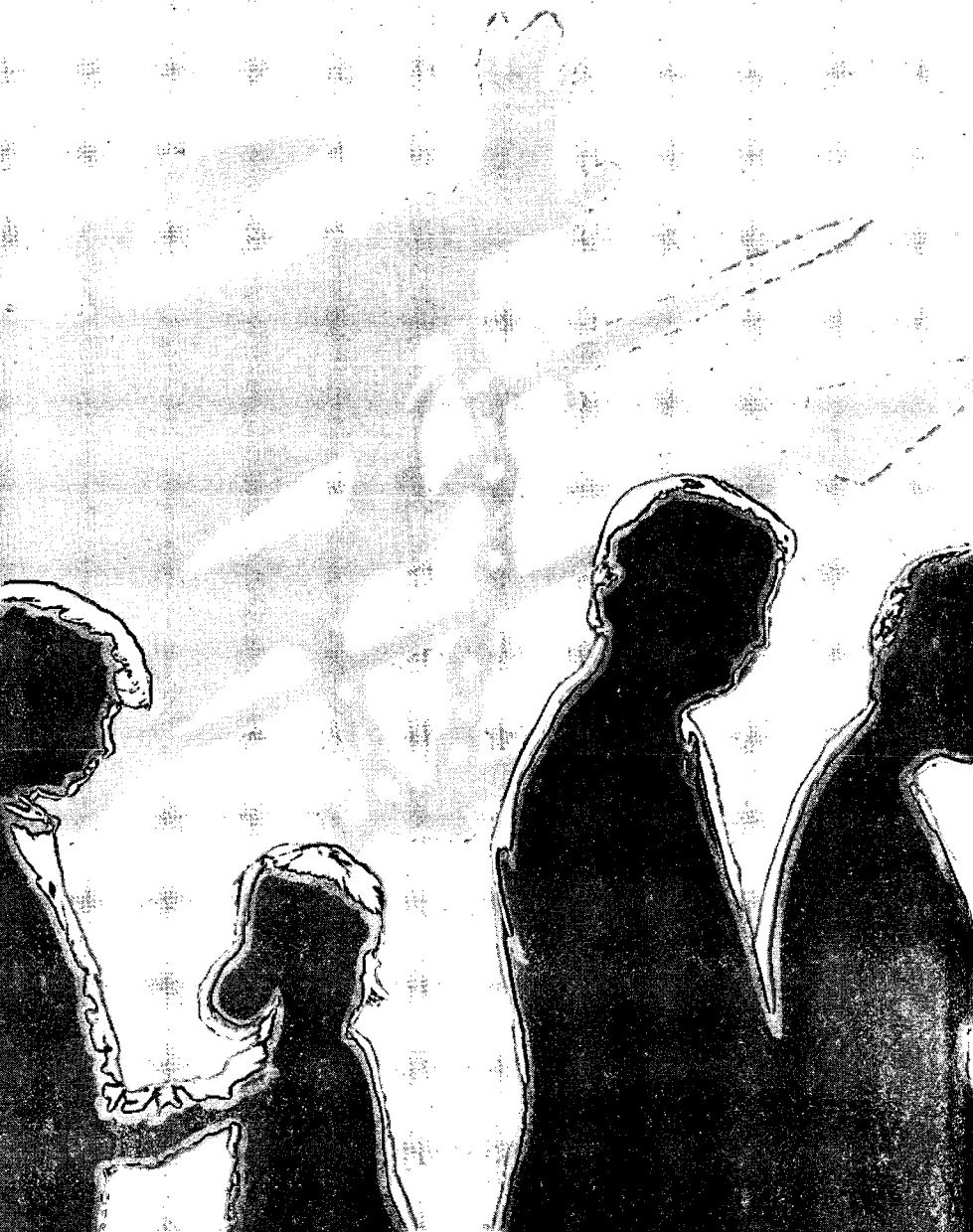
THINK IT THROUGH

What enables anyone to walk worthy of the calling with which he has been called? (See Gal. 5:22, 23.)

FURTHER STUDY

Rev. 3:4; Col. 1:9-14; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 255-268.

4 / Marks of the Church



“At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1).

If I look for the church, can I find it? What are its basic characteristics? These are the questions we seek to answer in our lesson this week.

We will see that the church is basically people—people who come and go, people who congregate in large numbers or in twos and threes, people who act in certain definite ways.

Too often we think of the church as a building, an institution, a denomination. But the early church did not have places set apart for worship. While in Jerusalem, they met in the temple. They worshiped in the homes of the people (Acts 2:46; 3:1). In the homes they held preaching services and prayer meetings (Acts 5:42; 12:12). Thus we must not think of the church as being contained in a particular building.

When the church was scattered because of persecution, it did not cease to exist. The church is wherever its members are. Where there is a large number of members, the church is large. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, Christ is in the midst to bless (Matt. 18:20). Large or small, rich or poor—these characteristics do not make or mar the church.

The church has a location and a name and is as visible as its members. Both local and universal, it partakes of the activity of God and the nature of its members. That is why we look at what church members do and think. They represent the God who

has called them, and they do the work God has called them to do.

In our lesson this week we see the church as represented by those who take the name of Christ. Their lives and thoughts are bound up with what Jesus has done for them.

For church members there is only one basic truth—the truth as they see it in Christ Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Such truth makes them free, and they will be loyal to it even unto death.

For the Christian, truth is not merely something to be thought about. It is a way of life. Christians practice what they preach!

Christian living is not legalism. A way of life, it involves the way of love. We will see that love to God and man involves a whole new set of values and priorities. The life of the Christian and the life of the one who espouses the ways of the world are at two opposite poles. Not that the Christian thinks of himself as having arrived. He is always seeking renewal and reformation, always seeking to accomplish God's plans and purposes.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Confessing Jesus**
(Acts 5:42)
2. **Loyal to Truth**
(Eph. 4:25)
3. **Doers of the Word**
(James 1:22)
4. **Reacting in Love**
(John 13:35)
5. **Seeking Revival**
(Ps. 85:6, 7)
6. **Doing God's Work**
(John 17:4)

Part 1
CONFESSING
JESUS

What was the message of the apostles after Pentecost?

"Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

By personal experience the apostles were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. He was born in Bethlehem as Micah had foretold (Micah 5:2). He was born of a virgin as Isaiah had predicted (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). He was Emmanuel—God with us—and His name, Jesus, indicated that He was the One who would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21-23). He had come "unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11), but all those who had accepted His claims were given "power to become the sons of God" (verse 12).

When this same Jesus had been crucified on the cross, what act of God made Him "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"? (Acts 5:31).

Not only were the apostles witnesses to Christ's sacrifice, but the Holy Spirit also testified of it in and through those who believed in what God had done (verse 32).

The gospel of Christ was an astounding message to the Jewish people, but it was the truth, and the apostles could not do anything but preach it. It was central to all their teaching. When asked to desist from such teaching, they replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (verse 29). When beaten for their conduct, they rejoiced in their experiences and continued to teach and preach every day (verses 41, 42).

What kind of preaching was done at Antioch, and what name was given to the disciples there? Acts 11:20, 26.

"The name [Christian] was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. . . . With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him. . . .

"It was God who gave to them the name of Christian. This is a royal name, given to all who join themselves to Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 157.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are some of the things we should be doing as true Christians in this day?

FURTHER STUDY

1 John 4:1-4; Phil. 1:15-21; Rev. 2:13; Col. 3:17.

Part 2
LOYAL TO
TRUTH

Why should members of the true church relate helpfully to one another?

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).

Those who belong to the true church are honest and straightforward in all their dealings. The church considers it important to uphold the truth and be loyal to it. (Note the injunction of Jesus in Matthew 5:37.)

What claim did Jesus make for Himself? John 14:6.

Many theories of truth are set forth, and some may feel there is no adequate answer to the question, What is truth? (See John 18:38.) But the Christian is positive that there is an answer to the question, and the answer is the Person—Jesus Christ.

What do we see when we see Jesus Christ? John 1:1, 14.

John testified that in Jesus we see God made flesh and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. He contrasts Moses and Jesus and says that Moses brought the law, but “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (verse 17).

Thus the true church presents the truth as seen in Christ Jesus. We see the love of God for fallen humanity in the sacrifice made on the cross. We learn of one who does not abide in the truth, but is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Thus only two stands can be taken by anyone—for the truth, or against it—for the revelation of God in the Bible and in Jesus Christ, or against it.

What does the Christian discover to be God’s key to freedom? John 8:32.

When he knows the truth about God and himself and acts upon this truth, he can be free from the guilt and power of sin. Through the truth he can be sanctified, according to the prayer of Jesus (John 17:17).

By contrast, there are those who not only reject the truth but who also suppress it. (See 1 Timothy 4.) Although they know about God, they refuse to accept the revelation that has been made about Him, and they refuse to be grateful for all that God has done.

THINK IT THROUGH

On what basis can we say that in the Bible we have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

FURTHER STUDY

Psalm 15; Ps. 51:6-13; John 16:12-14; *Steps to Christ*, “The Work and the Life,” pp. 77-83.

**Part 3
DOERS OF
THE WORD**

What is the relationship of Christian words and deeds according to James?

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

The true church has practicing Christians!

James does not deny that a Christian has experienced birth. He stresses the importance of this experience. He says that “of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (verse 18). The Christian is not a Christian merely because he is born into a Christian family. He is not a Christian because he has learned Christian habits of conduct and has kept the law insofar as anyone can judge. He is not a Christian because he knows Christian doctrines. He is a Christian only from the moment that he has been born into the family of Christ.

The true church expects that its members will live up to the principles taught in the Bible. This may limit the number of members that a church accepts, and the church may be very small in some areas. But the church that accepts and condones members who live in open violation of the law of God is certainly not living up to its calling. The church recognizes that membership carries with it an obligation to do what is right and to right any wrongs.

How does Paul compare the doers of the law with those who are hearers only? Rom. 2:13.

Paul makes it clear that a person is judged according to what he knows and how he relates to truth. He may not know much about the law of God, but he does know instinctively the difference between right and wrong, and he has chosen to do what is right. Therefore God can accept him; he has lived up to the light that he has.

Jesus also contrasts words and deeds. Matt. 7:21-27.

The action referred to in the text is doing the will of God. A form of piety that merely pays lip service to God will not avail anything in the judgment. Living in harmony with God's will is the criterion for entrance into the kingdom.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the connection between doing God's will and the Christian life?

FURTHER STUDY

John 15:4-8; Matt. 23:1-8; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “Not Judging, but Doing” (Matt. 7:25), pp. 147-152.

**Part 4
REACTING
IN LOVE**

What did Jesus say would be a distinguishing characteristic of His disciples?

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Human love is a characteristic implanted by God. But the love Jesus is talking about is more than human love. It is human to love the members of our family—to love those who love us. But Jesus is talking about a love like the love of God—a love that extends to enemies and to the unlovely.

What significant truth underlies the summary of Matthew 22:37-40.

To keep the commandments in a legalistic sense is comparatively easy. A young man who came to Jesus claimed to have kept the law, and the claim was not denied. (See Matt. 19:20, 21.) But the young man had not learned to keep them out of love.

Think upon Paul's evaluation of the way of love. 1 Corinthians 13.

When we read this chapter, we begin to realize that talents, self-sacrifice, and even faith in God are of no avail unless the motivating principle of life is love. It is outgoing toward all, regardless of the character of the person.

Consider the principle on which John shows the relationship between love to God and love to man. 1 John 4:20, 21.

Some claim that they love God and are willing to do anything for Him. But their relationships with their fellow Christians are anything but pleasant. Full of criticism and anxious to see discipline exercised on others, they are unable to put themselves in the shoes of their failing friends. They lack even the milk of human kindness. Such people have a distorted vision of their relationship with God, because if they truly loved God they would reflect His love in their relationships with others.

The true church is always a friendly church. It expresses concern for its neighbors. It cares for its members. Such a church exercises God's presence in the community and fulfills one of its most important functions.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why cannot love condone iniquity or excuse sin?

FURTHER STUDY

John 15:12-17; Matt. 5:43-48; *Steps to Christ*, "God's Love for Man," pp. 9-15.

**Part 5
SEEKING
REVIVAL**

What important request does the psalmist make of God?

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation" (Ps. 85:6, 7).

The psalmist is grateful that God has brought His people back from captivity and has forgiven their sins (verses 1, 2). Now he wants to feel the peace of God in his heart to be revived in spirit. He recognizes that salvation is the most important thing for him and that in order to enjoy this blessing he must trust implicitly in the merits of Jesus. As the fruit of faith, he walks in the ways of righteousness.

The danger always exists that we may take God for granted, accept His blessings as a matter of course, keep His commandments out of force of habit, and follow a pattern of worship because it has been handed down by tradition. In fact, we may be doing things that seem right to us but which are indeed contrary to what He has declared.

What counsel does Paul give to those who are too sure of themselves? 1 Cor. 10:12.

Arrogance is dangerous. A church may feel it is the true church; but if it is not willing to accept valid criticism and to make changes accordingly, it loses the presence of God.

Study the evidence that the church has always had to reform itself. Rev. 2:4, 14, 16, 20; 3:2, 16.

The church is wholly dependent on a relationship with God. This relationship must be renewed all the time. It cannot afford to be indifferent. Here are some questions to ask:

1. Are church leaders—called of God and endowed with spiritual gifts—to lead, or are they mere professionals with training and skill but no true charisma?
2. Are the members dedicated to God and His service throughout the week, or are they merely churchgoers, having a form of godliness but denying the real power of the gospel? (See 2 Tim. 3:5.)
3. Is the church making useful changes to meet new challenges, or is it tied to ritual and tradition?
4. Is the local church a place where the Spirit of God is active, or is it merely a social club attended for the prestige that it may provide its members?

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways is reformation more than change for the sake of change?

FURTHER STUDY

Pss. 138:6-8; 23:3; 73:1-3, 16-18, 28; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 585-592.

**Part 6
DOING
GOD'S WORK**

What did Jesus show to be one purpose of His work?

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Although Jesus was the Son of God, He did not attribute glory to Himself; His whole life was dedicated to the glory of His Father. He revealed the love of God, set forth the principles of the kingdom, called sin by its right name, and bore our sins on the cross.

The church on earth is to continue the work which Christ began. It is to represent Christ to the world. Only as it does this can it be recognized as the true church.

What are some important characteristics of the work of the church?

1. The church owes its origin and life to God, who is active in its midst. Its members are born from above and are Spirit-filled.

2. The church must be active in the ways Jesus would be were He here on earth. It should be concerned about sheep without a shepherd, about the lost, about releasing the captive from his sins, about being the agent of reconciliation and the depository of God's grace.

3. The church must manifest the spirit of Christ: His humility (Phil. 2:5-8), His service (John 13:4, 5, 12-17), His acceptance of the cross as the means of redemption.

4. The last part of God's church will proclaim the messages of the three angels who present God's last call to mankind. (See Rev. 14:6-12.)

Note Jesus' warning against seeking popularity. Luke 6:26.

Success is sometimes measured by size and popularity. But this is not true of the church. The church that supposes it is doing God's will because it has a large influx of members may be mistaken. While the church is charged with the responsibility of making disciples, its mission is basically that of bearing a witness. Hopefully, many who hear will also accept the gospel invitation. But we may be sure that there will be many who will ignore it, because the way of righteousness is narrow, while the way of destruction is broad.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much validity do numbers have in deciding the strength of the church or its importance?

FURTHER STUDY

Deut. 4:39, 40; Mark 3:34, 35; 2 Cor. 8:9-12; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Go Into the Highways and Hedges," p. 229.

5 / The Church in Pictures



“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32).

When Paul refers to the relationship between Christ and the church, he calls it a mystery. This is not to say that the relationship cannot be understood, but that it requires a certain amount of insight gained by a willingness to be sensitive to God’s revelation.

The problem is that the relationship between Christ and the church can be oversimplified. The activity of God, like God Himself, cannot be adequately described by human language. Because of the limitations of man’s mind, it is often beyond human comprehension. The nature of God’s activity in the church is so varied that a number of human terms are used to try to convey some sense of the reality.

The Bible tried to help us understand this mystery by using a number of metaphors, and in the lesson this week we look at these in an effort to grasp some of the fullness of the relationship between Christ and His church.

We begin by looking at the figure of the sheep and the shepherd. For this metaphor we must use our imaginations or wide reading, because few of us have seen Eastern shepherds or have had to deal with sheep. The early disciples had no problems here. When Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, they could visualize immediately what was meant and could recognize the aptness of the illustration. With a little study we ought to be able to appreciate what is meant by this figure of speech.

The figure of the vine and the branches as explained by Jesus brings out relationships between Christ and the church that are not brought out by the concept of sheep and shepherd. Something more than care seems to be involved. A source

of life is illustrated by the sap that flows into the branches. Fruit bearing is seen as a natural result of remaining in the vine.

The concept of the stones of a building brings out other truths regarding the relationship between Christ and the church. Peter seems to recognize that the figure of a stone has its weakness, because a stone is a lifeless object. Therefore he talks of “lively” stones. The imagery cannot be pressed on every detail, but the idea of a foundation or cornerstone is essential to understanding Christ’s importance to the church; therefore the figure of speech must be studied.

The metaphor of a king and a kingdom gets very close to actuality, because Christ is a king. This points up not only His supremacy, but also His authority. Of course the kingdom is not of this world; therefore we must understand the metaphor in terms of the kingdom of God and the principles of righteousness which it embodies.

Two other metaphors—the household of God, and the head and the body—bring home personal and family relationships. They show how close we are brought to God by the new birth and how we all become brothers and sisters in the faith.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Sheep and Shepherd (John 10:11)**
- 2. Branches and Vine (John 15:1)**
- 3. Stones and Building (1 Peter 2:5)**
- 4. Kingdom and King (Mark 1:15)**
- 5. Household of God (Eph. 2:19)**
- 6. Head and Body (1 Cor. 12:27)**

**Part 1
SHEEP AND
SHEPHERD**

Consider Jesus' pastoral picture of His relationship to His people.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

The relationship of Jesus to His people is that of a shepherd to his sheep. This metaphor was well understood in Bible lands because there were shepherds and sheep everywhere. It was also well understood that there were bad shepherds and good ones, sheep that were well cared for and sheep that were at the mercy of wolves. The sheep usually knew their shepherd by his voice and responded to his call. They could depend on him to lead them to good pasture, to refreshing water, and to the fold at night.

