

# WORD AND WORK

## “O TASTE AND SEE.”

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast.”

*I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting-place  
And He has made me glad.*

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down and drink and live.”

*I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.*

I heard the voice of Jesus say  
“I am this dark world’s light,  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright.”

*I looked to Jesus and I found  
In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that Light of Life I’ll walk,  
Till traveling days are done.*

—Horatius Bonar.

## WORDS IN SEASON.

R. H. B.

“Are there not twelve hours in the day?”

### WHY JESUS WAS NOT AFRAID.

The word had come to Jesus that His beloved friend Lazarus was sick. The message was brief and reserved. The sisters did not suggest that He come—their regard for Him forbade. They knew that He would understand all and would do all that love and wisdom could do. But the Lord did not do as they would have expected. “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When therefore he heard that he was sick he abode at that time two days in the place where he was. Then, after this, he saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again.” Bethany, the home of Lazarus, was in Judea. Now when Jesus proposed to go into Judea the hearts of the disciples were filled with anxiety and

fear. "Rabbi," they said, "the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" The Lord's answer to this remonstrance was this: "*Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.*" (John 11:1-10).

In these words, at first glance so obscure and mystifying, the Lord Jesus taught a most precious lesson on God's guidance and the safeguarding of His servants.

#### STEPPING IN THE LIGHT.

First as to guidance. When a man walks in the light, he knows what he is doing and makes no blunder. The disciples had misjudged because they judged by a wrong standard. They regarded the proposed trip into Judea as a mistake; for they measured from a standpoint of mere expediency and earthly profit and loss. The man who does that walks in darkness. That is no true principle of guidance. The Lord Jesus walked in the light. He always had clear and definite direction as to the next step He was to take—which of all possible steps was *the one step*. It was the light of the Father's will—the light of faith and obedience.

#### STUMBLING.

The man who walks in obedience to God's will, in the light of faith and the nearest duty, makes no blunders. Though in so doing he should incur earthly loss or pain, though he expose his life to danger—nay, though he die as a result of his step, he has made no mistake, he has not blundered. "If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not because he seeth the light of this world." Even so he who walks in obedience does not stumble because the Divine light shines upon his path. The world may look on and think that his path is folly, because they look upon immediate consequence, and they cannot see the end of the way. (Rom. 8:18). But he knows what he is doing and whither he is going. But let a man depart from this course of "trust and obey," and instantly he is in darkness. *Now* he stumbles and blunders, and makes mistake after mistake, some more, some less fatal. The world may look on and call him wise and shrewd; but God sees him as a blind man fumbling, groping in the dark, stumbling on his way to a precipice to fall into the blackness of darkness forever.

#### HE IS ABLE TO KEEP.

The second truth is God's safeguarding of His Servants' Lives. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" We must indeed work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. (John 9:4). But God has measured out to each of His servants his day be it long or short, and the night shall not come prematurely. So long as the servant walks in the light of God's will his life is perfectly safe until his day is done. No man or devil can harm him, no accident or unseasonable death can befall him. God sees to that. "Are not two sparrows sold

for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. 10:29-31). The men of Judea were but recently attempting to stone thee, Lord, and are you going there again? But the Lord answers, as it were, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? I am not going to Judea by human counsel—that would be foolish and foolhardy indeed. The man who thrusts himself into peril at his own will has only himself to thank for whatever disaster may befall him: God assumes no responsibility for him. But I am walking in the light of God, in the path of His will: the responsibility for my keeping is His, and He will safeguard my interests and see that I am not cut off before my allotted day is up, and that naught befall me that is not strictly in His program and plan for me. What rest, what peace, what holy boldness, what fearless confidence a man must feel when he knows himself to be thus in the line of God's will. To him indeed it is true that all things work for his good—whether life or death, or things present or things to come. God's servants are "immortal till their work is done." When the two witnesses of God have *finished* their testimony, and their appointed task is done, then (and not till then) the "beast that cometh up out of the abyss" shall "kill them." (Rev. 11:7). And then only that God may be glorified in their resurrection and victory.

#### LIFE CAN BE SHORTENED OR LENGTHENED BY DISOBEDIENCE.

This may explain, in some cases at least, the phenomenon often seen in times of epidemic plagues—how certain men in the performance of duty, in self-forgetful care of the sick will expose themselves all day long and all night, and come out unscathed; while others who are intent only upon saving themselves quickly take the disease and die. Very literally it is fulfilled sometimes that he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall save it. But if not—the end that comes to the servant of God in the path of duty is his *appointed* end. It is plain also that a man may prolong his life beyond God's loving plan by refusing perilous duty. But the life so saved is living death. When the path of light is forsaken the man is in darkness; left to stumble and blunder and wander, whither he knows not; making one mistake after another, committing error upon error; walking in folly and failure. Better far to have gone to rest when his day was over than to have bought a few extra days at such a price. "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may *accomplish my course* and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24).