In what portrayal by the psalmist was the Lord presented as his constant helper? Psalm 23.

The Shepherd provided the psalmist with his daily temporal needs. But He went beyond this, because He also led him in the paths of righteousness and restored his soul when he was discouraged because of sin. The psalmist was not afraid of death, nor did he feel any dread of evil coming upon him, for he knew that the Shepherd was with him to guide and correct him. Thus he felt unusually blessed, with a sense of victory over his enemies and the assurance that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What are some of the parallels between sheep and people? The likeness of people to sheep is a very close one. Like sheep, people are dependent on their leaders. Like sheep, they are sometimes treated well and sometimes badly. Sometimes they are lost and need to be found. They need to be treated gently when they are with young. The lambs often need to be carried over rough terrain.

Sheep have a tendency to go astray. They have no means of self-protection except as the shepherd reaches out with his crook and saves them.

Jesus said that He laid down His life for His sheep. This is the supreme sacrifice. Many people herd sheep for the good they can get out of them. When danger threatens their own lives, they run away. They are more concerned about themselves than about the sheep. In this respect Jesus is entirely different.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do you differentiate between the voice of the shepherd and the voice of the hireling?

FURTHER STUDY

Isa. 53:6-11; Matt. 7:15-20; John 10:1-18; 1 Peter 2:25; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476-484.

**Part 2
BRANCHES
AND VINE**

What metaphor from plant life did Jesus use to illustrate the relation between Himself, His people, and God?

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1).

If the illustration of sheep and shepherd had been all-sufficient, there would have been no need for another. But Jesus wanted to bring out the closeness that must exist between Himself and His people—a closeness like that of a branch in the vine.

When the spies rejoined the children of Israel in the wilderness after they had been to Canaan, what did the huge bunch of grapes they carried indicate? Num. 13:23.

The vine is an abundant, well-known, carefully cultivated plant in Palestine. It produces the grape which yields wine, and this brings refreshment to many a thirsty soul.

In the metaphor, what gracious work is done by the Father? John 15:2.

The object of the branch in being connected to the vine is to produce fruit. If the branch does not abide in the vine, it becomes fruitless, dies, and is disposed of.

The life of the branch is in the sap that comes from the vine. It cannot glory in itself because of the fruit it bears. It bears fruit naturally. When there is plentiful fruit, the glory comes to the husbandman.

What Old Testament illustration parallels that of the vine? Isa. 5:1-7.

The children of Israel were likened to a vine planted in a choice vineyard. They should have brought forth good fruit, but they did not. What a tragedy it is when that which God has created fails to fulfill His plan and proves a failure!

The church is God's vineyard, in which Jesus is the vine and the members of the church are branches. Only if the members are in Christ as the branch is in the vine can they bring forth fruit to God's glory. Will the church measure up to its privileges?

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the key by which one maintains his connection with Christ so as to bear good fruit?

FURTHER STUDY

John 15:1-11; Ps. 91:1, 2; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 675-680.

**Part 3
STONES AND
BUILDING**

What illustration does Peter employ to describe the church in its various relationships?

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

Stones and buildings suggest something more permanent than sheep and shepherds or branches and vines. Hence we find in this parallel used by Peter a suggestion of stability. The church still involves a relationship, but it is one that can last forever.

What purposes might Paul have in using the figure of a building in connection with the church? 1 Cor. 3:9.

The apostle describes himself as a worker with God, engaged in building. The first thing he does is to lay a foundation, and the only foundation that can be laid for the church is Jesus Christ (verse 11).

Jesus pointed out to His disciples the importance of a foundation. (See Matt. 7:24-27.) The wise man built on a rock, but the foolish man built on sand. The church is built on the Rock, Christ Jesus.

To whom does Paul refer as the foundation of a holy temple and as the Chief Cornerstone? Eph. 2:20-22.

A cornerstone was a key stone to hold the rest of the building together. A temple is the dwelling place of God; so this stone is vital to the whole building.

It is interesting to note that Jesus shares the foundation with the apostles and prophets, a generosity typical of Him. (See Rev. 3:21.)

Peter may have been dissatisfied with the idea of stones to represent people; so he writes of “living” stones (1 Peter 2:4). The building is therefore a living entity. But just as stones are bound to one another and support one another, so the members of the church are bound together by a unity that cannot be broken without destroying the whole edifice.

The figure of stone lends itself to other concepts. The stone can be precious (1 Peter 2:6). It may be rejected, as Jesus was by His own people (verse 7). It can be a stone of stumbling, as Jesus was to the Jewish people. (See Rom. 9:32, 33.) But the assurance is that the one who believes in Jesus will never be put to shame.

THINK IT THROUGH

What lessons do you draw from the inadequacy of any one metaphor to describe the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Acts 20:32; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 595-599.

**Part 4
KINGDOM
AND KING**

What gospel message did Jesus take to Galilee after the imprisonment of John?

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

The kingdom of God is another metaphor to describe the relationships that exist in the church. The kingdom is not of this world, but it is nevertheless a real entity. Jesus acknowledged to Pilate that He was a king. (See Mark 15:2.)

In what series of parables does Jesus describe what occurs in the kingdom of heaven? Matt. 13:18-52.

The reception of the seed of truth varies with individuals: some have hearts hardened like beaten paths, others cannot withstand persecution, still others permit the cares of this world to determine their destiny, but some accept the word of truth and bring forth fruit in their lives.

Again, the kingdom of heaven will have in it both good seed and weeds. Should the weeds be pulled up immediately? The answer is No—because of the danger of hurting the good seed. A time will come when this work of judgment can be done safely and effectively.

The kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven that works quietly and unseen, but powerfully. It is like treasure hidden in a field or like a pearl that a merchant will make a huge sacrifice to obtain. It may even be likened to a dragnet that takes in good and bad, with only the good surviving.

How does Paul describe his heavenly citizenship? Phil. 3:20.

What did Daniel see, through Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as the climax of all earthly kingdoms? Dan. 2:35, 44.

The God of heaven sets up this kingdom. To be a citizen of God's kingdom is surely the greatest privilege that anyone can enjoy.

The Christian finds no abiding city here in this world, but for him the enlargement of the kingdom of God is the highest goal for which he can strive.

Augustine saw the church as the City of God. His concept of such a city on earth was mistaken. But to the Christian the church is *an earnest* (a pledge) of the kingdom of heaven.

THINK IT THROUGH

By what means may a person who is an active citizen of some country in this world also obtain citizenship in heaven?

FURTHER STUDY

Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 7:27; Matt. 7:21; 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Gain That Is Loss," pp. 253, 254.

**Part 5
HOUSEHOLD
OF GOD**

While assuring the Ephesians that they were no longer aliens, into what family did Paul include them?

“Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

The concept of the household brings the interrelationships of the church members even closer. The church is not a group of unrelated individuals; it is a family group, with all the closeness that membership in a family implies.

What word from Jesus shocked Nicodemus regarding his part in the kingdom of heaven? John 3:3.

Nicodemus, like so many other good people, thought that he would get into the kingdom because of his righteousness—because of his faithful keeping of the law.

Why may those who tell lies properly be called the children of the evil one? John 8:44.

Children partake of the characteristics of their parents. That is why we have all inherited the traits of fallen Adam. Those who claim to be the children of Abraham should manifest Abraham’s characteristics (verse 39). When we are born into the household of God, we must reflect the character of God.

What indication does Paul give of the close relationship binding together members of the household of God? Eph. 3:14, 15.

We are now brothers and sisters. This is a relationship that involves responsibilities. We are privileged to treat one another as members of the family—with love. If we see a brother who is naked, we must clothe him. (See James 2:15, 16.) We must be careful not to cause a weak brother to stumble. Paul states it emphatically when he says that if we sin against a brother we sin against Christ. (See 1 Cor. 8:12.) We must be willing to restrict our own liberties for the sake of our fellow members (verse 13). As brothers and sisters we should settle our own disputes and not take them to courts where unbelievers are called upon to judge. (See 1 Cor. 6:5-7.) The Christian should choose rather to be defrauded and to suffer at the hands of his fellow Christians than to go to court.

THINK IT THROUGH

What advantages or disadvantages do you see in calling members of the church by the title of “brother” and “sister” rather than by some secular title?

FURTHER STUDY

Gal. 6:10; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15; *Sons and Daughters of God*, pp. 7-14.

**Part 6
HEAD AND
BODY**

What striking figure of speech did Paul use to describe the true nature of the church?

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:27).

Paul elaborates on this figure of speech in his letter to the Ephesians. He says that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23).

The metaphor of a body is very apt as applied to the church. Here are some principles worth noting:

1. Just as a body cannot operate without a head, so the church cannot live without Christ.
2. Just as the body has many members, each unique in its function, yet all contributing to the life of the whole, so in the church there are different gifts, each ministering to the whole; many nationalities, but one body. (See 1 Cor. 12:12, 13.)
3. No member can claim priority over any other member in the body, nor should anyone want to be the only member. This would be a negation of the body. (See verses 15-17, 21.)
4. All the members of a body are so related that if one member suffers, the rest of the members suffer (verse 26).
5. There are three "gifts" that all must exercise: Faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)

What ambassador role shows the close interrelation between Jesus and His disciples? Matt. 10:40.

To be rejected of men is not easy. But when this happens, we may find comfort in knowing that Jesus was also rejected. (See the experience of Samuel in 1 Sam. 8:7.) It is good to know that Jesus identifies with us so that He, as the Head, shares with the church in its various experiences, rejoicing in its successes and grieving over its failures.

Although Jesus is in heaven, He is also present on the earth in and through His church. And although He is the Head of the church, He is not conditioned by the church. Independent of the church, He nevertheless voluntarily associates with the church in order to make it what it ought to be—His bride.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what particular ways do the figure of the head and the body emphasize the truth that the church is more than a human organization?

FURTHER STUDY

1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:15, 16; Col. 1:14-19; *Education*, pp. 268, 269.

6 / A Chosen People



“You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Col. 1:21, 22).

Paul presents to the church at Colosse the purpose that Christ has for every member of the church—an ideal that rises above weakness or sin.

Because the Christian is holy, the church is holy. It will have no love for sin. It cannot condone it or find excuses for it. It must always call sin by its right name and wage war against it.

Jesus prayed that His disciples might be sanctified, or made holy. (See John 17:17.) He indicated that this would be accomplished through the Word of God—the truth God has revealed. Thus there can be no doubt about the way of holiness set before the church.

Yet the word “holy” must be understood in its biblical setting to be interpreted correctly. Hence the subject of this week is vital, both for understanding what the church is all about and for recognizing our duties and responsibilities as members of the church.

We notice that the members of the church are called to be saints. This term can have a rather special meaning, referring to those canonized by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Therefore we need to look at the word carefully to be sure that we understand what the writers of the New Testament meant by the word “saint.” In one aspect it refers to a way of life that leads ever upward to Christlikeness, and we have no desire to water down the high standards of Christian conduct and life in order to bring sainthood into harmony with what we may see all

around us—even within the church.

It is important, however, to note another and perhaps more common aspect of things sanctified or made holy. Buildings and articles of furniture, priests and garments, sacrifices and offerings are declared holy when they are set apart for God’s service. The sanctuary/temple was a prime setting for all of these in the Old Testament. God’s people, ancient or modern, are called holy—set apart for God’s service. They are likewise called to reflect the holy character of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Holiness—Christlikeness—is the goal.

Is it not a blessing that God’s commands are His enablers? If we were required to reach God’s standards in our own strength, we would be most miserable, because we would fail from the very start.

When the Christian accepts the goal that God has set for him, he does not sit back and do nothing. In mind and heart he dedicates himself to God’s purposes and allows the Holy Spirit to operate in his life. Then in his relationships with others he acts as the servant of God, providing for the needy, showing hospitality to strangers, and opening his doors to fellow saints. The holy and blameless life is not lived away from the stream of humanity, but right in its midst.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Called Saints**
(Rom. 1:7)
2. **Meaning of Holiness**
(Num. 16:38)
3. **Divine Imperative**
(1 Peter 1:16)
4. **Believer’s Response**
(1 John 3:3)
5. **Practical Aspects**
(Rom. 16:2)
6. **Blameless Lives**
(Phil. 2:15)

**Part 1
CALLED
SAINTS**

Note Paul's greeting to the members of the church at Rome:

"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:7).

In the days of Christ's ministry His followers were called "disciples." Later on they called one another "brethren." Paul calls them "saints," or "holy ones."

The term *saint* is not in common use in our day except in reference to those reputedly devout persons who have been canonized by ecclesiastical authority. Therefore several modern versions of the Bible in English use other words to translate the Greek word which the KJV translates as "saints." The Good News Bible (TEV): "called to be his own people." NEB: "called to be his dedicated people." Phillips: "called to be Christ's men and women."

We must never lose sight of the idea of sainthood as a characteristic of the believers in the church, although we should understand what that sainthood means.

How does Paul say a believer becomes a saint? 1 Cor. 1:2.

"Sanctified in Christ Jesus": The Greek word for "sanctified" comes from the same root as the word for saint. Because the believer is in Jesus and Jesus is in him, he is a saint.

Jesus prayed that His disciples might be sanctified by the truth—the Word of God. (See John 17:17.)

What does Paul tell the Thessalonians are key elements in their salvation? 2 Thess. 2:13.

Peter confirms this in his letter. (See 1 Peter 1:2.) When Paul was describing his commission to King Agrippa, he said that he was sent to the Gentiles "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [Christ]" (Acts 26:18).

But sanctification is also an ongoing process. (See Eph. 5:26.) Sainthood is not the attainment of instant perfection, but a daily growth in grace. That is why members of the church need ever to be reminded to put off "the old man" and "put on the new" (Eph. 4:22-24).

THINK IT THROUGH

What is a member's responsibility to other members who may be struggling against temptation?

FURTHER STUDY

Eph. 5:27; Rom. 6:16; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Cor. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:21; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 469-474.

Part 2
MEANING OF
HOLINESS

What was true of the material in certain censers hammered out to overlay the altar?

“Hammer the censers into sheets to overlay the altar, for they were presented before the Lord and have become holy. Let them be a sign to the Israelites” (Num. 16:38, NIV).

Read all the verses of Numbers 16 in order to get the background of the story. Note the following points:

1. The leaders of the rebellion say that the whole congregation is holy because God is in their midst (verse 3).

2. God separated the Levites from the rest of the children of Israel and brought them near to Himself. Apparently Korah did not recognize or care to acknowledge that it is God who appoints men and women to certain offices. Men and women are to accept from God any privileges or limitations imposed upon them.

3. God vindicated His established order, and the leaders of the rebels were destroyed.

4. The metal of the censers was considered holy because it had been presented to the Lord.

What is your reaction to the story? Do you see how men sometimes turn away from God's order? Do you see that to oppose God is dangerous?

What are two examples showing that even the ground is made holy by the presence of God? Ex. 3:5; Joshua 5:15.

Because God is holy, everything He touches is holy. The temple was holy because He was in it. (See Matt. 21:13.) The Sabbath is also holy because God is in it in a special sense—meeting His people in this sanctuary in time.

What was God's purpose for the children of Israel? Deut. 28:9-14.

By setting apart the children of Israel as a holy people, God intended to make them a blessing and an example. There was just one condition—that they keep God's commandments.

Thus holiness involves God's action of hallowing; it means a separation from other people in terms of blessing; it involves being obedient to God's commands.

THINK IT THROUGH

How recently did you uphold the view that the church building is to be regarded differently from any secular building?

FURTHER STUDY

Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:2; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 395-405.

**Part 3
DIVINE
IMPERATIVE****Why are God's people to be holy?**

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Peter tells the believers that they are to be holy in all they do (verse 15). That is, holiness is not to be limited to certain acts of worship or to certain times of the day or week. The Christian is to be holy at all times, in every circumstance, in all his activities. Just as God is holy and never loses His holiness—never sets it aside—so the Christian is to be holy in following the divine pattern.

What does Paul say is the will of God for us? 1 Thess. 4:3-8.

Paul makes it clear that there is to be a very great difference between the Christian and the man of the world. The latter may engage in unseemly practices, but the Christian cannot. The Christian knows God, whereas the Gentile does not (verse 5). The knowledge of God determines the way of life. When we know that God is love and that He has done so much for us, we respond by doing His will, and we know that His will is to save us from our sins—to save us from the death that is the wages of sin. He wants us to be reflectors of His goodness and holiness, because we have been created in His image.

If we are slow to turn our backs on the wicked ways of the world, what must be included in our view of the future? Eccl. 12:13, 14; Deut. 4:24.

Not that fear should be our primary motivating force, but it can be a healthy reminder! God has certainly given ample warning of the consequences of sin, both to our first parents and to the children of Israel. In 1 Thessalonians 4:6 Paul urges the members in Thessalonica to refrain from defrauding one another because God is an avenger! God has not called us to be His people with the expectation that we shall remain the same as we were before we were called. He calls us so that we may have the privilege of a new creation, a new heart, a new life—a life of doing what is right and pleasing to God. In fact, when we show no regard for our bodies or our calling, we are despising God. That is a careless attitude to take and will result in serious consequences.

THINK IT THROUGH

Will we offend people if we carry holiness into our everyday lives? (Read Rom. 12:14-21.)

FURTHER STUDY

2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:2; *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 454-456; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Sower Went Forth to Sow," pp. 48, 49.

**Part 4
BELIEVER'S
RESPONSE**

When the Christian sees that the end is near, what does he seek to do?

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

The Greek word for "purifieth" is in the present tense, which means that the Christian is always seeking to be pure in life, especially as he looks forward to the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return. He knows that he can do nothing to make himself clean; but he also knows that if he comes humbly before the throne of grace and pleads the merits of Christ, God will be gracious, forgiving him and purifying his life.

What is God's goal for His children? Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Thess. 5:23.

"The sanctification of the church is God's object in all His dealings with His people. He has chosen them from eternity, that they might be holy. He gave His Son to die for them, that they might be sanctified through obedience to the truth, divested of all the littleness of self."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 559.