#### HOW MAY WE KNOW THE WILL OF GOD?

The question remains how a man may know when he is in the path of light. The matter is not as simple to all men as it was to the Lord Jesus. He knew instantly and always just what

to do and what to say next. His every move was before ordained and He followed out perfectly the course afore traced for Him by the Father. I do not say that the Lord Jesus, so far as His battle of life was concerned, availed Himself of any power not accessible to us—He *never* did that. But because His will was so absolutely subject to the Father's will; because His heart was so perfectly attuned to the Father's heart; because He followed from the first every demand of duty, even to the slightest indication of God's will—He knew instinctively (if such a word might be used of Him) what God would have Him do next. "I have carried out that man's orders so long and so carefully," said an officer in the army, concerning his General, "that I believe I could tell in almost any given situation just what he would have me do." For the ability to see duty clearly is itself the precious reward of former faithfulness. The man who disobeys or neglects will not only lose his power to *do* but also the ability to *see* and *know* his duty. That is what complicates the matter for us. We have been so long careless, so self-willed, so disobedient to the light that now, even when we want to do right, we are often perplexed and in doubt as to what we really ought to do. Nevertheless there is even for the weakest always a place at which to *begin*. And that place is, the *nearest clearly seen duty*—whether that be repentance, or a confession of wrong or the obedience of the gospel (which certainly *must* be the first thing for one out of Christ) or the paying of a debt, or the restoring of wrongly gotten goods, or the renunciation of some evil or filthy habit, or a definite surrender of some known selfishness or of some form of covetousness; or the fulfilling of a promise—there is always some one thing before us that we can know. And that promptly and fully done, as unto God, a next step becomes clearer, conviction stronger, obedience easier. Let us be sure it is God's light—the light of His word. Then, looking to Him, follow it up. "In our personal lives today," says one—"light is turned on the path. And there's always strength given to walk in the light that's given. If we step out and walk in the light and according to it, more light comes, further light, light on the next step. And with light unflinching comes the strength to walk in it. And so on to the full noon of light and the full flood of strength."

This is the path of God's will that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. This is the light, in which, if a man walk, he shall not stumble. This is the way of committal of ourselves in trust unto God that He may keep us all our way and all our work-day through and lay us down to sleep at the right hour, awaiting as faithful servants the happy morn of our Lord's appearing.

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Cowardice asks, Is it safe? Expediency asks, Is it politic? Vanity asks, Is it popular? but Conscience asks, Is it right?—*Punshon*.

## THE ELOQUENT SERMON.

There is a father in this "City of Brotherly Love" who has a four-year-old daughter, named "Florence." Little Flo. is, according to her papa, the best child in the universe. But Nature will have its way; so, like all other children, Flo. was recently naughty, but not maliciously naughty. According to the father, it was an innocent kind of naughtiness, and she did wrong unwittingly. The child, however, needed correction, and the father reluctantly undertook a scolding. The parent hated to make his tender darling's heart ache and to see the dear child cry; but he forced himself to speak judiciously and severely, and in his heart he felt that he was suffering more than the child. He recounted her misdeeds and explained the whys and wherefores of his stern rebuke. His wife sat by, looking duly impressed. Finally the husband paused for breath and also to hear the little culprit acknowledge her error; but the scolding was never continued. Florence turned a face beaming with admiration to her mother, and said, innocently: "Isn't papa interesting?"—*Selected.*

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## THE BALD EAGLE IN A CAGE.

I recently saw a great bald eagle kept in a cage on the outside of a tall building. The sun had got high enough so that its beams fell across the first three or four feet of the top of the great iron cage in which the eagle was a captive. There was a great pole which stood in the cage, reaching up close to the top.

I watched the eagle as he became interested in the sunshine at the top of the cage.

He had been standing drowsy and uninterested on the ground, but suddenly stretched himself up at the sight of the sunshine. After looking at it for a moment, he spread his wings and flew up to the top of the post, where the sunshine bathed him. From that vantage ground he was able to see the sun as it looked over the building.

Suddenly the bird seemed transformed. He stood erect; his wings came into position as trim as a soldier at attention. A fierce gleam came into his eye, and again and again his wild scream, such as I have heard over and over again in the Oregon mountains, rang forth. He was looking at the sun; he thought of the upper sky where he belonged, and he pined for it. But—alas!—he was not free.