The Christian does not assume that purity is an impossibility. Nor does he consider that he has already attained such a state. He recognizes his weaknesses, but he also has faith in the strength and grace of God while he trusts in Jesus' merits.

What are two other outstanding qualities of a Christian? Heb. 12:14.

1. The member of the church is a *peacemaker*. (See Matt. 5:9.) He knows that he lives in a world where tempers flare up quite easily (even his own!). But he knows that nothing is gained and much is lost when tempers take over. Therefore he pours oil on troubled waters. He seeks to understand both sides of a controversy, and then he tries to bring them together. This does not mean that he compromises truth, but he knows when to stand firm and when to give in. And he urges others to do the same, using heavenly wisdom and tact. He also knows that the only peace worth having is that which Jesus gives. (See John 14:27.) He is a witness of this peace in his heart.

2. At the same time he strives for *holiness*. This is a personal relationship with God in which he knows that, being right with God, he can be right with his fellowmen.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the differences between purifying oneself and merely being a "goody-goody"?

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 474-478; Rom. 12:18; Phil. 2:14-16.

Part 5
PRACTICAL
ASPECTS

What kind of conduct did Paul say was fitting for saints?

"That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (Rom. 16:2).

A study of this verse in context reveals the following principles and relationships:

1. Phebe is "our sister." Members of the church are brothers and sisters; they belong to one family. Therefore they relate to one another closely as members of a family.

2. Phebe was a "servant of the church." Being a servant of the church is not demeaning, but rather makes one worthy of respect and high regard. She was a deaconess, contributing to the needs of church members in both general and specific ways, according to her talent.

3. She was to be welcomed "in the Lord." That is, she was to be welcomed as a representative of the Lord. (See Matt. 10:40.) If it is proper to entertain strangers in case they should be angels (Heb. 13:2), it is most certainly proper that members of the church should be hospitable to one another.

4. If Phebe had helped many, it was right that she should be helped whenever she was in need; and she should feel free to find that help among church members. The church community can be a mutual self-help society where everybody can contribute and receive help.

5. Phebe is an example of Paul's attitude to women. He did not belittle them, and he recognized the contribution that women can make to the church. In this chapter he mentions several: Priscilla (Rom. 16:3), Mary (verse 6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (were they twins?), and Persis (verse 12). Rufus's mother is mentioned as being a mother to Paul (verse 13)—another of these "mothers in Israel" who are so precious with their thoughtfulness and love. Two others are mentioned: Julia, and the sister of Nereus (verse 15). No wonder Paul could say: In Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28).

Holiness does not mean isolation. It may mean being different, but the difference is that a person who is holy is also very devoted to the good of his fellowman.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there a tendency to consider the contribution of a woman to the church less important than that of a man? If so, why?

FURTHER STUDY

1 Peter 4:7-10; Rom. 12:9-16; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 341-348.

Part 6
**BLAMELESS
LIVES**

What is the pattern of life set before the church member?

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

In the previous verse Paul says that the Christian should do all things "without murmurings and disputings." Is this possible? Is it not more usual to hear grumblings and complaints—to hear people arguing about this and that? But grumblers are a headache! Nothing seems to please them. For example, consider the children of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3). There is always the opportunity to find fault with some *one* or some *thing*.

How does the follower of Jesus treat problem members of the church and community? 1 Thess. 5:13-15.

The Christian lives a life of serenity, knowing that all things are in the hands of God and that God does all things well. The believer refrains from grumbling lest he dishonor God. He is not interested in arguing until tempers are frayed, and he does not enter into litigation. (See 1 Cor. 6:1-8.)

Blameless: The Christian must not only be pure, but others must see that he is pure. He avoids all compromising situations.

Harmless: He is absolutely sincere in his relationships with others. His motives are pure. (See James 5:12.)

Sons of God: The Christian will have God's attributes of goodness and love. (See Matt. 5:48.)

Without rebuke: His life and character can stand the scrutiny of the world and of God. He lives a life of purity and cannot be condemned by any law.

This standard of conduct is not just something to be realized in the afterlife. God's life-style must be lived *each day*—in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation. Such living will stand out like a light in the midst of darkness.

How does Peter show that such a life can have a saving influence? 1 Peter 3:1, 2.

Holy women in the past set such an example (verse 5). Beauty is not in the outward adorning, but in a gentle and quiet spirit (verse 4).

THINK IT THROUGH

When we think of the high standard of holiness set before the Christian, how can the gospel still be good news?

FURTHER STUDY

1 John 1:5-7; 1 Tim. 6:6-12; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 206-210; *Gospel Workers*, p. 122.

7 / Called to Be Saints



“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10).

Part of the mystery of the church is that it is holy and committed to obey God’s law of love, and yet every Christian in it is a sinner. How can we harmonize these seemingly opposite ideas?

We must ever remember that we are born in sin. We all have inherited and cultivated tendencies to sin. We have all sinned and come short of the glory that God intended us to have in terms of being in His image. (See Rom. 3:23.)

Flesh is not evil in and of itself. We cannot have pure spirits in wicked bodies. Man is a whole and can in no way be divorced from his body and continue to exist. The goal of the Christian is that his whole body, soul, and spirit be sanctified. (See 1 Thess. 5:23.)

When the Christian prays for forgiveness, we are told that he is forgiven and cleansed “from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This is because God is “faithful and just.” John is bold to say that the one who “is born of God doth not commit sin” (1 John 3:9). That is, he does not habitually practice sin or choose to continue in it. But this is not to say that he does not ever fall into sin or make mistakes.

Thus in God’s people called to righteousness is the shadow of sin. Anyone who looks at the church can see it for himself. The paradox is that the church is composed of sinners who are saints!

In the parable of the tares and of the net, Jesus pointed out that the kingdom of God has both the good and the bad in it. (See Matt. 13:24-30; 47-49.) In our lesson this week we shall see how the Christian must refrain from making any claims for himself that cannot be substantiated.

We should never excuse sin in our lives, but neither should we deny it. Nor should we seek to establish our own righteousness, because that is a futile task anyway. There is nothing that we can do of ourselves that is good. Even our good is marred by our corrupt natures. (See *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 344.) Nothing we can do will earn salvation or favor with God. We are dependent upon God for everything good that comes our way, and only through Him are we able to accomplish some good in the world.

The Bible has recorded the lives of the saints of old. Some of them made terrible mistakes. The purpose of these biographies is not that we duplicate their errors; it is to learn the secret of victory in the life.

The church has always been in need of reform, and the true church is always aware of its weaknesses and seeks to bring about a change. It is not making a mistake that is serious; it is persisting in that mistake when realizing our error and not confessing that a mistake has been made. Unfortunately, sin in the church can be a stumbling block to many, and that is one reason why it should be avoided. But since it exists, we need to pray for mercy at all times.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Words of Caution**
(1 John 1:8)
- 2. Filthy Rags**
(Isa. 64:6)
- 3. Saints Who Failed**
(Ps. 143:2)
- 4. Need for Reform**
(Rev. 2:4)
- 5. Tragedy of Sin**
(Rom. 2:24)
- 6. Prayer for Mercy**
(Ps. 51:1)

Part 1
WORDS OF
CAUTION

How does John caution us against making claims that we cannot substantiate?

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

The life of the Christian is a mysterious paradox. He is called a saint—one set apart for the life and service of God—yet he must not say he is without sin. (John talks of sin and sins [verses 8, 9].) The closer he is to his Master, the more conscious he is of his faults and shortcomings.

Why is the denial of sin the denial of what God has revealed in the Scriptures? Ps. 14:3; Eccl. 7:20.

The fall of Adam has left a legacy that everyone inherits. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6), said Jesus to Nicodemus, pointing out that even though he may have lived a respectable life he could not be a candidate for heaven unless he were born again.

The fact that we have a God “faithful and just” to forgive us our sins is one of the basic truths of the gospel. But in order to enjoy this privilege, one must confess his sins. (See 1 John 1:9.)

How does James describe our human situation? James 3:2.

James points out one area in which we all make mistakes—our speech. Although the tongue is a small member of the body, it can do a considerable amount of damage. (See verse 6.)

What basic difference is there between the sinner who is a Christian and the sinner who has not made any commitment to Christ? 1 John 3:9. Read this in the New International Version.

The one who is born again cannot habitually sin. He cannot be a slave of sin, continually and helplessly repeating the same sin. (See Rom. 6:14.) He is delivered from this body of death through Christ, and he walks “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1).

THINK IT THROUGH

When does the Christian reach that state when he is without sin?

FURTHER STUDY

James 4:17; Col. 2:10; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Lord’s Prayer” (Luke 11:4), pp. 113-116.

**Part 2
FILTHY
RAGS**

How does the prophet Isaiah describe the righteousness of man?

“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

When Adam and Eve recognized their nakedness, they made coverings of fig leaves. But God made for them “coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21).

Man has always tried to do that which he thought was right. Even Cain brought an offering at the same time as his brother Abel. But his offering was not mixed with faith; it did not indicate recognition that he was a sinner and that he needed a Saviour. It merely represented an offering of his own works to God. As such, it could not be accepted by God, because salvation comes through faith in Christ, not faith in our works.

What in man makes him want to do something to atone for his own wickedness? Rom. 10:3.

Some will give up their lives for God; they will give up comfort and riches—even food. But such acts of self-denial can never earn salvation.

The Christian is not immune to this human tendency. The history of the church abounds with stories of men and women who have suffered self-inflicted hardships for the gospel. But Paul points out that all this, without love, is nothing. (See 1 Cor. 13:3.)

Follow the psalmist’s expression of the joy of the one who trusts wholly in God. Psalm 32.

Note the following points made in this psalm:

1. The blessedness of sins forgiven comes only from God (verses 1, 2).
2. Confession of sin leads to forgiveness (verse 5).
3. The godly are in constant communion with God and thus enjoy God’s protection (verses 6, 7).
4. God promises to guide and instruct the one who wants to know what he should do in life (verse 8).
5. God is abundantly merciful to those who trust fully in Him (verse 10).
6. This relationship with God brings joy and happiness; so the righteous should praise God for their privileges (verse 11).

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is the tendency to see merit in works such a dangerous and self-defeating attitude in the church member?

FURTHER STUDY

Rom. 8:1-4; 9:31; 10:3; *Steps to Christ*, “Consecration,” pp. 43-48.

**Part 5
TRAGEDY
OF SIN**

What did Paul say resulted when the Jews broke the law which God had given them?

“The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Rom. 2:24).

Read the texts on each side of this verse. Clearly, the Jew had many privileges. He knew the Ten Commandments. He knew that God had chosen his race. He knew God's will because it had been revealed in the Old Testament, and he adopted the high ideals presented (verse 18). In fact, he considered himself able to instruct the ignorant and throw light on topics that were generally not understood (verses 19, 20). Yet—and this is the tragedy of tragedies—he did not take advantage of his privileges. He who knew the law did not keep it. He who knew God's will did not live a life in conformity with it. Thus, instead of being the channel of God's blessing to others, he was the cause of turning people away from God.

What distinction did Paul make between those who were Jews racially and those who were Jews spiritually? Rom. 2:29; Gal. 3:29.

The parallel with the church is obvious. The church enjoys many privileges. Does it live up to those privileges? Or does it cause people to turn away from God by its faulty witness?

What did the children of Israel do that was considered blasphemy? Eze. 20:27, 28.

We blaspheme the name of God when we turn away from the worship of the true God and worship idols instead. An idol need not be wood or stone; it can be anything that we consider more important in our lives than God. It may be position or the honor we gain by letting down God's standards of behavior. When we have such confidence in our own skills that we forget to ask for wisdom or guidance; when we push ahead in projects without waiting for God's leading; when we rationalize our actions in the pursuit of our objectives (in order to excuse them)—these are ways in which we dishonor God, because we put other matters ahead of Him in our system of priorities. Our goals may seem honorable; but unless we put God first, last, and best in our lives we blaspheme His name; and others, seeing us, will also question the ideals we profess.

THINK IT THROUGH

What precautions must the church take to avoid being a cause of stumbling to others?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, “Without a Wedding Garment,” pp. 317-319.

**Part 6
PRAYER
FOR MERCY**

After his great sin, David's words must have been those of a true penitent.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1). (Read the whole psalm.)

David offers this prayer after he has sinned in the case of Bathsheba. He knows he is dependent upon the mercies of God. He knows that he needs to be cleansed of sin (verse 2). He does not try to find excuses for his sins. He is ever mindful of them, and he knows that his sin has been primarily against God (verse 4). He recognizes his human weakness and presents it as a plea for God to forgive him (verse 5).

What does David see as the only solution to his heart problem? Ps. 51:10.

"The heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand. In the fierce storms of temptation it will surely be overthrown."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

David realizes that because of sin he really has no claim on God, that a holy God would normally turn away from him. But he asks not to be forsaken. He wants to have the experience of being restored to favor, and then he will tell other sinners of his experience and thus win them back to God (verse 13).

What contrast does David draw between a repentant heart and some sacrifice offered to God? Ps. 51:16, 17.

"Man must be emptied of self before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature. New bottles can contain the new wine. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith the character of Christ will be manifest."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 280.

The church member ever looks to God for mercy, because he recognizes that he is not all that he ought to be, and he finds a gracious God who is abundant in loving-kindness and mercy. Here is the mystery and the paradox of the church: it is not so much a private club for saints as a hospital for sinners.

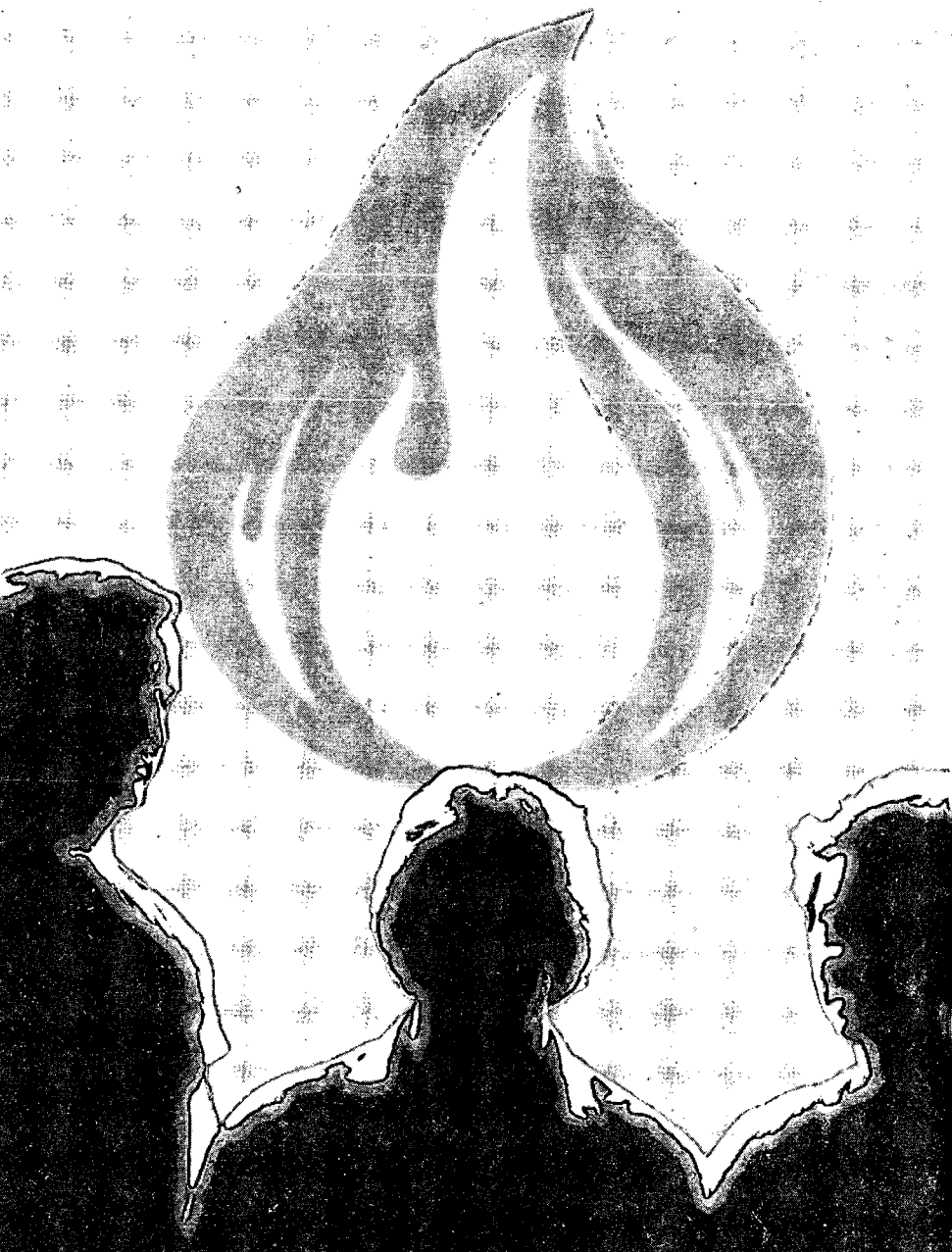
THINK IT THROUGH

Why does the mercy of God toward him make the Christian more careful not to sin against God or his fellowmen?

FURTHER STUDY

Ps. 78:36-39; Isa. 30:15-21; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 717-726.

8 / United in Christ



“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

The Godhead is one. So must the church be one—one in spirit, one in plan and purpose. Whether the church is small or large, in the country or in the city, in a primitive or an advanced society, it is one with God. Unity is its divine characteristic.

People in the world cannot help but be divided. They are divided in their allegiances, in their cultures and races, in their languages and thought patterns. Sin is divisive. It causes jealousies to arise, initiates struggles for power, creates dissatisfaction with the present and the past, and fosters suspicion and doubt. Thus the whole world is divided. It reflects its fallen human nature in sin.

By contrast, the church is drawn together in unity, regardless of ethnic backgrounds or differences in language. The Holy Spirit breaks down the barriers that keep people apart. After the Flood, God confused the languages in order to prevent people from continuing the foolish task of building a tower “whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen. 11:4). But at Pentecost God enabled the disciples to speak foreign languages so that everyone could hear and understand the gospel in his own language and thus be drawn into the unity of the church.

This week we look at the unity that is to be characteristic of the church. We see that there is only one church, because there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The differentiation between Jew and Gentile which prevailed for many centuries no longer exists. Although born sons of Adam, we become sons of the second Adam and thus enter into

one family on earth and in heaven. (See Eph. 3:15.)

This unity is not only the subject of Jesus’ prayer for His disciples; it is the answer to that prayer. This distinctive mark convinces the world that there is a superhuman power in the church; therefore unity is the object of attack on the part of Satan. For this reason the Christian must always strive to maintain the unity of the faith. He must resist all those human traits that would bring about division.

How is such unity possible? It is possible only as each Christian adopts the same attitude to life and its purposes as the Master has. He seeks to do the Father’s will and is willing to suffer any indignities that may be part of God’s plan. He is not so much concerned about his rights and privileges, in a worldly sense, as he is that God’s honor be vindicated and His purposes be accomplished.

Unity is not achieved in a day. Christians must work for unity—grow up into it. They must let God have His way in their lives, transforming the carnal nature which they inherited as sons of Adam to the spiritual nature that they may have in Christ. At the same time, the unity of the church does not require uniformity. “The apostles differed widely in habits and disposition.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 296.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Only One**
(Eph. 4:5)
2. **One in Christ**
(John 17:23)
3. **Secret of Unity**
(Phil. 2:5)
4. **Need of Unity**
(Matt. 12:25)
5. **Growth Into Unity**
(Eph. 4:15)
6. **Barriers to Unity**
(1 Cor. 3:9)

Part 1 **How simple the words of Paul emphasizing that there is only**
ONLY ONE **one church:**

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5).

Paul argues that we as church members should maintain peace and unity within our ranks (verse 3). It is so easy to divide up in factions, to find fault with one another, to go off into different directions. Church members should remember that we have only one God who calls, only one Christ to offer hope, only one Spirit who sanctifies, only one gospel to which we can adhere, and only one Lord in whose name and one body into which we are baptized. Since this is true, how can the church be divided?

How did experience confirm prophecy as the council at Jerusalem recognized that all people can belong to one church? Acts 15:12-19.

The Jews had long considered themselves the people of God, and they were. God had chosen them to be His representatives. But they had excluded the Gentiles from the circle of salvation. They set up barriers between themselves and all other people.

But Peter found, in the home of Cornelius, that it does not matter to what race a person belongs. God is no respecter of persons. He “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:35, NIV). Furthermore, Paul and Barnabas told the council “how the Gentiles had been converted” under their ministry (Acts 15:3, 4, NIV). James finally clinched the whole case by quoting from the Old Testament to show that the Gentiles were very much in God’s plan.

By what words concerning Jesus did Caiaphas speak better than he knew? John 11:51, 52.

The psalmist says that the wrath of man praises God. (See Ps. 76:10.) (Balaam could not but bless Israel, though he was hired to pronounce a curse.) So here the high priest makes a prophecy that Jesus would die for the Jews. And not for the Jews only, for He would “gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52). Jesus is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (See John 1:29.)

Jesus Himself told the disciples that He was concerned about others beside the children of Israel. (See John 10:16.) Then he added that there would be one fold and one Shepherd.

THINK IT THROUGH **Why would God be as interested in the Gentiles as in the Jews?**

FURTHER STUDY Rom. 12:3-21; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188-195.

**Part 2
ONE IN
CHRIST**

When Jesus prayed for His disciples, what special request did He make?

"I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23, NIV).

Unity is a divine characteristic. No closer unity can be found than that in the Trinity. Jesus prays that His disciples may enjoy that same unity to the end of time.

The unity in the church is a personal unity. It springs from faith and an opening of the heart to Christ. (See Rev. 3:20.) It results in open communication and divine direction in the life.

How close was the unity that Paul experienced with his Lord? Acts 18:9-11.

Paul always knew what to do; and, when he did it, God blessed him abundantly.

Such a unity means that the disciple will go into the world just as Jesus was sent into the world. (See John 17:18.) Yet he will always be different from it (verse 16). In the world he will witness to truth—a truth which sets him apart as holy (verse 17). And his testimony will be effective, because the world will see the effect of God's presence in his life. He will testify to the goodness and love of God (verses 18, 23).

Whatever the race or nationality of Christ's followers, they are one in Him. (See Gal. 3:28.) When one considers how differences in culture and race can divide, this unity is remarkable.

"The unity of the church is the convincing evidence that God has sent Jesus into the world as its Redeemer. This is an argument which worldlings cannot controvert. Therefore Satan is constantly working to prevent this union and harmony, that unbelievers, by witnessing backsliding, dissension, and strife among professed Christians, may become disgusted with religion and be confirmed in their impenitence. God is dishonored by those who profess the truth while they are at variance and enmity with one another. Satan is the great accuser of the brethren, and all who engage in this work are enlisted in his service."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 620.

What means does God provide for believers to become partakers of the divine nature? 2 Peter 1:4.

We may escape the corruption that is in the world, because it is Christ in us who is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

**THINK IT THROUGH
FURTHER STUDY**

How much effort does it require of us to have Christ in us?

1 Cor. 10:16, 17; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 239-243.

**Part 3
SECRET
OF UNITY**

What trait did Paul want the members of the church at Philippi to have?

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

The NIV translates this verse: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” The NEB has it: “Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus.” Our attitudes determine our bearing, and our bearing springs from an inner disposition. What we are inside determines what we are outside, if we are truly sincere.

To the Christian, the example of Jesus is compelling. No other example in history comes anywhere near it. Here is One who was equal with God, yet He did not hang on to that equality selfishly as many of us would have done! On the contrary, He made Himself as nothing—for what is man, that God should be mindful of him? And as a man He took on the humble duties of a slave, serving those who turned their backs on Him. Finally, He submitted to the indignities of death by crucifixion—the mind reels to consider such commitment. (See verses 6-8.)

What contrasting spirit does Isaiah attribute to Lucifer? Isa. 14:13, 14.

The secret of unity for the Christian is to be imbued with the Spirit of Christ. He does not compare himself with anyone else, imagining that he is better. (See Phil. 2:3.) He does not desire to be placed higher than another, becoming jealous if someone seems to have an advantage over him. In fact, he is just as interested in the welfare of others as he is in his own (verse 4).

How, according to Paul, is this kind of action and attitude possible for the Christian? Phil. 2:13.

The honor and glory goes to God, who makes such a spirit and such a life possible. He is the One who “energizes” (Gk. *energeō*—translated “worketh” in KJV) in the verse above.

At the same time, there is a working out of one’s own salvation “with fear and trembling” (verse 12). Christians must set goals and ever be mindful of their responsibilities as they go about their various duties. Do they sometimes feel like complaining? They must check their impulses. Do they feel like arguing about what is said or done? They should remember that nothing is gained by argument. (See verses 14, 15.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Why do so few believe that they are all that Christ would have them to be?

FURTHER STUDY

Psalm 133; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 677-680.

**Part 4
NEED
OF UNITY**

Think of the way that Jesus pointed out the importance of unity, even outside the church.

“Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matt. 12:25).

It is remarkable to what lengths people will go in order to refuse the lordship of Christ. The Pharisees were prepared to accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons. Jesus gave them an irrefutable answer. Even Satan would recognize the importance of loyalty within his own ranks.

But the unity of the church is important not merely because it bolsters the church or because without it the church would fall. The unity of the church is based on the unity of God and the consistency of His plans. What God sets out to do, He will accomplish. The group not united is just not truly a part of God's church; it is not the group through which God is working out His plans and purposes.

In what words did Paul show the Corinthians that their divisions were ridiculous? 1 Cor. 1:13.

The church is always in danger of being carried away by some charismatic leader. Members are often attached to certain individuals. Leaders must be careful about this and turn the eyes of their converts to the true leader of the church—Jesus Christ.

In whom alone can the Christian glory? 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

Pauls says that every member is in Christ, and Christ is everything we need. Therefore, if we glory in anyone, we should glory in God. It is always dangerous to glorify people—both to the one glorified and the one glorifying. The former is in danger of thinking of himself more highly than he ought; the latter is in danger of being led astray. Our safety as members and as a church rests in recognizing the Source of all goodness—the object of true worship—and in refusing to be turned aside by any rival gods or influences.

Paul makes a strong appeal for unity in the church at Corinth. (See 1 Cor. 1:10.) He wants members perfectly united in mind and thought. We have to fit in with one another, making adjustments as may be necessary. Church members vary in talents and temperaments, and it takes conscious effort to adapt oneself to varying people and circumstances.

THINK IT THROUGH

Would it be unwise to name the Seventh-day Adventist Church after a pioneer or leader? If so, why?

FURTHER STUDY

Jer. 9:23, 24; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 321-327.

**Part 5
GROWTH
INTO UNITY**

What is Paul's prayer for every Christian?

"Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

It is the God-given privilege of every living creature to grow and reach maturity. So it must be with every Christian and the church. Peter urges growth in grace and "the knowledge of . . . Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). He also indicates the means by which we may grow. (See 1 Peter 2:2.) As we grow into Christ, we grow into unity with one another.

"The unity that God requires must be cultivated day by day if we would answer the prayer of Christ. The disunion that is striving for existence among those who profess to believe the last message of mercy to be given to the world, must find no place; for it would be a fearful hindrance to the advancement of God's work. His servants are to be one, as Christ is one with the Father; their powers, illuminated, inspired, and sanctified, must be united to make a complete whole. Those who love God and keep His commandments are not to draw apart; they are to press together."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 174, 175.

Note the graciousness of Paul's address to the church at Corinth. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1.

With all its faults, the church at Corinth was still the "church of God." "Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

Is Paul pleased to recognize that there may be blemishes in the church? 1 Cor. 11:19.

The word "heresy" used in the KJV is a strong word. The Greek is translated "differences" in the NIV and "dissensions" in the NEB. Differences of opinion do arise in the church, and sometimes factions develop as a result.

Unity is a goal to be achieved: "My brethren, allow nothing to come in that will separate you from one another or from God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 12.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the difference between unity and uniformity?

"Let us remember that Christian unity does not mean that the identity of one person is to be submerged in that of another; nor does it mean that the mind of one is to be led and controlled by the mind of another."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 212.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 263-267.

**Part 6
BARRIERS
TO UNITY**

As Paul describes the part that ministers play in the growth of the church, how does he describe the church?

"We are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9, NIV).

Paul says that he and others water and plant in the garden of the Lord but that God gives the increase (verse 7). It is God who takes the initiative and provides the power of spiritual growth. The result must be attributed to Him and not to the human agent.

When church members forget the supremacy of God in their lives, they are apt to praise other persons who have been a blessing to them. Every garden needs a "planter" and a "waterer," but the church is God's garden, and to Him must go all the praise and the glory. When we recognize God's ownership, we will not be divided into parties and factions.

What serious condition exists among the members when there are divisions? 1 Cor. 3:3.

"Carnal" in the KJV means "worldly" (NIV). The NEB translates this verse: "Can you not see that while there is jealousy and strife among you, you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature?"

"Paul had described four types of men. The first, *the natural man*, is the man without the Spirit, who needs the new birth (cf. John 3:1-8). The second is the *carnal-weak man* (1 Cor. 3:1), the babe in Christ, who needs growth through reception of the milk of the Word. The third type is the *carnal-willful man*, the older, yet immature Christian, who needs restoration to fellowship, or the healthy condition conducive to the taking of nourishment, by confession of his willfulness, or sin (cf. 1 John 1:9). The fourth is the *spiritual or mature man*, who has responded to the milk and grown into spiritual adulthood, so that he has become strong and able to take the meat of the Word (1 Cor. 2:15; 3:2). This is the man God would have every Christian to be."—*The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (New York: The Iversen-Norman Associates, 1971), p. 596.

Of the early disciples Ellen White has said: "No longer were they ignorant and uncultured. No longer were they a collection of independent units or of discordant and conflicting elements. No longer were their hopes set on worldly greatness. They were of 'one accord,' of one mind and one soul. Christ filled their thoughts."—*Education*, p. 95.

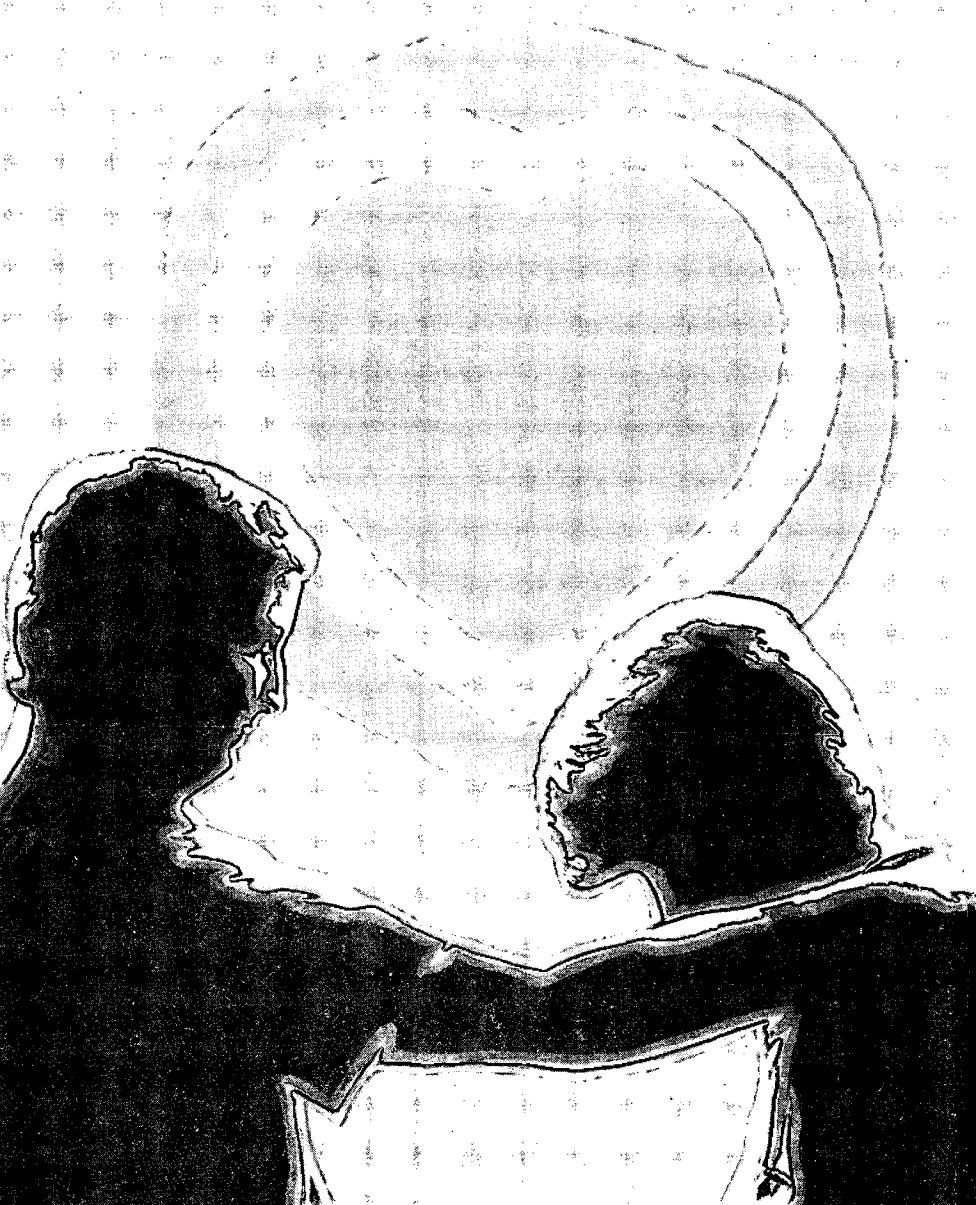
THINK IT THROUGH

Why is unity through compromise often a false kind of unity?

FURTHER STUDY

Prov. 6:16-19; Gal. 5:16-21; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 53-56.

9 / Disciplined by Love



“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Prov. 29:17).

We are living in a day of permissiveness, but we are beginning to realize some of its woes. We cannot refuse to correct and control and expect to have people go the right way of their own accord. We all need discipline.

Discipline is not arbitrary control. It is not forcing people to go one way—the way of one individual or group. It is the way of making disciples. A disciple is one who has accepted the principles of conduct of another. It is much easier to control than to persuade, but control that does not employ the powers of persuasion will not have a lasting effect.

The Bible tells us that there is a close correlation between love and discipline. Because the church is where love is, there must also be discipline. God Himself disciplines and thereby sets an example of what parents and leaders in the church should be prepared to do.

In our lesson this week we see that God is the ideal disciplinarian. He is always testing and trying us, because He has our best interests at heart. If we are ever to get into the kingdom, we must be willing to submit to His discipline.

As members of the church, we must be prepared to discipline ourselves—to keep our bodies under, as Paul did. Many of us are acquainted with slimming diets. We diet to preserve our health and perhaps our appearance. The same principle applies to our spiritual well-being. We need to exercise proper control of our habits if we are to live up to the spiritual privileges that are ours.

Many of us are more anxious to correct others than to correct

ourselves. There is a place for correcting others. But there is a right and a wrong way of dealing with others when they are in the wrong, and only when we follow biblical principles are we likely to be helpful.

The church is far from being a perfect society. There are always those who need to be gently led to see their error. Some are great talkers. If their speech were always seasoned with grace, there would be no problem. But sometimes they are critical, and their criticism undermines what the Spirit of God is trying to do. Such people must be helped graciously.

When a church member lives in open sin, there is a responsibility placed on the church to safeguard the interests of the church, on the one hand, and to bring the guilty party to a realization of the seriousness of his course, on the other. Paul had no question in his mind as to what needed to be done. Do you think that you could engage in such corrective work and yet maintain humility and love for the sinner? At all times we must remember justice and mercy. Each has its place, and neither should neutralize the other. One needs more than human wisdom to be able to manifest these graces.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Divine Discipline**
(Heb. 12:6)
- 2. Self-control**
(1 Cor. 9:27)
- 3. Correcting Others**
(Matt. 18:15)
- 4. Need for Discipline**
(Titus 1:10)
- 5. Church Discipline**
(1 Cor. 5:5)
- 6. Justice and Mercy**
(Col. 3:12)

Part 1
DIVINE
DISCIPLINE

What does God do to those whom He loves?