How many times we see a man like that. He has vision hours when he beholds the Sun of Righteousness, and catches a glimpse of the upper spiritual sky where he belongs. He pines for it, he longs for it; but the cage of his evil habits shuts him in, and he soon sinks back again into the old lethargy. Yet there is one who can set him free.—*L. A. Banks.*

# WORD AND WORK

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO DECLARE THE  
WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

Entered at Louisville, Ky., Post Office as Second Class Matter.

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2605 Montgomery Street, Louisville, Ky.

*Co-editors: Stanford Chambers, H. L. Olmstead, E. L. Jorgenson*

Subscription . . . . . Seventy-five Cents a Year  
In Clubs of Four or More . . . . . Fifty Cents Each  
Single Copies . . . . . Ten Cents

VOL. XIII.

JANUARY, 1920.

No. 1.

## NEWS AND NOTES.

Our book business during the holidays was extra good, and we thank our friends for remembering us. We are more than anxious to make correction in case of any dissatisfaction.

Charles Neal reports things "moving on" at Portland, Me. Two have been baptized recently.

Orders for our Lesson Helps took a jump upon the announcement that they were to be sent out in Quarterly form. We knew this arrangement would please. Boll, Olmstead and Neal wrote the questions and notes for the first quarter, 1920, one month each, to get started. See if you can tell "which is which." Hereafter, Brother Boll will prepare them as usual. We decided to put a neat cover on the Quarterly and to set the price at 4 cents each; 15 cents for the full year, in advance.

There have been five baptisms and more than that number have been restored to full fellowship, communion and service in the Portland Avenue Church, Louisville, lately.

Did you say that you wanted a copy of WORD AND WORK for 1919, handsomely bound, saved for you? Say it with a Dollar and Quarter.

J. M. McCaleb is having helpful missionary meetings among the churches. He reports good success in raising the \$3,000 needed for the Tokyo Sewing School, \$2,200 of the amount being already in hand. And what a worthy laborer McCaleb is!

Two or three hundred copies "Truth for the Times," containing the articles "What Baptism Is" and "What Baptism Is For" remain for sale at \$1.00 per hundred.

A few friends, usually from distant points, write that some-

times WORD AND WORK does not reach them with the lesson in time for the first Sunday in the month. We try to reach readers before the first Sunday; but the *sure* way to get the lessons on time is to subscribe for the Quarterly, fifteen cents per year, postpaid, in any quantity.

The large book, "Reminiscences and Sermons" free for two new subscribers, to those who want it. The books are only slightly shelf-worn.

"Our building fund goes on well enough, though somewhat slowly."—Paul C. Young, Minneapolis.

We call this good: "As fruits of Bro. Fujimori's labors this year (together with his co-workers) there have been eight baptized; at Shioda-mura there have been eight conversions; and in Tokyo there have been thirty-nine to date. This makes a total of 55 baptisms in the first eight months of the year. Since it is God that gives the true increase, one has as much right to rejoice about this as another. I am sure that those of us on this field know that through no power of our own have these souls been led to God."—O. D. Bixler, in *Missionary Messenger*.

From Harper, Kansas: "I just want to say that our Thanksgiving meeting at Harper, Kansas, was a great success. More than seventy-five thousand dollars was added to the endowment fund of Harper College, making the fund reach a total of a hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars. Besides we were greatly built up in the faith once delivered to the saints."—Ray Lawyer.

Brother McCaleb desires to print 10,000 copies in leaflet-form for free use and distribution, of the splendid article in the December WORD AND WORK—"Scriptural Ways to Go and Preach." Are there not among the readers of the WORD AND WORK some who would assist Brother McCaleb in this matter with a little financial help? It will be a pure missionary effort.

The article entitled "God's Eldership," page 15, is worth a double reading; in fact it is worth careful study.

A supply of Torrey's Excellent vest-pocket Lesson Help, "Gist of the Lesson for 1920," is on hand. 25c each postpaid.

Unexpected demand for the recent Baptism articles by E. L. Jorgenson, seems to require that they be put in permanent tract form. We have not decided, tell us what you think, or how many you want.

If you want the Bound Volume for 1919, kindly let us know at once. \$1.25 each. It costs us nearly that to bind and mail them.

Two were baptized and one aged man was restored at Albion, Nebraska, at a recent service.

The second session for the season of the Editor's Bible Classes begins January 4. The work continues to receive the blessing of Almighty God.

## ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMING.

STANFORD CHAMBERS.

First, let us learn from the Scriptures what our attitude toward the coming of the Lord should be: Waiting. "How ye turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." 1 Thess. 1:9, 10. "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time apart from sin, to them that wait for him unto salvation." Heb. 9:28. "Whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:20. "Come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 1:7. Looking. "Looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13. Hoping. "We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And everyone that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 Jno. 3:2-3. "Looking for the blessed hope." Titus 2:13. Desiring. Hope is made up of desire and expectation. Sometimes we expect things we do not desire. That is not hope. Again we sometimes desire things we do not expect. That also is not hope. The Lord's coming is set forth in the Scriptures as the Christian's expectation and desire in passages already cited. Other passages: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:8. "Maranatha." Margin, "O Lord, come." 1 Cor. 16:22. "Amen: come Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20. "Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God." 2 Peter 3:12. This passage is in order here though pertaining to the coming of the day of God, for that day cannot be except the Lord come, hence to desire the one is to desire that which necessarily precedes it. From these several quotations we see that Christians are to be in the attitude of waiting, looking, hoping for and earnestly desiring the coming of the Lord. This was the attitude of the apostles and those whom they by the Holy Spirit instructed. Every writer of the New Testament wrote on the subject. James found it necessary to say, "Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." The attitude has decidedly changed since those days, even as also the Scriptures foretell, so that now the admonition to patience with many would have to read, "Be patient, brethren, the coming of the Lord is in nowise nigh." For there is dread of His coming, and there are any number who get all out of patience at the mention thereof. The wife of a traveling man is reported as saying to one who brought word that her husband expected to reach home in a few days, "O don't tell me that. It just gives me the all-overs." There was something wrong. And so the professing church, the espoused of the Lord, is not right, inasmuch as she does not love the Lord's appearing. She neither understands



nor loves her Lord. She does not know what blessings are to attend His coming. Her wrong attitude betrays on her part consciousness that she is unrepresentable. The above is true of the individual, likewise in an unscriptural attitude towards the Lord's return. Hereby let professed loyalty be put to a test.

Why should I desire the coming of the Lord? Because it is the Lord—my Lord. Because His coming is necessary to His carrying out His eternal purpose. Because it is His will to return. Because He desires to present His church unto Himself. Eph. 5:27. "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Jno. 14:3. "Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Jno. 17:24. Just because our Lord desires it, we, His disciples, should desire it. Again, this old earth, though created by Him and for Him, is in rebellion against Him. It will continue so until He comes. We who are on His side and call Him Lord, do we not wish Him to come into His rights? Satan, the god of this world, still goes about as the roaring lion devouring whom he may. "The whole world lieth in the evil one." 1 Jno. 5:19. Has it not been so long, enough? But the "man of sin" will not be destroyed except by the Lord Jesus who will bring him "to nought by the manifestation of his coming." 2 Thess. 2:8. Do you not long to see this glorious triumph over sin, when, with the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire and Satan bound, (Rev. 19:20-20:3), righteousness and peace may prevail? Again, the sleeping saints, do you not think they have been in the dust long enough? But so their bodies will continue until the Lord comes. "Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." 1 Cor. 15:23. For these and many other reasons should Christians be purifying themselves in that blessed hope of their Lord's return. Let us get clear over on our Lord's side in all these matters that we may say with Paul, "Maranatha," and with John, "Amen; come, Lord Jesus."

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## THE CALL TO PREACH.

WM. J. CAMPBELL.

There are many preachers in various churches, preaching various, different and oftentimes contradictory doctrines, and upholding various and different creeds. Many of these claim they have a direct and personal call to preach, and that they speak a message direct from God as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance.

Can they all be from God and preach contradictory doctrines? Does God call one man to preach one doctrine and uphold one creed, and then call another to preach a different doctrine and uphold a different creed? Does the Holy Spirit speak a message through one preacher and then deny this and preach a different message through another? These are questions that confront us as we view the various preachers and doctrines of the present time.

In the beginning of the Church, when the gospel was a new message, and not yet written as we have it in the New Testament, Jesus called and sent out the twelve apostles and others, guided by the Spirit, to preach to the people. Under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, they all spake the same things. It seems that it would be that way now if God really calls and inspires these present day preachers.

God's final message to man was fully revealed, taught, and written down by those early apostles and preachers. We have it in the New Testament. So there is no further need for inspired teachers, direct revelations, and signs to confirm. Nothing more could be given than what we have in the New Testament.