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

The writer to the Hebrews quotes from Proverbs 3:11, 12 to point out that a loving relationship between father and son includes correction and discipline. It must be expected, therefore, that God will treat His children in the same way.

Discipline is never easy to take, but the results can be good. (See Heb. 12:11.) The discipline given by an earthly parent can be mistaken; not so that which comes from God.

Not all children accept the discipline of their parents. They may refuse to be subject to their parents and go their own way. Some people do that with God. So long as there is freedom of choice on the part of an individual, discipline can fail in its objectives.

What is the objective of divine discipline? Deut. 8:2-5.

Man does not always know what is best for him. But God does. Therefore, in His love and mercy, He permits people to come into various situations so they can learn from their experiences. One thing they must learn is that they are wholly dependent upon the Word of God for guidance and well-being.

Just as a child does not always understand why a parent insists on certain forms of conduct, so we may fail to understand why God has permitted us to pass through certain difficult circumstances. In such cases we must depend on the love of God, recognizing that His love and wisdom exceed those of a parent. Our faith in God must not fail, and the experience borne with patience will fit us to serve God and our fellowman better.

What is one of God's purposes for us? 2 Peter 3:9.

God has one basic purpose for all of us: that we may repent of our sins and turn to Him for salvation. All that He does or permits to happen has this one goal. We should therefore be willing to accept all God's plans for us and be grateful for all His providences.

There can be serious consequences if we do not repent and accept Christ as our salvation. (See Rev. 2:5.) It is always in our best interest to listen to the Word of God and act accordingly.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is God so concerned that we do His will?

FURTHER STUDY

Job 5:17; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 344-348.

**Part 2
SELF-
CONTROL**

As a Christian, why did Paul find it necessary to exercise self-control?

"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27).

Paul draws a parallel between the life of an athlete and the life of a Christian. They both seek to win in a race, and they both need to be "temperate in all things" (verse 25). This latter phrase means to go "into strict training" (NIV).

"A noble character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. It is the result of self-discipline, of subjection of the lower to the higher nature, of the surrender of self to the service of God and man."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 488.

How strong are the influences of the body upon the mind and soul?

"The body is a most important medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. . . . Intellectual power, physical stamina, and the length of life depend upon immutable laws. Through obedience to these laws, man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations, conqueror of principalities and powers, of 'the rulers of the darkness of this world,' and of 'spiritual wickedness in high places.' Ephesians 6:12."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 488, 489.

What is one area in which self-control needs to be exercised? Dan. 1:8.

The Christian observes the laws of health in matters of diet. He does not indulge merely in what he likes, but he makes sure that he gets a well-rounded and balanced diet.

"Daniel and his associates had been trained by their parents to habits of strict temperance. They had been taught that God would hold them accountable for their capabilities, and that they must never dwarf or enfeeble their powers. This education was to Daniel and his companions the means of their preservation amidst the demoralizing influences of the court of Babylon."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 482.

THINK IT THROUGH

Give examples of the greater freedom to be found in a life of self-control rather than in a life of self-indulgence.

FURTHER STUDY

Phil. 3:13, 14; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 482-490; *Education*, pp. 54-58.

Part 3
CORRECTING
OTHERS

If a church member sees a fault in someone else, how should he deal with the situation?

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15). (See also Matt. 5:23, 24.)

Members of the church need to be sure they are doing what is right themselves. If everyone did what was right, there would be no problem. But this ideal does not exist. Someone is always transgressing the rights of another.

We are counseled to take these three steps:

1. Go to the one who has offended and speak to him personally. In most cases this is the end of the matter. The trouble is that most people express their grievances to everyone except the one concerned, and thus the matter becomes aggravated.
2. If the matter is not resolved in the first step, then take one or two witnesses so that there will be clear evidence of the grievance involved (verse 16). Very often the presence of a third and fourth party will lead to a better understanding of the situation; and, with a little "give and take," the matter can be resolved.
3. But sometimes even the second step does not resolve the issue, because of the deep feelings of those concerned or perhaps because of a strong dose of obstinacy. The third step is to take the matter to the church. A larger group is now involved in hearing and judging the case. Presumably the church members will be understanding and fair and will act justly as well as mercifully.

When the guilty party will not listen to the judgment of the church and act accordingly, what is the church to do? Matt. 18:17.

By rejecting the authority of the church, the guilty one obviously puts himself outside the circle of the church.

"Our Lord teaches that matters of difficulty between Christians are to be settled within the church. They should not be opened before those who do not fear God. If a Christian is wronged by his brother, let him not appeal to unbelievers in a court of justice."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 248, 249.

The church member is not only responsible for his own right-doing, but he is his brother's keeper as well.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why should the Christian always be willing to forgive a wrongdoer who asks for forgiveness?

FURTHER STUDY

Gal. 6:1; James 5:16-20; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Measure of Forgiveness," pp. 248-251.

**Part 4
NEED FOR
DISCIPLINE**

Why is a certain amount of discipline necessary in the church?

"There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision" (Titus 1:10).

Some people are always "unruly," in the sense that they will not accept any rule as applying to themselves. Rebellious under any administration, they find fault with anything that is done. They cannot lead themselves, but neither will they be led. They are usually grumblers and complainers. At the same time they are great talkers. They do not keep their thoughts to themselves, but they must fill someone else's ears with their ideas. Usually they do not say anything constructive; so their talk is a waste of time.

Often people who are self-righteous are critical of the church. They may have some favorite idea that they harp on. They may be intelligent and well-read and may have researched their projects. But instead of pulling with the church, they pull against it. They pretend to want to reform the church, but in fact what they seem to want is for everyone else to accept their viewpoint.

What does Paul say ought to be done regarding such members in the church? Titus 1:11

Some people must be plainly advised to stop promoting their propaganda. Perhaps the church pastor should take the lead in this. But the members also have a part to play; they can decline to accept publications critical of God's truth. They must always be gentle and Christian in these matters, neither prejudging nor declining to recognize in themselves the possibility of holding an unsound position.

How should a person be rebuked when he causes disharmony in the church? Titus 1:13.

The purpose of plainly rebuking those who cause division and disharmony in the church is to bring them to a realization of the seriousness of their situation and the importance of making a change. Too many avoid taking disciplinary measures and would rather let someone else do the work. But to face wrongdoing squarely and call it by its right name has a strengthening effect on faith. It safeguards the truth and purity of the church.

THINK IT THROUGH

Where can one find the courage to speak the truth in love and even to rebuke if necessary?

FURTHER STUDY

James 5:20; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 261-264; vol. 3, p. 428.

**Part 5
CHURCH
DISCIPLINE**

What did Paul expect the church at Corinth to do with a member who lived in open sin?

“To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

Paul is quite clear that open sin cannot be tolerated in the church. Apparently there was a case of incest in the church at Corinth, and the church members had done nothing about it. (See verses 1, 2.) They were not even concerned that no disciplinary action had been taken.

Good reason exists for acting definitively in such matters. The church must be pure, and no known, flagrant sin can be tolerated in it. Furthermore, the power of example is strong; and if others see sin going unpunished, they may be encouraged to indulge in the same.

Disciplinary action must be taken for the good of the wrongdoer, who must know definitely that certain actions cannot go uncondemned. But the wrongdoer should also be made to understand clearly that while his actions may be condemned, he as a person is not.

To deliver a person over to Satan is strong language to describe discipline. What does it mean? It means to say that if a person has decided to follow in the way of Satan, then he had better go out of the church and into the world to be in the domain of Satan. (See 1 John 5:19.) The church cannot be a center of wickedness.

What example do we have in which Paul exercised this form of discipline toward two individuals? 1 Tim. 1:20.

His purpose was that “they may learn not to blaspheme.” Discipline, even of the severest kind, is to be therapeutic in nature and intent.

In the case of incest, the purpose of discipline was that the guilty party should come to realize the seriousness of the sin and forsake it. Sometimes it takes a strict measure to impress upon the mind the necessity for making a change.

Under what conditions should severe measures sometimes be taken? Matt. 5:29, 30.

Surgery is sometimes necessary in order to save the whole body. A little pain inflicted on a member is better than the loss of the whole congregation.

THINK IT THROUGH

What reasons would you give for the exercise of great care in the removal of anyone from membership in the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Luke 17:3, 4; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 303-308.

**Part 6
JUSTICE
AND MERCY**

Consider prayerfully how members of the church should relate to one another.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12).

Mercy is not opposed to justice; it confirms it. Because mercy has been shown, justice is elevated all the more.

The Christian must guard against a haughty spirit of condemnation—a spirit of self-righteousness leading him to judge the wrongdoer. If he adopts a holier-than-thou attitude, he becomes as guilty before God as the one he presumes to judge. There are many hidden factors in every situation that make it difficult for any human being to judge fairly.

Why should the Christian be slow to judge another? 1 Cor. 4:5.

Whatever goodness we have comes from God; whatever victories we may have gained are because of His power. Therefore we have no cause to boast about anything we have, and we must relate to others in humility and meekness. This does not mean that we do not deal seriously with open sin, but it does mean that we do so with a sense of personal unworthiness. (See 2 Tim. 2:24-26.)

Notice how Jesus treated the woman taken in adultery. Did He minimize the sinfulness of her acts by what He said? John 8:11.

The woman knew that Jesus was merciful and that He understood her situation. Her heart went out in gratitude to God, and she wanted never to sin again. Mercy does not deny sin but makes the sinner stronger in his fight against sin.

On the other hand, human beings want to “maintain” discipline. It is often felt that if sin goes unpunished then the “law is slacked” (Hab. 1:4). But there is a danger in overemphasizing stern punishment. Hence Paul indicates that the Christian must be prepared to forgive. (See 2 Cor. 2:6, 7.)

Some want to maintain their authority and feel they are let down if punishment is not exacted. They are like Jonah, who wanted his word maintained and the people of Nineveh destroyed. But God showed him how small he was. (See Jonah 4:1-11.)

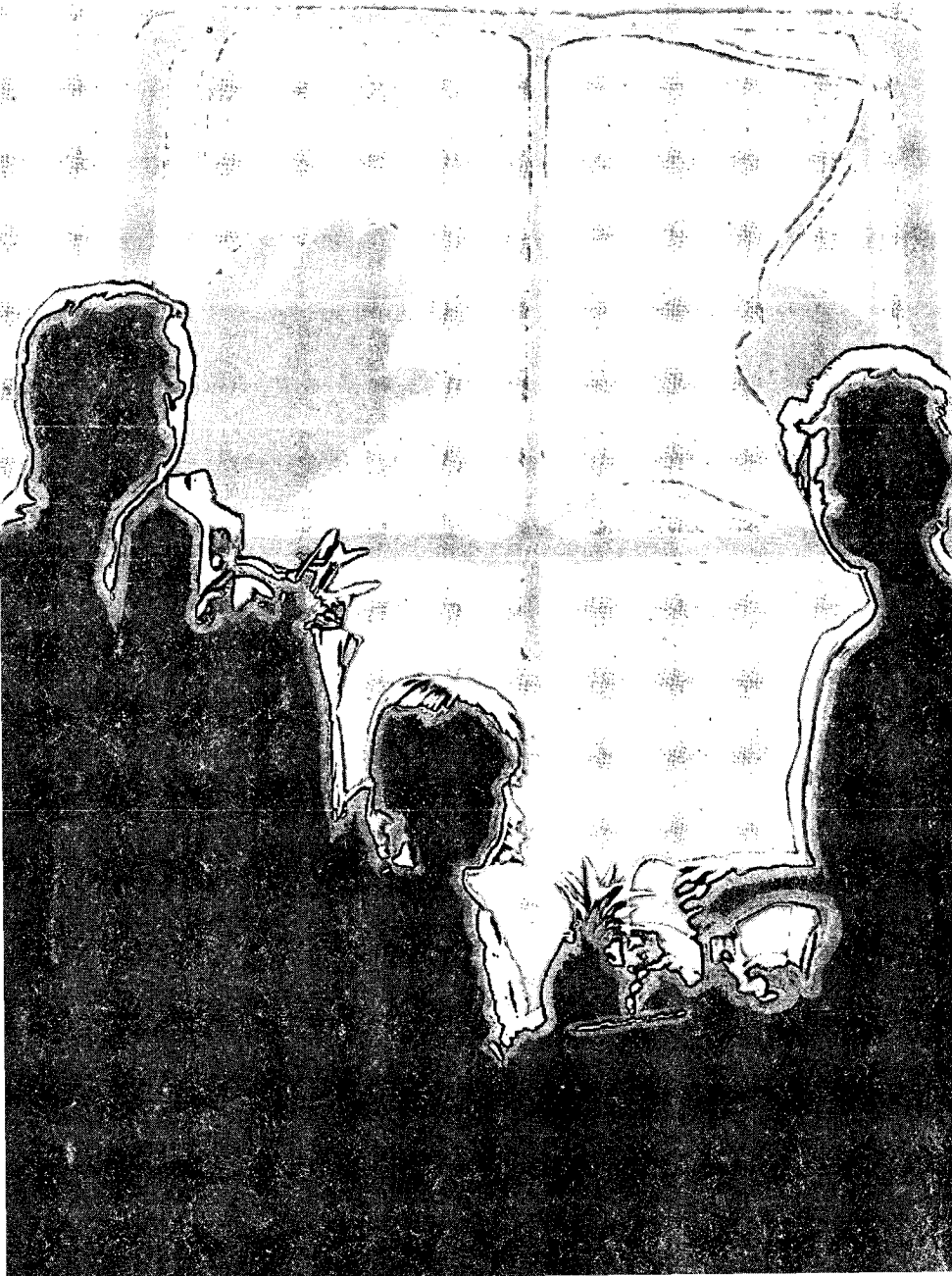
THINK IT THROUGH

What are the sins in others that we find most difficult to forgive?

FURTHER STUDY

Micah 6:6-8; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Beatitudes” (Matt. 5:7), pp. 21-24.

10 / Called to Serve



“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”
(1 Tim. 6:12).

Paul, writing to Timothy (whom he calls a “man of God” in verse 11), urges the young minister to keep well away from the practices of the world. In the world, he says, is a rejection of the teachings of Christ (verse 3). People argue about issues far from the truth (verse 5). They love money, and in pursuit of it some will hesitate at nothing. Consequently, they cause themselves and others much suffering (verse 10). By contrast, the man of God is to follow after “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (verse 11).

The member of the church differs from the man in the world in that his interests and goals are entirely different. In this lesson we look at some of those differences.

First of all, the primary concern of the Christian is to be an effective witness for his Lord. This arises naturally out of his experience. God has been so good to him that he gives glory to God at all times and in every circumstance. He shows that the service of God brings untold blessings. He does not have to be a skilled preacher in order to witness. He does not have to know the Bible as a scholar. All he needs to do is to testify to what he has seen and heard. Remember, the blind man whom Jesus healed said simply to the Jewish leaders, “Whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). There is no stronger witness than that which comes from personal experience.

The member of the church is a diligent student of the Word. He knows that the Word of God is his life, and he studies it every day. He shares with others the truths he has learned. The Bible is the light that

keeps him from error and the truth that saves him from all heresies.

The Christian must be concerned about his health. He knows that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; therefore he seeks to keep it free of all defilement—physical and moral. Certain meats he knows to be unclean according to the Scripture; so he avoids eating them. He also avoids beverages that stimulate his nerves unnecessarily or cause him to lose full control of his senses. He shuns the drugs used by many to escape reality, for his life is dedicated to God and His service.

As a citizen of the world, the Christian knows he has obligations to his government and nation. He knows that God has ordained authorities to maintain peace and order. He is law-abiding and responsible. He realizes that only when the requirements of men infringe on the laws of God must he insist on recognizing the higher authority. (See Acts 5:29.)

The Christian is more concerned about the welfare of others than about his own interests. Thus his life is one of blessing to others. Children need to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The poor need to be provided with the necessities of life. Strangers and members of the church need to be shown hospitality. He imitates his Master in going about doing good.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Witnessing for Christ**
(Mark 16:15)
2. **Studying the Word**
(Acts 17:11)
3. **Caring for the Body**
(1 Cor. 16:19)
4. **Loyalty to Authorities**
(Rom. 13:1)
5. **Caring for Widows and Orphans**
(James 1:27)
6. **Training the Youth**
(Prov. 22:6)

**Part 1
WITNESSING
FOR CHRIST**

What commission did Jesus give to the church?

“He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The objective of preaching the gospel is that men, women, and children may be saved (verse 16). But not all will listen to the gospel or accept it. Thus the preaching of the gospel gives everyone an opportunity to decide his destiny, because the alternatives are clear: salvation or damnation.

The preaching of the gospel has no limits. It must go to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). Wherever they are and wherever they go, church members are to be witnesses of what Jesus has done for them. They call all to repentance and promise them forgiveness in Christ’s name. (See Luke 24:47, 48.)

Not all are called to go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all may have a part in the missionary enterprise by raising the necessary funds to finance the undertaking. And all may be witnesses in their homes and neighborhoods. Some will give up the companionship of sons and daughters so that the interests of missions may be served.

What does Christ enjoin all Christians to do? Matt. 5:16.

Jesus is the “true Light” (John 1:9), and He lights every man. The Christian is to reflect that light. The light of God’s love can bring joy to people who live in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. But it does not follow that people will accept the light. Unfortunately, many people prefer darkness to light.

Why do people prefer darkness to light? John 3:19.

Some people do not want to change their ways. They delight in doing evil. They feel that the light of the gospel may restrict their freedom. They do not seem to realize that they are bound by their sin and finally destined to lose their lives in bitter self-condemnation. The truth makes you and me free—free to enjoy an abundant life here in this world and eternal life in the world to come. (See John 10:10.)

The preaching of the gospel is accompanied by the rite of baptism for all who accept Jesus as their personal Saviour. This rite symbolizes the fact that our old man of sin has been buried and that a new man has risen out of the water, just as Christ was raised from the dead. The Christian henceforth walks in “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

THINK IT THROUGH

What provisions has God made for the church to carry out its gospel commission?