But does God still want preachers of His word? If so, how does He call them now, and how does the preacher know if he is called? What does the New Testament say as to these things? "The things thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2:2. It is evident from this that God did not intend to continue thus to call and inspire His messengers. But through this and other scriptures God does still call faithful men who have the ability to teach, to continue the preaching and teaching of the messages, "once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3). To a great extent the churches must decide who among the members are faithful and have the ability. If a man is faithful to Christ (and that means he is living the teaching, holding fast to it as given, and steadfast in his Christian life and service), and has the ability to teach, God is calling that man.

So God's call to men now is through the New Testament scriptures. He there gives the qualifications of life, ability, and character of those whom he would have to preach His word. Also He ordains through the scriptures that those whom he thus calls shall live of the gospel, be given the temporal necessities of life, by the other members of his church; "wages," "supply of want" (2 Cor. 11:8, 9), "fellowship," "giving and receiving," "gift" (Phil. 4:14-18), communicating in good things (Gal. 6:6)—as this support is variously called. In the New Testament I find no instruction or example of bargaining between the churches and preachers with respect to giving and receiving. But as the laborer is worthy of his hire, so the faithful preacher is worthy of his living. It is a shame to the church to let any faithful man preach without support.

The message these faithful men, called of God, are to preach is "the word" (2 Tim. 4:2), "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1), "the gospel" (1 Cor. 15:1-4). They must study carefully the Bible to know God's message and how it should be taught. The fields are white. May many more hear the call God is giving them and go forth to the harvest.

Davis City, Iowa.

## WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A LIVING CHURCH.

E. L. JORGENSON.

Let us assume that the congregation has been established on true New Testament ground, and that to all outward appearances at least it still stands there. We are not inquiring, therefore, into the steps by which the members of the church became members of it, nor into the correctness of its methods in work and worship. These things are important, but they do not belong to our present discussion.

Granted that the church is thus established and is thus worshipping, what does it take to make it a "live" or living church?

A church is not necessarily a living church because it is a working church. Of course, a living church will be a working church. There will be found the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope. But, just as it is possible to cause the muscles of a dead body to move after the fashion of a living man by means of the galvanic battery, so it is possible to stir up much activity which is not of God in a church, by human means. So it is with a church which is not indwelt by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:6, 19), and which does not minister in the strength which God supplies.

Sardis is a case in point: There they were working and had a "name to live," the reputation of being a live church: but this is the verdict of Jesus—"thou art dead."

Among the factors that go to make a living church, I would name as one of the most fundamental, *a thoroughly converted and genuinely consecrated leadership*. This will include elders, deacons, teachers, preacher—all those who, officially or unofficially, take the lead, determine the policies, and so give tone and color to the work of the church. Church leaders are not always thoroughly consecrated nor even wholly converted. There are men who have gone through the outward forms of salvation who have never really been born again; and in some places they have not only got into the congregation but actually into the saddle, through the wicked custom of making an elder or leader out of a man because he is wealthy, or popular, or possibly in order to win and "hold" him to the church. Every man serving as elder who knows that he does not come up in a degree to every qualification named by Paul (in Timothy and Titus), and every teacher, conscious in himself of some unsundered field in his life, ought immediately to resign. No, let me improve that statement: that would be too much like refusing the Lord's supper because one is "not good enough." Every elder or other leader thus conscious of shortcoming ought immediately to lift the life up, in the strength and by the grace of God, to that altitude upon which a man may stand and be fit to serve. A living church will of course have new members and younger members who have not grown in grace and knowledge, and consequently an *outer* circle concerning whose conversion and consecration there may be some doubt; but there will be no doubt on these points with

reference to those who are in the place of spiritual leadership and power. *Their* consecration will be beyond all question; theirs the "perfect heart" (even if there should occur inadvertent failure at times in conduct); theirs the "single eye," the one purpose of building up the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The second essential factor in a living church is *the regular systematic feeding of the membership on the Word of God*. "The word of His grace—is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). No church can live on whippings, no church can live on scolding, nor yet on protracted meetings, nor on sermons. *Building up on the Word is the thing*. From the days of prophets, apostles and the Lord Jesus Himself, the public discourse has been an indispensable means of propagating truth. But it is only a small proportion of the Word that anyone ever gets that way. I would like to look up into the face of Jesus some day and say, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God;" so far as *duties* are concerned I may be able to do it; but as for as those stirring, stimulating, teachings which *move* men to do the things they already know they ought to do—the limitations of time, knowledge and ability, render it well-nigh impossible. After seven years' ministry with one church I find vast fields of the Book that have never been traversed there. The average preacher puts forth only a limited part of the Word, the average Christian does not hear or grasp all of that; and he remembers and retains only a very small part of what he hears! I am persuaded therefore, that no preacher will ever succeed in declaring to his people "the whole counsel of God," except that man whose preaching drives them to the Book itself, first-hand.

Aside then from what may be learned from preaching, the *two main ways* of building up the church upon the Word are, first, Regular, systematic, personal reading—what is known as Daily Bible Reading; and second, The public Bible class. Each has its own advantages. Personal Bible reading is probably the most essential thing in all the Christian life, because it is fundamental and everything else comes out of that. It is not possible to do too much of it, because the Bible won't let you! It is possible to *imagine* folks reading all day to the exclusion of service, but that does not happen in real life. This is the time of year to begin daily Bible reading. I often say I would rather a given sermon might lead every member of the church to become a daily reader than to have ever so many additions; because that would mean more additions in the long run. Nothing can take the place of daily Bible reading.

Yet not even personal Bible reading can take the place of the public class. The class offers certain special advantages. There the learner has help on the hard places from an experienced student and teacher; there is the exchange of ideas, the sharpening of the interest in animated discussions, and there is that strange, indefinable something which comes from group work—we may call it atmosphere—so that along with the enlightenment of the

head, there comes the enkindling of the heart, the rising emotions (by which means a man becomes "fervent in spirit") the growing enthusiasm, all of which lead to noble resolutions and brave deeds in His name.

A third thing that goes to make a living church is a *careful attention to exercise*. First the feeding, then the exercise. The secret of "holding" men and boys to the church—everybody for that matter, but especially men and boys—lies in giving them something to do. I do not mean that a novice is to be put in the place of power and spiritual leadership; but that is one thing, and giving them *something* to do is another. David Lipscomb said the best excuse for backsliding he ever heard a man make was, that in twenty-five years he had never been asked to do anything in the church.

By exercise, I mean not only acts of Christian love and service in the daily life, but particularly, exercise within the assembly. When the Corinthian church assembled together *each one* was permitted and encouraged to take part. (1 Cor. 14:23, 26). A living church will surely provide one meeting or more for the exercise, within the assembly, of individual gifts.

But someone will say, "Yes, but even with a consecrated leadership, with the regular teaching and preaching of the Word which builds up, and with a careful attention to exercise, some will not respond and will fall away." That is true, and on that account we are bound to add a fourth thing among the fundamental factors that go to make a living church; namely, that there should be *the faithful exercise of scriptural discipline*. Some are quick to reply, "Oh, I don't believe in discipline!" Of course, they do not mean that. They do not mean to disbelieve Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:2; Cor 2:5-7; Titus 3:10; Rev. 2:2. and other verses. What they mean is, they do not *like* discipline, or to have to exercise it. But surely we are not to set our feelings and preferences or even our judgment over against the clear Word of God on this point. Furthermore, to hold up the standard in this respect will usually obviate the necessity of discipline; or, if such action must be undertaken, the preparatory restorative process (which must always be carried out in love and sincerity, and if anything beyond what is required) will usually make discipline unnecessary. But if not, and if the final step of exclusion should result *that step* will, in many cases, bring back into fellowship, communion and service the disorderly member. For his salvation, therefore, and in the love of his soul, on the sinner's part, and in order to prevent the leakage of spiritual power through those members of the church who have broken the insulation between it and the world, the faithful exercise of discipline becomes essential in every orderly, living church.

Given, a wholly converted leadership; regular feeding of the membership on God's word; careful attention to exercise; and the faithful exercise of discipline—given these things, and we are sure to see a living church; for these things are both the means to life, and the sure sign of it.

## THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING.

J. N. GARDNER.

Giving is a great privilege. Paul, quoting from the Lord Himself, says: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." There is joy of the highest type in giving to the spreading of the glad tidings or in the ministering to the necessities of the unfortunate. A brother of my acquaintance expressed his desire to move into a section where he could make better crops. He gave as one of the strong motives for doing so that he might have something to give to the Lord's work. He said he liked to have something to give to good works when they presented themselves. This was a worthy motive, and it is in harmony with divine teaching. "But rather let him labor working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." (Eph. 4:28). We should ever labor with the idea in view of earning that we may give to him that hath need. It should be done cheerfully for it is the cheerful giver whom God loves. God wants us to regard giving as a great privilege.

### SOME MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURE.

Miserly persons sometimes go to the Scriptures to sustain them in their miserliness. Sometimes when giving the Lord a pittance they plead the widow's mite; but she gave "all her living," while these do not. Then the matter of the cup of cold water is often mentioned. It is true that a blessing is promised to those who give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple; but undoubtedly this does not apply when one can and should give something more. But probably the favorite Scripture of a great many people is the statement of Paul, "But if any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." An examination of this shows that the apostle has in mind relations more distant than those which we usually consider as his dependents. Yet even that obligation need not prevent a proportionately liberal giving to God's specific work. "The blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich."