FURTHER STUDY

Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 19-29.

Part 2
STUDYING
THE WORD

In what particular did Luke contrast the Jews in Berea with those in Thessalonica?

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“The minds of the Bereans were not narrowed by prejudice. They were willing to investigate the truthfulness of the doctrines preached by the apostles. They studied the Bible, not from curiosity, but in order that they might learn what had been written concerning the promised Messiah. Daily they searched the inspired records, and as they compared scripture with scripture, heavenly angels were beside them, enlightening their minds and impressing their hearts. . . .

“ . . . If, in the closing scenes of earth’s history, those to whom testing truths are proclaimed would follow the example of the Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily, and comparing with God’s word the messages brought them, there would today be a large number loyal to the precepts of God’s law, where now there are comparatively few.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 231, 232.

What advice did Paul give to Timothy as a young minister? 1 Tim. 4:13.

Paul was an avid reader. Only by reading and study can we test our beliefs. That which is written serves as a testimony that is safer than the oral word. It was by quoting what was written that Jesus overcame temptation in the wilderness. The Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone, and sometimes John the revelator was told to write down what he saw. (See Rev. 1:19; 2:1; 14:13; 21:5.)

Why were God’s messages written down? Rom. 15:4.

The Christian who earnestly studies the Bible is strong in faith. As Jesus said, the Scriptures testify of Him. (See John 5:39.)

The church that makes the Bible the object of its study will stand for truth though the heavens fall. (See 2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 15:4.)

What can the Bible do for the believer? 2 Tim. 3:15.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is the Sabbath School really important to the church? Why do some members not attend? What might I do about it?

FURTHER STUDY

Pss. 19:7, 8; 119:9-11; John 5:39; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 524-526; *Education*, pp. 123-127.

**Part 3
CARING FOR
THE BODY**

What attitude does the Christian have toward his body?

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

Christians have a healthy respect for their bodies. They do not consider that the flesh is inherently evil and must be abandoned as soon as possible. They do not make an unscriptural distinction between soul and body. When God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of the man He had created from the dust of the earth, man became a "living being" (Gen. 2:7, RSV).

What is Paul's testimony concerning the need for the Christian to keep his body under the control of the higher nature? 1 Cor. 9:27.

Because of man's fallen nature, the body wants to be pampered; but the Christian does not let the body have its own way. The body is to serve God, and the Christian dedicates his whole being to God.

Since the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus the channel through which the Holy Spirit can be active in communicating and saving, it must be kept in a good condition. The mind needs to be clear and the limbs supple and strong. Only in this way can the Christian bring maximum glory to God.

What promise did God make to the children of Israel which indicates His interest in health and freedom from disease? Ex. 15:26.

The Bible is full of good counsel regarding eating and drinking habits. God at first provided a diet of fruits, grains, and nuts. (See Gen. 1:29.) After sin, the herb of the field was added to the diet (Gen. 3:18). As a result of the Flood, God permitted the use of flesh food (Gen. 9:3); but this was restricted to clean meats. (See Leviticus 11.) Blood was not to be eaten. (See Gen. 9:4.)

Common wine is intoxicating, and anything that leads to drunkenness is an abomination. The drunkard is excluded from the kingdom of God. (See 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.) Except as medication, we are not to take anything into the body that dulls the judgment or impairs our sense of right and wrong. (See Prov. 31:4, 5; Lev. 10:8-10.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Think of examples illustrating that a person who is sick is not always so because he has disobeyed the rules of health.

FURTHER STUDY

3 John 2; Ps. 42:11; *Education*, pp. 202-206.

**Part 4
LOYALTY TO
AUTHORITIES**

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1).

It is difficult to see how a government is ordained of God when it engages in injustice and puts to death those who have a right to life. (The God of justice bestows the gift of eternal life.) All governments have their weaknesses because of the human element, yet generally speaking they are set up to be respected and supported except when they violate conscience.

What is the Christian's proper attitude toward governments? Rom. 13:1, 2.

The Christian pays his taxes and contributes to public services. By obeying the laws of the land he avoids the arm of the law, which Paul describes as “the minister of God” (verse 4). He is not found among the lawbreakers, but is a positive influence for good.

This does not mean that the Christian is uncritical of the government that controls his political life. He will speak his mind in favor of truth and righteousness. If he knows that he has political or civil rights, he will ask that they be granted him, as when Paul claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. (See Acts 22:25.)

Yet the Christian will follow the example of his Master and submit to injustice when necessary in giving a testimony. The early Christians were often placed under arrest and put in prison, but such occasions brought glory to God. (See Acts 12:5-11; 16:25-31.)

Can the Christian expect that he will never be treated unjustly? Matt. 24:9.

The Christian speaks the right word at the right time and endures to the end (verse 13). He is promised that he will be given the right words to speak on every occasion if his communications are open with God. (See Matt. 10:19, 20.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Should the Christian be pessimistic about the success of programs designed to improve the world situation politically and economically?

FURTHER STUDY

Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 394-397.

**Part 5
CARING FOR
WIDOWS AND
ORPHANS**

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

To the one who thinks of religion in terms of keeping the commandments, this definition must come as a shock! Is not religion a relationship with God? Of course it is! But the closer one is to God and Jesus Christ, the closer he is to anyone for whom Christ died.

In what words does John bring out the close connection between love for God and love for man? 1 John 4:20, 21.

With comparative ease we may say, I love God. We feel it is the right thing to say, and we say it. The proof of whether we do love God or not is seen in whether we love our fellowman. Once again, it is comparatively easy to speak in generalities and say that we love all men. The question is, Do we love those with whom we come in contact every day? Are we concerned about their welfare? Do we work for their good? Or are there some who make us unhappy? Are there some we positively do not like?

How does Paul describe the way the Christian ought to relate to those around him? Rom. 12:13-16.

The Christian keeps himself unspotted from the world, but he does not separate himself from it. He is in the world to bring a knowledge of the love of God and His constant care to all those he meets. This is to be the witness of the church in every locality.

How does the psalmist describe the blessings that come to the one who is considerate of the poor? Ps. 41:1-3.

Some people find it difficult to give, but this is only an evidence that they do not have the spirit of Christ. (See Acts 20:35.) The Bible speaks out against those who are inconsiderate of the poor. (See Prov. 21:13.) Helping others should not be limited to those who have money. Peter said he had no money, but he had something infinitely more valuable to give. (See Acts 3:6.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Which is easier to do: to weep with those who weep or to rejoice with those who rejoice?

FURTHER STUDY

Ex. 23:11; Lev. 19:9, 10; Ps. 9:18; Gal. 2:10; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Who Is My Neighbour?" pp. 385-389.

**Part 6
TRAINING
THE YOUTH**

What injunction is given parents regarding their children?

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

Children are "an heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3). They are not only a blessing to the parents, but a responsibility. Parents who neglect their children or abuse them will someday have to answer to God.

Notice the way Jesus expressed His concern for children and emphasized the importance of caring for their spiritual interests. Matt. 19:14.

The importance of children to the well-being of society and their place in worship is not always realized. Their training is often neglected while parents pursue other interests. But no investment produces greater results than that of spending time with children and answering their many questions. Mother wants to talk with her neighbors and friends. Father wants to read the newspaper or indulge in his hobbies. In such situations children go off and play by themselves, and perhaps they will learn many things it would be better they not know.

With what words has the psalmist indicated that children may be a source of strength? Ps. 8:2.

Jesus quoted this text to the Jewish leaders when they were displeased by the welcome the children gave Him as He rode into Jerusalem. (See Matt. 21:16.) Often we think children are not old enough to understand or to make decisions or to take a leading part in church activities. But parents should know how often children can be surprisingly wise and understanding.

The church that has many children in its midst is obviously a growing church, because one day the boys and girls will be able to make their decisions for Christ and join the family of God. But the church must be sure that everything is done to keep the little ones within the fold. In modern society it is not easy, nor is it often practical, for parents to teach their own children. The church must provide a school in which the principles of the Bible are taught by precept and practice. This is the basis of a church school system. Only that church which teaches the importance of Christian education lives up to its fullest responsibilities.

THINK IT THROUGH

Suggest ways in which parents can show their children that they are concerned about their religious education.

FURTHER STUDY

Judges 13:2-24; 1 Sam. 3:12, 13; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 511-517.

11 / Order for Efficiency



“Thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof” (Ex. 40:4).

One cannot read the account of the Exodus of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt without being impressed by the detail of its organization. God was very explicit in the details regarding the Passover. (See Exodus 12.) Only if the children of Israel did what they were told could they expect to have God’s promises fulfilled to them.

God gave detailed instruction for the building of the tabernacle. (See Exodus 25.) It was to be according to a pattern shown on the mount. (See verse 40.) The robes of the priests and the various sacrifices were all ordained by God. Everything was to be in order. Even the words of blessing to be used by the Aaronic priesthood were given by God. (See Num. 6:23-27.)

Why all this detail? Because everything that God does, from Creation to redemption, is related to His nature. He knows what is best and wants the best. Order is a part of His being, and everything He sets up is orderly and efficient. Sin has brought disorder into the universe; but when sin is destroyed, everything created will be restored to its original perfection. The laws of the universe will be obeyed with infinite precision.

It is not surprising, then, that the church should partake of divine order and system. Every part is to function in perfect harmony with every other part. In this way it reflects the glory of God.

In our lesson this week we shall see how the church is organized for efficiency. Paul told the church in Corinth that the worship service needed to be orderly and dignified, with common sense prevailing.

Visitors ought to be able to understand what is going on. Those who speak should use a language that is understood. No more than one person should speak at the same time. And the basic reason for all this is that the God who is worshiped is a God of order.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach, He sent them two by two. He also limited what they should take with them and specified to what areas they should go. Everything has a proper time, and there is an efficient way of using talent.

As the church increased in size, the need arose for the appointment of men who would serve tables. One of these was the first Christian martyr (Stephen); another was an evangelist whose four daughters were prophetesses. In this way the apostles were free to spend their time doing the work to which they had been called.

As time passed and the church has grown, there has developed a need for a multitude of officers. This organization was not seen in the early church, because that church was in its infancy. But the principle of organization for efficiency is clear enough in the Scripture to authorize the setting up of new offices to meet expanding needs.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. A God of Order**
(1 Cor. 14:40)
- 2. Order in Israel**
(Ex. 18:18)
- 3. God’s Army**
(2 Tim. 2:3)
- 4. Jesus Sends Disciples**
(Mark 6:7)
- 5. Need for Structure**
(Titus 1:5)
- 6. Organized, but Dead**
(John 2:15)

**Part 1
A GOD
OF ORDER**

According to Paul, how should all the services of the church be conducted?

“Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

The reason for this, says Paul, is that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (verse 33).

A study of these verses in context indicates that Paul was not pleased with the worship services in Corinth. With no previous planning, everyone felt free to get up and have his say in the midst of the congregation. (See verse 26.)

What are some of the sound principles of church order laid down by Paul?

1. Worship services must make sense so that visitors coming in can understand what is being said and done (verse 23).
2. Whatever is said should be understandable to those who listen and should bring home the truths of the Bible (verse 24).
3. Visitors should be impressed that God meets with His people in the worship service.
4. The purpose of all worship is that the members may be strengthened (verse 26), encouraged, and instructed (verse 27).
5. When anyone speaks, the rest must remain silent. There must be order in the presentation of the message from God (verses 29-31).

To what authorities is Paul prepared to appeal in support of his own authority for the counsel he is giving the church? 1 Cor. 14:37.

Church services are not occasions when people are to come and display their talents, ask their personal questions, or ignore what anyone else says while they do their talking. The church service must bring honor to God by being orderly, and it must meet the needs of the people by being clear and understandable.

Paul's words regarding women and their part in the church service must be understood in the context of the church in Corinth. In some places today women ordinarily do not take the lead in religious services. Their doing so could cause misunderstandings and negative response to the gospel.

THINK IT THROUGH

What improvements do you think might be made in the worship services of your church?

FURTHER STUDY

John 20:6, 7; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 789; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 374-376; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 95, 96.

Part 2
ORDER IN
ISRAEL

What principle underlies Jethro's advice to Moses, suggesting a decentralization of authority?

"Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone" (Ex. 18:18).

Jethro could see that the task of judging the people according to the law of God was too much for one man. Moses and the people were spending long days in careful deliberation of a multitude of matters. Moses needed to get organized!

What sound counsel suggests that by the distribution of responsibility more work could be done in less time? Ex. 18:19-26.

This did not mean that Moses shirked responsibility; he still had to review important cases. But at least other matters could be settled in lesser courts, and thus time and strength were saved. It speaks well of Moses that he was willing to listen to counsel from his father-in-law and to act accordingly.

What provision was made for order in the sanctuary services? Lev. 1:1; 4:1; 6:1; 8:1; 11:1.

God gave Moses instructions as to how the various services of the sanctuary were to be conducted. God was the real Leader in the wilderness, and the children of Israel were to follow instructions carefully. God uses men as His instruments to carry out His purposes, and in every phase of activity there is to be a well-thought-out plan.

It is the same with the church. God is the true Leader, and when the appointed human leaders in the church are in close touch with God regarding their responsibilities, everything is done efficiently and in order.

How closely did Jesus work with His Father in planning His life and teaching? John 5:30; 8:28.

"Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479.

THINK IT THROUGH

What help can be given people who think that they are the only ones who can do a job efficiently?

FURTHER STUDY

Rom. 12:4, 5; Col. 1:18; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 26, 28, 489, 495.

Part 3 **What figure of speech does Paul use to describe his ideal**
GOD'S **for what Timothy ought to be as a Christian?**
ARMY

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).

A popular hymn sung in the church begins:

"Onward Christian soldiers! marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before."

—*The Church Hymnal*, no. 360.

The metaphor is a striking one because it is so apt. The following is also true:

"Crown and thrones have perished, kingdoms ruled and waned,

But the church of Jesus constant has remained.

Gates of hell can never 'gainst that church prevail;

We have Christ's own promise, that can never fail."

Everyone knows that an army is supposed to be well-organized. There is to be order and discipline, planning and strategy, one who leads and one who follows.

In what ways does Paul use this figure of speech to apply to the church? 2 Tim. 2:4.

Paul points out two areas in which there are close similarities:

1. Every soldier has a commanding officer, and every member of the church has Jesus Christ as his Head.

2. Just as a soldier concentrates on his soldiering because he has been called to it, so the church member gives top priority to his church responsibilities.

How is this warfare waged? Paul exemplified it in his own life. At first he fought against the church, using political pressure and violent measures. (See Gal. 1:13.) But on the way to Damascus he was converted, and from then on he proved himself to be the greatest missionary and the greatest theologian the world has ever seen among men, apart from Christ. He dedicated his life to one purpose—preaching the gospel. (See 1 Cor. 9:16.) He endured hardness as a good soldier, being filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit. No wonder he could say, "I have fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Paul has been accompanied by a whole host of Christians who have fought the battle for truth. Can you name some of them?

THINK IT THROUGH **Is implicit obedience essential in the operations of an**
army? Should Christians ever obey without knowing why?
(See Heb. 11:8.)

FURTHER STUDY *Judges 7; Education*, pp. 271, 295-297.

Part 4
JESUS SENDS
DISCIPLES

Think upon how Jesus felt as He sent forth His first disciples.

"He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits" (Mark 6:7).

Why did Jesus choose just twelve to be closest to Him? Is the number possibly related to the twelve tribes of Israel? We may not know the answer, but we do know that the New Jerusalem has twelve foundations and names of the apostles are written on them. (See Rev. 21:14.) Jesus told the Twelve that they would judge the twelve tribes. (See Matt: 19:28.)

We note that Jesus sent out His disciples two by two. Here is order and organization. We do not know for sure which of the disciples went together, but doubtless the combination was for a purpose.

Furthermore, Jesus gave them the power they needed to do their work. In succeeding verses in this chapter we learn of detailed instructions given to the disciples. There is an organized group going out to do a specific task, a Leader, and those who do what He commands.

Here we see in embryo how the church operates. It moves forward in an orderly fashion. A congregation may be large or small, but it always addresses itself to a task and then proceeds to do its work with dispatch and efficiency.

What experience in the Old Testament illustrates how a group under God's control can accomplish an important purpose in spite of small numbers? Judges 7:2-15.

The success of the church is not dependent on large numbers. It is dependent on dedication and a faith that God can work through few as well as through many. (See 1 Sam. 14:6.)

"Man needs a power outside of and beyond himself, to restore him to the likeness of God, and enable him to do the work of God; but this does not make the human agency unessential. Humanity lays hold upon divine power, Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and through co-operation with the divine, the power of man becomes efficient for good.

"He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 296, 297.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it important for God to use human beings rather than angels to take the message of grace to fallen man?

FURTHER STUDY

Luke 9:1-6; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 70-73; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 548-554.

Part 5
NEED FOR
STRUCTURE

When Paul left Titus on the island of Crete, what need was he meeting?

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5, NIV).

Paul recognized that it was not enough just to have groups of Christians wherever he preached the gospel. These groups needed to be organized into continuing communities, each with its own elder. He had not had time to work out the details of organization, but he left Titus to do this.

Is it obvious today that when a church is formed, there must be recognized leadership? Someone must take the initiative, calling the group together and arranging for the various needs of the members. For instance, there needs to be a place to meet for worship, and everyone needs to know where that place is. Someone must arrange a time for each meeting—a time that suits the majority. We are not referring now to the day of worship. But will the Sabbath worship services take place in the morning or in the afternoon? What about times for prayer? What about the communion service? Who will be responsible for the offerings? What about prayer for the sick? (See James 5:14.) What about the widows and the poor in their midst?

Who will represent the group as delegates if there is a call for a general council? How will the delegates be selected? These will be some of the concerns of the local church, and doubtless a new group would be interested in the experience of other groups in order to organize themselves in the best possible way. Titus was no doubt a resource person in this respect.

What other important matters must be cared for by the local church? 1 Cor. 9:13, 14.

God made provision for the support of the Levites through the tithes, and God has provided that the gospel ministry shall be supported by the tithe today.