### GIVING WITH CONFIDENCE.

There are some who would no doubt like to be liberal, yet are somewhat afraid to give freely lest a rainy day come and their dependents be left unprovided for. To such we commend the last chapter of the Philippian letter. In words which are the very essence of Christian refinement and courtesy the apostle thanks the Philippians for a recent gift. And as ever it was not the gift but the giver which he was thoughtful about. (Not once in his whole career did Paul tell the brethren that if they did not support him he would be compelled to quit preaching). But after telling the Philippians that their gift was an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God he says, "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

## GOD'S ELDERSHIP.

DON CARLOS JANES.

Age and experience contribute to wisdom, and for leadership wisdom is an element of immense importance. Naturally then, elders would be selected for such responsibilities as go with the oversight of either small or large communities and in process of time the term "elder" has come to be the designation of the office itself. As long ago as the demise of Jacob, we read of elders of Pharaoh's house "and all the elders of the land of Egypt," who went up with Joseph to the burial of his father in the cave of Machpelah. Gen. 50:7. From the feast of the passover in Egypt (Gen. 12:21) onward, we hear of "the elders of Israel." After the settlement in Canaan we read of "the elders of his city" as the persons who were to send for and deliver a criminal to "the avenger of blood that he may die" Deut. 19:12. We hear of "the elders" in the days of the Judges (Judges 2:7) and in the period of the kings when "David and the elders," clothed in sack-cloth, "fell upon their faces" (1 Chron. 21:16) while the chief of Israel confessed his sin in ordering the census taken. In the captivity, they are still mentioned (Ez. 10:14), and at the restoration of their capital, "the elders of the Jews builded and prospered." Ez. 6:14. In 1 Macc. 7:33 (in the Apocrypha) they are still referred to and we are familiar with the fact that with apostolic authority elders were appointed "in every church" established in that first great and notable trip of the convert of Damascus from Antioch to Cyprus and Asia Minor. Acts 14:23.

These men to whom God has given the oversight of the local assemblies are referred to by several other names which are more or less descriptive of the work they are to perform. In 1 Tim. 3:1, we have "bishop" from a Greek word which means "over-seer;" in 1 Pet. 5:4 they are, by inference, "shepherds," and in Acts 20:28, "to feed" is literally *to shepherd*. We read of the "presbytery" in 1 Tim. 4:4, and in Acts 11:30 the same Greek noun is translated "elders." The "pastors" of the New Testament are literally *shepherds*. So elders, bishops, shepherds, pastors, and presbyters are not five classes of officers in the church of God, but simply so many designations of the one class which Peter says is to exercise "the oversight."

Each time the Holy Spirit has told us the kind of men to put into the eldership, he has used not the language of expediency, preference or option by saying that they *should be* this or that, but the language of imperative necessity, "must be." 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7 This "must be" is given by the same spirit and in the identical language of the "must be" in John 3:7, "Ye *must be* born anew." It therefore follows with the certainty of inspiration that unless men can be found who are what the Holy Scriptures say they *must be*, elders cannot be appointed.

And combining the two lists of first Timothy and Titus we learn that those who occupy this honorable position of high re-

sponsibility and vast importance "must be without reproach (blameless), the husband of one wife, temperate, (self-controlled), sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt, i. e., qualified to teach, no brawler, no striker gentle, not contentious, no lover of money, one that ruleth well his own house, having children (that believe) in subjection (who are not accused of riot or unruly) with all gravity, not a novice, . . . he must have a good testimony from them that are without, not self-willed, not soon angry, a lover of good, just, holy, holding to the faithful word, . . . able to exhort in the sound doctrine and convict the gainsayers." The record which three times uses the expression "must be" does not say in what measure or to what extent these items are to be present, but it undoubtedly says they must be there and no one should overlook this in appointing overseers for a church nor should any Christian be guilty of attempting to break the force of the very word which the church has been commissioned to uphold. 1 Tim. 3:15.

If there is no particular method of appointment then any course which is decent and orderly (1 Cor. 14:40) will do. And if we are left to select a method of procedure, surely we are at liberty to select the very same course that was followed in apostolic times. So, whether it be universally agreed that the method for us is revealed or not, we are safe in doing just as they did. In the matter of deacons, the disciples were to *select* seven qualified men whom the twelve would *appoint*, and when the seven set before them they prayed and laid their hands upon them. Acts 6:1-6. The apostles said they would appoint them. What they actually did was to pray and lay hands on them. Therefore the appointing act was by prayer and imposition of hands. In Acts 14:23 we read of prayer and fasting in connection with the appointment of elders. If the Scriptures reveal a way, this (fasting, prayer, laying on of hands) is the way. If the Scriptures reveal no way, then this will do and nothing can do any better.