Some may be self-supporting missionaries or ministers, just as Paul was able to support himself at certain times by tentmaking or by personal means. But this is not the rule. Jesus suggested that the disciples stay at the homes of those who received them and thus enjoy their hospitality. No doubt Titus, while on Crete, was often invited into different homes for board and lodging. But the ministry is on a much sounder basis when it is supported by the tithe according to God's plan.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does organization lessen the need for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church?

FURTHER STUDY

1 Timothy 3, 4; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 617-621.

**Part 6
ORGANIZED,
BUT DEAD**

What situation in the temple at Jerusalem led Jesus to strong action?

"When he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables" (John 2:15).

The services at the temple in Jerusalem had ceased to be worshipful. The place that was to be a house of prayer had become a "house of merchandise" (verse 16).

The need for sacrifices to be offered in the temple was unquestioned. God had provided for these in the sanctuary service. Those who came from long distances to worship at the Passover would not be able to bring their animals with them. Hence the need for the purchase of sheep and oxen in Jerusalem.

Offerings for the temple were also a part of worship. But the Jews decided that only the temple shekel would be accepted for this purpose or for the purchase of sacrifices. People coming from far away would have to change their currency in order to have an appropriate offering. Thus a money changer was necessary.

In what ways may organization and ritual detract from the spirit of worship?

When organization hinders the prime purpose of the church, then organization must be set aside. The sole purpose of organization is to enable the church to function efficiently.

"Evil does not result because of organization, but because of making organization everything, and vital godliness of little moment. When form and machinery take the pre-eminence, and a laborious task is made of carrying on the work that should be done with simplicity, evil will result, and little will be accomplished in proportion to the effort put forth."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 253.

"Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 489.

THINK IT THROUGH

When did organization become necessary in the administration of our institutions, in the protection of church property, and in the publication of books and tracts containing the truths for our times?

FURTHER STUDY

Mark 7:1-13; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 154-166.

12 / Servant Leaders



“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

In the church the concept of leadership is entirely different from that in the world. In the world there is always competition for the highest place—the highest honor. But in the church the highest honor is to serve.

Jesus set the example in word and deed. He said that He had not come to be served, but to serve. He exemplified this, not only in His daily ministry, but also during the Last Supper with His disciples, when He took a towel and washed their feet. (See John 13:4, 5.) Then He enjoined His disciples—those who were going to be the first leaders of the church—to follow His example.

In our lesson this week we see how leadership in the church is primarily a function of service. Paul looked upon himself as a servant of the people. He dedicated himself to the gospel ministry, because he felt that in this way he could bring the greatest amount of good to all. In a striking exhortation, he said: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:12). If one analyzes the various gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit among members of the church, it is seen that their prime purpose is to equip Christians to serve others. Thus an apostle is sent with a message of salvation. A prophet speaks for God so that men and women may be reminded of truths they need to apply in their

lives. Teachers guide, direct, and instruct in the way of righteousness, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of others. An examination of the other gifts will show that they exist in the church for mutual encouragement and help.

Elders and bishops may seem to have positions of honor, and certainly they carry important responsibilities. But they are to feed the flock and oversee the interests of the church so that none may be led astray.

A key office in the church is that of the deacon. As he sees to the many material needs of the church, he releases others to care for the church’s spiritual needs. The qualifications for deacons are as high as those for elders and bishops. (See 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Acts 6:1-7.)

The danger is always present that officers in the church will misrepresent their Master and exercise an authority that does not belong to them. We should notice the dangers that face church leaders so that we and they may be warned.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. A Serving Master**
(Matt. 20:28)
- 2. Chosen to Serve**
(Acts 6:3)
- 3. Gifts for Service**
(Eph. 4:12)
- 4. Leadership Roles**
(Eph. 4:11)
- 5. Elders and a Council**
(Acts 14:23)
- 6. False Leaders**
(Matt. 23:3)

**Part 1
A SERVING
MASTER**

What did Jesus say He had come to do?

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

From beginning to end, the life of Jesus was one of service. He told His disciples that they were to follow His example. They would be very different from the world, because the world confused greatness with authority, while the disciples were to recognize that true greatness consisted in service. (See verses 25-27.)

What powers go with position in worldly organization?

“In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. . . .

“Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows. . . .

“ . . . The principle on which Christ acted [practicing self-denial] is to actuate the members of the church which is His body.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

Note the principles on which Paul built his ministry. 1 Cor. 9:19; 10:33.

Paul recognized that he was free to do what he liked with his life, and that is a freedom that exists for everyone. But he chose to be a servant. He had only one objective—to bring salvation to his fellowmen. So he did not consult his own interests, but theirs. He adapted himself to all kinds of people so that he might be a blessing to them. He knew that he could not compel anyone to accept the truth of the gospel, but he also knew that he could not go on living his life without considering the needs of those around him. This meant a certain amount of self-discipline. (See 1 Cor. 9:27.) But it was a price he was prepared to pay because, not only was he a servant of those in need, but he was a “servant [also bondservant or slave] of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1).

Here then is an important characteristic of the church. It stands as a symbol of service to mankind, because it is a group of people who are slaves of Jesus Christ—slaves by choice, in gratitude.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I finding service for Christ a burden rather than a blessing?

FURTHER STUDY

Luke 17:7-10; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 642-651.

**Part 2
CHOSEN
TO SERVE**

When the church grew so large that the original Twelve could not do all that needed to be done in the church, what plans were made to solve the problem?

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

The church not only grew in size, but some cultural/racial tensions troubled the administration (verse 1). The church leadership had to be expanded to meet the situation. The apostles wanted to devote themselves to the preaching of the Word and caring for spiritual interests. Yet the divided groups of widows in the church had to be cared for, and someone had to make sure that in meeting their needs there was justice and fair distribution.

This was a problem that had not existed before. The situation required changes in administration. Could this be effected quietly and efficiently? The results indicate that the right moves were made. (See verse 7.) The church must always be prepared, under the Spirit's leading, to make changes of policy as new situations arise.

Note the following points to be drawn from this recorded experience:

1. We must not be surprised if sometimes there are injustices or inconsistencies in the church. After all, the church has a very human element about it! (See verse 1.)
2. On this occasion it appears that the whole church was called together to consider the problem. (See verse 2.)
3. Appeal was made to reason regarding responsibilities that needed to be carried. Spiritual priorities must not be laid aside for the sake of temporal needs (verse 2).
4. The whole church was asked to recommend seven men who could be relied on to undertake the task of serving tables. Such men would be called deacons or church administrators today.
5. The church was willing to undertake this task, and certain men were named for the office and were brought before the apostles for their blessing and ordination.
6. The church continued to expand, and we know that two of the seven later distinguished themselves—Stephen by being the first Christian martyr, and Philip by evangelizing Samaria and baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch.

Thus the church must always be ready to modify its structure in order to fulfill its primary responsibilities.

THINK IT THROUGH

“Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 92.

FURTHER STUDY

Gal. 5:13; Col. 3:24; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87-92.

**Part 3
GIFTS FOR
SERVICE**

What does Paul say is the reason that spiritual gifts are given to members of the church?

“To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12, NIV).

The NEB translates this verse: “To equip God’s people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

These two versions combine two propositions that are expressed in the KJV as follows: (1) “for the perfecting of the saints” and (2) “for the work of the ministry.” Many scholars feel that the two propositions should be combined so that one is accomplished to make the other possible.

With this understanding it is clear that the gift of leadership cited in the previous verse (verse 11) is for training members to serve. But do the leaders in our churches do this?

Is it possible that in too many churches there has been a division between the leaders (the “clergy”) and the other members (the “laity”)?

At times, leaders have undertaken to do all the work, as the members have chosen to sit as spectators. But this is not the plan outlined in Scripture. Nor was it the practice of the early church.

That church grows in which the minister leads and trains the laity how to work. This may mean more effort on the part of the minister, who may find it easier to do the work himself. But God’s plan is to give gifts to some who will teach others how to engage in service for the building up of the body of Christ.

The root meaning of the Greek word for “equip” (NEB) or “perfection” (KJV) has to do with resetting a broken limb or mending a net. “The basic idea of the word is that of putting a thing or a person into the condition in which he or it ought to be. It is the function of the office-bearers of the Church to see that the members of the Church are so educated, so helped, so guided, so cared for, so sought out when they go astray, that they become what they ought to be. The office-bearer of the Church holds his office, not for his own honour, but for the help he can give his fellow-members within the Church.”—William Barclay, *Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 176.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my church a family in which every member contributes his share of ministry for the upbuilding of the body of Christ? If not, what is my responsibility?

FURTHER STUDY

Eph. 6:5-9; *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 95-107.

**Part 4
LEADER-
SHIP ROLES****How does Paul describe some of the leaders in the church?**

"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

Leaders in the church are not self-appointed; their calling is from Christ. He has chosen and appointed them. They are then available according to need.

Church office is very different from positions held in the world. In the world a man may choose the type of work he wants to do. He will train for it and then do it as opportunity comes his way. But in the church, effective leadership comes only when Christ is in control and His will is done.

What are the primary gifts of the Spirit in the life of the church?

Apostles: "Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of men. As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stood as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles stand as representatives of the gospel church."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 19.

The New Testament tells us of others who were apostles besides the Twelve. Paul was an apostle (1 Cor. 9:1). So were Barnabas, Apollos, Timothy and others. Paul refers to James, the Lord's brother, as one (Gal. 1:19). Most of the apostles were those who had seen Jesus and were witnesses of His resurrection. (See Acts 1:21; 22.) Paul could claim to have seen Jesus and to have been convinced of the resurrection. (See Phil. 3:10.) The root meaning of the word *apostle* is "one who is sent"—a messenger.

Prophets: A prophet is one who speaks for God. He does not necessarily foretell the future, but he may do so as he delivers God's messages. Jesus warned that there would be many false prophets in the last days. (See Matt. 24:11.) But the remnant church will be marked by the gift of prophecy.

Evangelists: An evangelist is a bearer of the good news of the gospel. Philip was an evangelist in Samaria (Acts 8:5; 21:8). Paul urged Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). An evangelist today is one who concentrates on taking the gospel to those outside the church.

Pastors and teachers: It is interesting that these two offices should be placed together. It suggests that the pastor needs to be a teacher, and the teacher needs to be a pastor.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I see the officers of my church serving the members in the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Matt. 20:20-28; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 360-371.

**Part 5
ELDERS AND
A COUNCIL**

Note the care with which leaders were appointed in churches raised up by Paul.

“When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

The elders were not to constitute a hierarchy to dominate the church. They were commended to the Lord, on whom they believed and from whom they would receive direction and help. The connection between member and Lord, officer and Lord, is always open, always vital. The church finds its unity, not in organization, but in a relationship to Christ. And it is the spirit of Christ—the spirit of service—that prevails.

When the church was faced with a problem of doctrine and practice, how did it proceed to find a solution? Acts 15:2.

Read Acts 15:1-35 for the whole story. Note the following aspects:

1. The problem is not a simple one, because backgrounds and biases come into play.
2. Lengthy arguments are used on both sides, but this does not solve the problem.
3. The issue is ultimately the concern of the whole church.
4. Delegates are chosen, sent, and received. Apostles and elders are present, and speeches are made.
5. James sums up the arguments and proposes a solution.

“The council moved in accordance with the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. As a result of their deliberations they all saw that God Himself had answered the question at issue by bestowing upon the Gentiles the Holy Ghost; and they realized that it was their part to follow the guidance of the Spirit.

“The entire body of Christians was not called upon to vote upon the question. The ‘apostles and elders,’ men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 196.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it always wise to consider carefully the decisions of a council that is “the voice of the highest authority upon the earth”?—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 196.

FURTHER STUDY

Prov. 11:14; 24:6; 15:22; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188-200.

**Part 6
FALSE
LEADERS**

What type of leader did Jesus say we should not follow in all respects?

“All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matt. 23:3).

Read the whole of chapter 23. Note the marks of a bad leader:

1. He is concerned about show and wants to be seen of men in places of honor and to be called by honorific titles (verses 5-7).
2. He does not go into the kingdom himself, and he hinders others from doing so (verse 13).
3. He profits from the poor and needy, but he says long prayers to suggest that he is pious (verse 14).
4. He is apparently zealous for the salvation of men and exerts himself a good deal in this respect, but the result of his work does not promote the work of God (verse 15).
5. His teaching does not stand up to reason (verses 16-22).
6. He is so legalistic in his interpretation of what is right and wrong that in the end he insists on minute details but overlooks gross breaches of the law (verses 23-26).
7. He rejects God's messages of truth and persecutes those who want to do what is right (verses 34, 35).

Will leaders in the church have any of these characteristics? Not if they have the grace of God in their hearts. But there is always the danger that the church will become so institutionalized that it ceases to represent God and His activity. Instead of being shepherds of the flock, the ministers will be hirelings who run away in time of danger and fail to do the work they have agreed to do.

By contrast, how are God's chosen leaders to act? 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

“It is as if Peter said, ‘When you are engaged in Christian service, you must not do it or give it as if you were conferring a personal favour, or distributing bounty from your own store, but in the consciousness that what you give, you first received from God.’ Such an attitude preserves the giver from all pride and the gift from all humiliation.”—William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 304.

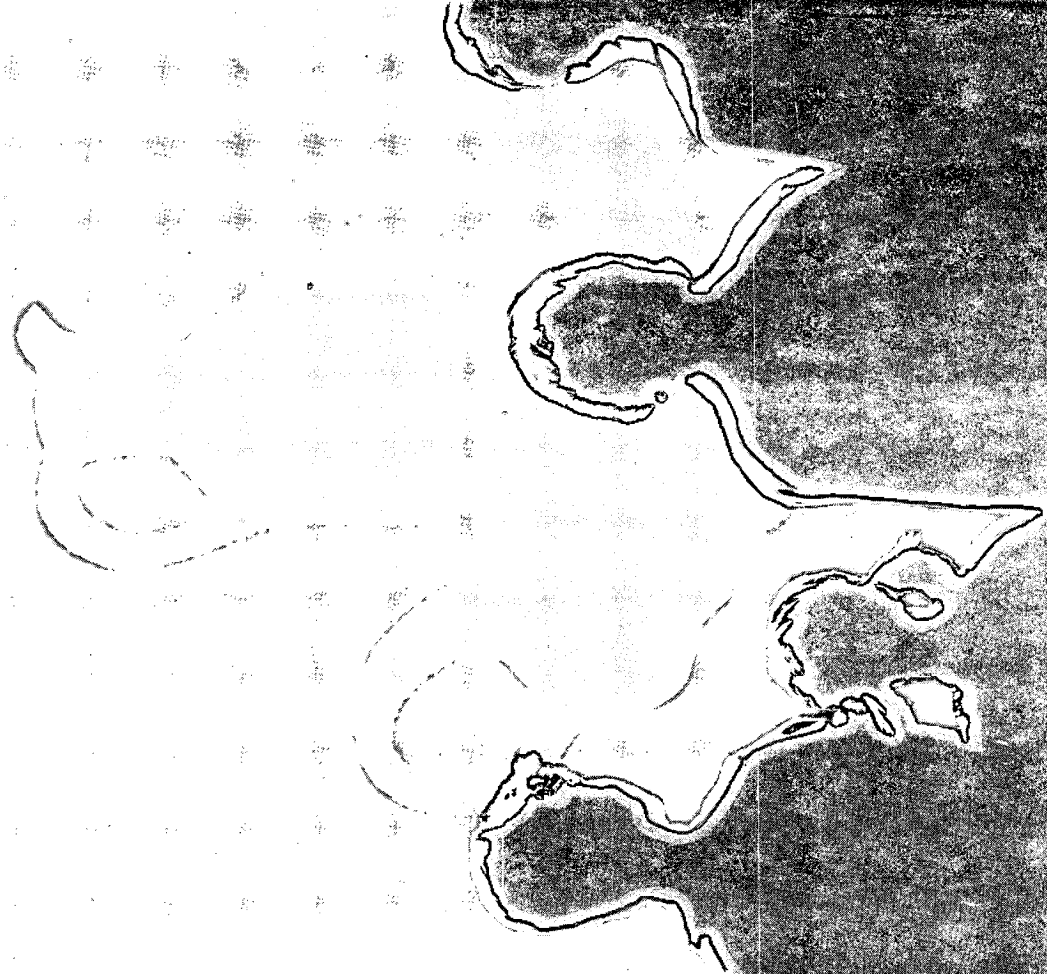
What a difference it would make to the church today if everything done in it were done to the glory of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

What alone can keep a leader from being pharisaical in his leadership?

FURTHER STUDY

Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 606-620.



“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:11, 12).

The church at present is a pilgrim church; but the time will come, and that very soon, when it will be the church triumphant. John the revelator said that he saw in vision “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” They were standing “before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” (Rev. 7:9).

That will be a glorious day. Until then the church needs to be ready to meet the Bridegroom. In our lesson this week we look at some of the warnings that have been given, at some of the areas in which the church needs to get ready, and at the changes to take place at the great consummation.

First of all, we look at the parable of the ten virgins. We note that a delay postponed the expected arrival of the bridegroom. All the virgins went to sleep; but some had made adequate preparation in case of a delay, while others had not. We do not know the time of the second advent; so we must be prepared at all times.

How shall we relate to the obvious delay in Christ's second coming? Shall we, as did the evil servant in Christ's parable, say, “*My lord delayeth his coming*”? (Matt. 24:48). Should we not rather admit that “it is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years”?—*Evangelism*, p. 696. And do we realize that “it is

the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”?—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

The church in the last days will be aware of the changes that must take place before God's purposes can be fulfilled. Sin has caused so much havoc that all of earthly creation must be utterly destroyed, and all creation groans in expectation of change. We are never pleased with the evils that we see around us. We would like to see the situation changed. But we know that the solution to our problems is not in science or technology, not in politics or the show of force, but in the second coming of Jesus.

The picture given us of the grand reunion of the church and its Master is that of a wedding supper. There is no one who is not invited. But all of us who accept the invitation must also accept the full provisions God has made. We must be sure to have a wedding garment. Should we not gratefully put on such a garment when it is so graciously offered to us?

What a glorious scene is presented by John as he sees the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven! We do well to contemplate this scene and to refresh our memories with the great things being prepared for us.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Wise and Foolish**
(Matt. 25:1)
- 2. A Living Hope**
(1 Peter 1:3)
- 3. Dramatic Changes**
(2 Peter 3:10)
- 4. Second Advent**
(1 Thess. 4:13)
- 5. A Wedding Supper**
(Rev. 19:7)
- 6. The New Jerusalem**
(Rev. 21:2)

**Part 1
WISE AND
FOOLISH**

How fitting was the parable Jesus used to describe the church in the last days?

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1).

The previous chapter records Jesus’ description of conditions that will exist in the world just before His coming. It is at just such a time that the principles in the parable of the ten virgins are particularly applicable.

What fact regarding the time of Christ’s coming makes it important for God’s people to be watching at all times? Matt. 25:13.

The virgins are to have their lamps ready. The Word of God is a lamp that enables them to know how and where their feet are to tread. (See Ps. 119:105.) The oil is the Holy Spirit. (Compare Zech. 4:1-14.) God has supplied the lamp and the oil as well.

“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful deceptions of Satan.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 408, 411.

Contemplate Jesus’ warning that those who seem nearest to the kingdom are not always those who will enter it. Matt. 8:11, 12.

Read Matthew 8:5-10. The centurion had shown implicit faith in the power of Jesus to heal, not by a magical touch or a so-called charismatic presence, but merely by His word. (Contrast Naaman the leper; 2 Kings 5:11.) This kind of faith must exist among God’s people in the last days.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I relate to the delay in the second coming of Jesus?

FURTHER STUDY

Matt. 25:1-13; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, “To Meet the Bridegroom,” pp. 405-421.

Part 2
A LIVING
HOPE

Note Peter's development of the new-birth concept taught by Jesus.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3, NIV).

When Jesus was crucified on Friday, the early disciples were without hope. Only when they were convinced that He had risen from the dead did new life surge through them. Only when they could see that the whole Old Testament had pointed to a suffering Messiah did they begin to hope. (See Luke 24:25-27.)

The Christian hope centers in the second coming of Christ. It matters not what life's experiences may be here on earth. They may be pleasant or unpleasant. It is the future that counts. Peter says that he can now look forward to "an inheritance that can never perish" (1 Peter 1:4, NIV). It is safely kept in heaven, not only for him, but for us. Furthermore, through faith we are shielded by God's power "until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (verse 5, NIV). And because of this we can all be happy, regardless of the circumstances through which we have to pass (verse 6).

In writing to Titus, Paul speaks of the Christian's hope and its consequences. Titus 2:12, 13.

As a blessed hope it teaches us "to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (verse 12, NIV).

The church member dedicates himself wholly to the principles of God's righteousness. He wants nothing to do with the ways of this world, because he belongs to another kingdom—one that will never pass away.

Do you recognize the pilgrim nature of the Christian life as expressed in Hebrews 13:14?

The church member is willing to wait for God's plans to work out. They will always be for the best. Men of faith in the past did not receive the fulfillment of the promises, and we today may not either, but the time will come when God will make all things perfect. (See Heb. 11:39, 40.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it true that the otherworldliness of the Christian does not necessarily make him negligent of his duties on earth?

FURTHER STUDY

Heb. 11:13-16; 1 Peter 2:9-12; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 514-528.

**Part 3
DRAMATIC
CHANGES**

What great changes does Peter say will take place on this earth?

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

This old world, sin-cursed as it is, cannot continue forever. The time will come when God will destroy sin and all that has been affected by it. By that time everyone will have had an opportunity to decide his fate. God will have vindicated His name and character of love, and sin will have been seen to be the destructive and cruel element it certainly is. Those who have chosen sin have by now become so involved in it that they cannot be distinguished from it. As in the case of Satan, there is no further room for mercy. It is a mercy that they are destroyed and that the world is cleansed from the defilement of sin.

Until that time comes, how does Paul describe creation? Rom. 8:19-23.

Paul is aware of the glories to come. He knows that we are children of God and therefore "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (verse 17). But meanwhile there is a groaning and a longing for change. Not only do human beings want a change, but the whole creation is involved.

Note the way the writer to the Hebrews describes the hope that is set before the Christian. Heb. 6:19.

The symbol is that of an anchor which steadies the ship in the time of storm and keeps it from running before the wind. Some people are unsteady. They are moved by every wind of doctrine. (See Eph. 4:14.) They are easily deceived, easily upset. One can never be sure of the direction they are taking. They cannot be depended on to steer a steady course in life. James likens such a person to a wave of the sea. He has no strong faith as a steady influence. By contrast, the Christian has a hope that does not waver. He knows that it is based on the promises of God, and God cannot lie. (See Heb. 6:16-18.)

Thus the church of the last days has a faith in God that cannot be shaken; and even when the last great dramatic changes take place in nature, church members will not be afraid but will know that God's Word is being fulfilled.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I best prepare to meet the calamities that will come upon the world?

FURTHER STUDY

Ps. 16:1-9; 31:23, 24; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 529-538.

Part 4
SECOND
ADVENT

Of what did Paul say he did not want Christians to be ignorant?

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

There is no sorrow greater than that which comes with the passing away of a loved one. But the Christian has hope. The loved one has not gone forever. Because Christ has risen from the dead, the portals of death can be opened. In fact, says Paul, the time is coming when there will be a resurrection of the righteous. It will be at the time of the second coming.

This gives great comfort for the present. A time of reunion is coming, when we will be caught up with all saints to meet the Lord in the air and to be with Christ forevermore (verse 17).

How universal will be the knowledge of Christ's second coming? Rev. 1:7.

The voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet will be heard. Clouds of angels will be seen. The advent will be as lightning that shines from the east to the west. (See Matt. 24:27.) Graves will open, and the righteous dead will arise. What an advent that will be! The human mind cannot grasp it, nor can the imagination comprehend it. For some it will be a frightening moment. For others it will be a moment of great joy. For the church it will be the climax of the ages.

What other important change takes place at the second advent? 1 Cor. 15:51-58.

Death is a great enemy now. But at the second advent, death will be swallowed up in victory.

This corruptible flesh will be replaced by something incorruptible. The present mortal state will be changed to that which is immortal.

John has been cited on the wide impact of the advent. He also says we shall be like our Lord, seeing Him as He is. Because of this hope we now seek to be pure even as our Lord is pure. (See 1 John 3:2, 3.)

The church thus looks forward to the second coming and meanwhile seeks to do God's will and to be covered by Jesus' merits. By this means its members may indeed qualify to be among the redeemed.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why are some people afraid of the second coming of Jesus? What may I do or say to ease their fear?

FURTHER STUDY

John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:8; Isa. 25:9; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 641-645.

Part 5
A WEDDING
SUPPER**Savor the great rejoicing among God's last-day servants.****"Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7, NIV).**

John the revelator looks down to the end of time and sees the saints rejoicing because there is to be a wedding involving the Lamb and the New Jerusalem—the home of the saints. John explains that the linen in verse 8 stands for the righteousness of the saints. Then he adds: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (verse 9, NIV).

What parable did Jesus relate which gives us further details about the marriage supper of the Lamb? Matt. 22:1-14.

Three invitations are sent out to call people to the wedding: The *first* was when Jesus and His disciples announced to the Jewish people that the kingdom of heaven was at hand—that people should repent and believe the gospel. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the people and the Jewish leaders did not respond with gratitude; they rejected the invitation.

The *second* went out in the power of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. But once again the invitation was rejected, and the bearers of the message were persecuted and put to death.

The *third* invitation is addressed to the Gentiles; and the gospel is preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

What destiny-settling counsel is given to the church of Laodicea? Rev. 3:18.

"This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.

To accept the wedding invitation is a great privilege. To reject it is also a terrible disaster. (See Matt. 22:7.) Accepting the invitation means also accepting God's standards for us in His plan of salvation. This does not involve any hardship for us; but if we do not take advantage of our opportunities, we may be like the man without the wedding garment who was "speechless" before the king.

THINK IT THROUGH**Do I understand why so many people reject the gospel message?****FURTHER STUDY***Christ's Object Lessons*, "Without a Wedding Garment," pp. 307-319.

**Part 6
THE NEW
JERUSALEM**

When John saw a vision of the new heavens and new earth, what was the nature of the city coming down out of heaven?

"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

The New Jerusalem is described as "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (verse 9). It is the capital of that kingdom which Jesus receives from the "Ancient of days," as described in Daniel 7:13, 14. It is a kingdom that will never pass away, in which peace and righteousness will prevail.

What are some of the conditions that will exist in the earth made new? Rev. 21:3, 4.

"In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called 'a country.' Heb. 11:14-16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

Savor the poetic words with which Isaiah contrasts what will exist then with what exists today. Isa. 11:6-9.

"One reminder [of sin] alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

THINK IT THROUGH

In view of the glorious heavenly future, what should I be doing now?

FURTHER STUDY

John 14:2; Heb. 11:16; Rev. 22:14; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662-678.

Lessons for 2nd Quarter 1981

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1981 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is THE CHURCH—HOME AT LAST.

First Lesson

THE CHURCH FALLEN AND REDEEMED

Memory Text, Gen. 1:31.

1. *Meeting Man's Need (Gen. 2:18)*
2. *Freedom of Choice (Josh. 24:15)*
3. *The Burden of Disobedience (Rom. 5:12)*
4. *Saviour From Sin (Matt. 1:21)*
5. *Bruising the Serpent's Head (Gen. 3:15)*
6. *The Ascending Lord (Acts 1:3, 9)*

Second Lesson

THEN JESUS CAME

Memory Text, Gen. 49:10.

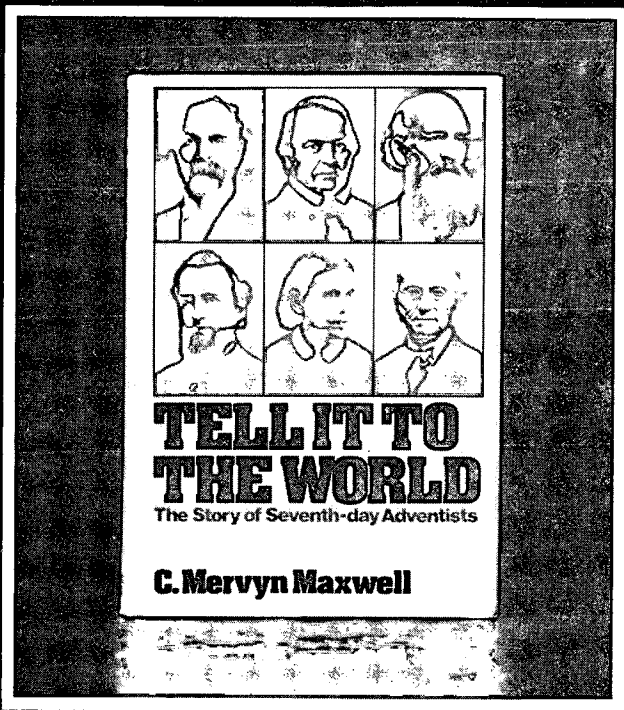
1. *The Promised One (Isa. 9:6, 7)*
2. *No Room (Luke 2:7)*
3. *Peace to Men (Luke 2:9, 13, 14)*
4. *Saved to Save (Matt. 2:16)*
5. *His Blood Avails (Gal. 2:20)*
6. *Newness of Life (Rom. 6:3, 4)*

Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16²/₃ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal inkprint. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accidents, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal inkprint publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

Tell It to the World

by C. Mervyn Maxwell



The second printing, new and revised edition, and destined to be a best seller! The book is the story of Seventh-day Adventism. The story of the thrilling way God led us, as a people, to discover wonderful new truth about Jesus, truth that no other people on earth have discovered.

The preface says that Adventists exist to tell the world not only about the Christ of history, hanging on the cross, and the Christ of the future, coming in the clouds, but also the Christ of the most holy place, doing something exquisitely great for sinners—something that

no one else knows about and that we are invited to share with all of our friends and neighbors—that is to TELL IT TO THE WORLD.

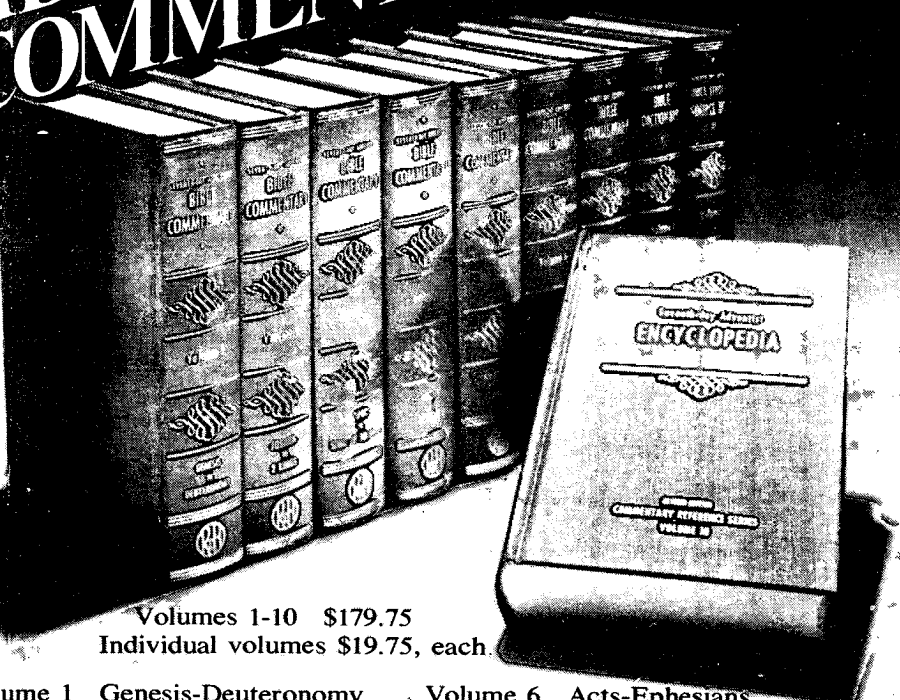
Available now at your local Adventist Book Center or ABC Mailing Service for only \$7.95 each. Include 85 cents for shipping and handling, add tax where applicable.



Brought to you by Pacific Press

help
 you prepare for
 service there is no better
 aid than

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES



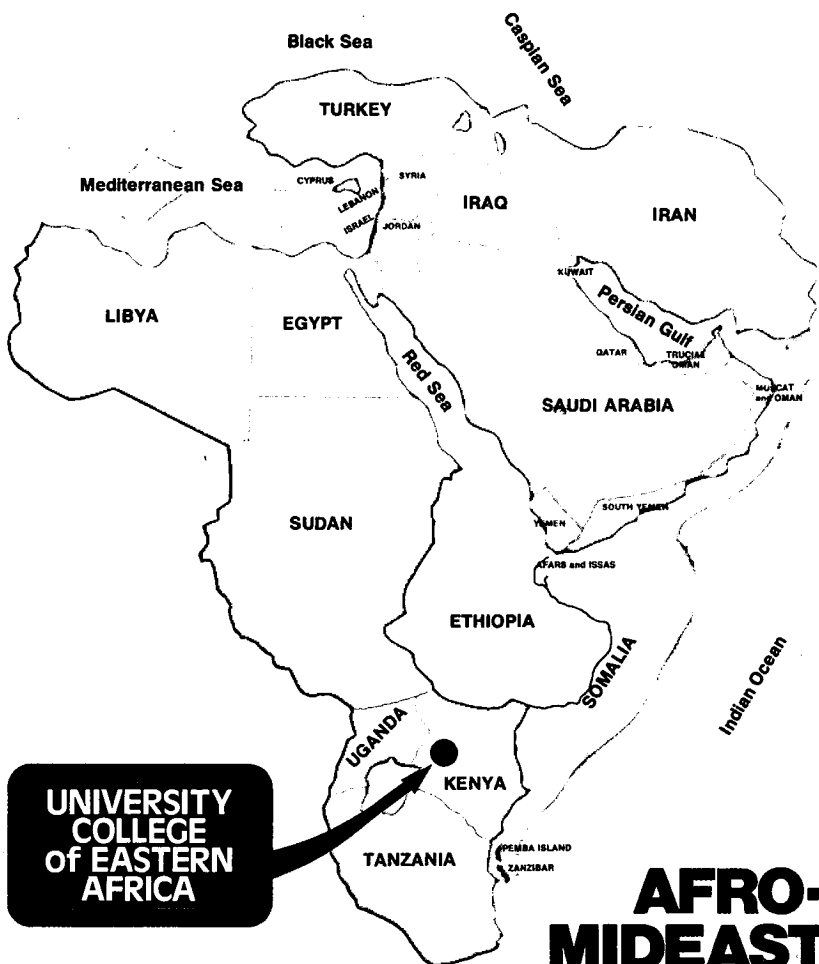
Volumes 1-10 \$179.75
 Individual volumes \$19.75, each.

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Volume 1 | Genesis-Deuteronomy | Volume 6 | Acts-Ephesians |
| Volume 2 | Joshua-2 Kings | Volume 7 | Philippians-Revelation |
| Volume 3 | 1 Chronicles-Song of
Solomon | Volume 8 | Bible Dictionary, Revised |
| Volume 4 | Isaiah-Malachi | Volume 9 | Source Book |
| Volume 5 | Matthew-John | Volume 10 | Encyclopedia |

Order from your local Adventist Book Center or
 ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 37485, Omaha, Nebraska 68137
 Canada:
 ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 398, Oshawa, Ontario L1H 7L5
 Please include sales tax as applicable and add 10 percent or a minimum charge
 of 5 cents for mailing.

REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION





AFRO-MIDEAST DIVISION

East African Union
 Ethiopian Union
 Middle East Union
 Tanzania Union

Unions	Population	Churches	Church S.S.	
			Members	Members
East African	27,599,000	728	142,372	234,914
Ethiopian	35,305,000	87	32,151	63,342
Middle East	191,786,000	34	2,674	1,806
Tanzania	17,552,000	244	40,055	58,144
Division Totals	272,222,000	1,093	217,252	358,206

Figures as of fourth quarter, 1979