It is interesting as well as important to observe in the very language of inspiration what the office or work of these men really is. In three simple words it is comprehended: *feed* (Acts 20:28); *watch* (Heb. 13:17; *rule* (1 Tim. 5:17). In a sentence, it is to "take care of the church of God." 1 Tim. 3:5. In words well worthy of study by both shepherd and sheep, Peter defines the work and describes the manner in which it is acceptably executed, saying: "The elders therefore among you I exhort: *Tend the flock of God* which is among you, *exercising the oversight*, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, *making yourselves ensamples to the flock*. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 5:1-4. The elders (and we would do well to use as many terms for this office as the New Testament does) are the overseers of their respective assemblies, God's under-shepherds upon whom



He has placed the responsibility of such care as the church needs. We should no more be willing to change their *office* than we should to change the *music* God placed in the worship, or change the *terms of pardon* which Heaven has made, or substitute sprinkling for baptism, or use cider for "the fruit of the vine," or otherwise alter the arrangements of our Father in heaven. The work of elders and evangelists are in some respects similar, but they are by no means identical and it is a very serious and far-reaching error when the latter supersede the former.

The dignity of this high office, the highest in the church, is evidenced by many things. In the first place, any man (whether recognized as an elder or not) who possesses the noble qualities which these men must possess is by these very things exalted to a high plane of holy living and deserves to have the love and respect of all others who have not yet attained to such eminence in the scale of Christian being and doing. The more men of this type we have the better off we are and the more we put ourselves in their company, the more we consider "the issue of their life, and imitate their faith" the better we shall be ourselves.

As heads of any worthy association or company, they would be deserving of respect. As overseers of God's church, they are none the less entitled to it. The fact that theirs is "a good work" indicates the worthiness of the workers. The sick man was to "call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Jas. 5:14. Surely men who were to perform such a service as this would be entitled to honor among the members. That they are men of age and experience, men of families, entitles them to respect. When the Antioch Christians sent famine "relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judaea" they sent it "to the elders." Acts 11:30. It is unscriptural to receive an accusation against an elder "except at the mouth of two or three witnesses." 1 Tim. 5:19. We are told, "Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father." 1 Tim. 5:1. This father-and-son relationship involves honor and respect as does also the fact that "they watch in behalf of your souls as they that must give account." Heb. 13:17. And "the elders that rule well" are to be "counted worthy of *double honor*, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching." 1 Tim. 5:17. They may be supported in the work for "The laborer is worthy of his hire." V. 18. At this point, Paul's fine language to the Thessalonians seems in place: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." 1 Thess. 5:12.

From the year 100 A. D., "The changes were rapid and radical, profoundly modifying many of the fundamental conceptions of Apostolic Christianity and laying the foundation for the Roman and Greek Catholic churches."—*McGlothlin*. "In the second century, . . . the bishop came to be regarded as higher than the elder."—*Pardington*. "Power rapidly became centralized in

a few bishops who became archbishops . . . of principalities such as Antioch, Alexandria and Rome.”—*Moncrief*. So rapidly did heresy grow that by 250 A. D. five new offices had been developed, Subdeacons, Acolytes, Exorcists, Readers, and Janitors, which were filled by selections made by bishops. This chain of error began by unduly exalting an elder. In our times, the tendency among disciples supposedly loyal to the Bible is to *minimize the eldership*. Some congregations have no “elders” and do not seem to care. In some cases there is only one elder. Real elders are rare. Evangelists are being settled among the churches (which is not wrong if they “do the work of an *evangelist*” 2 Tim. 4:5), elders more or less cease to feed, watch and rule; they fail to “take care of the church;” do not “tend the flock of God, . . . exercising the oversight, . . . willingly according to the will of God. . . making (themselves) ensamples to the flock,” while they “exhort in the sound doctrine and convict the gainsayers” as they “labor in the word and in teaching” and keep “watch for your souls as they that must give account.” The church suffers in the semi-darkness which comes because the evangelist has eclipsed the elder.

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### “HE’S COMING TOMORROW.”

The reprinting (in part) of this quite old article will not demand an apology after the reading, and the lesson’s strange, imaginative, setting will be pardoned. It presents in a stirring form the attitude of various men to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some there are who say, “My Lord delayeth his coming;” some who scoffingly say, “Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;” some who will try to still their heavy forebodings by “putting far off the evil day”—for they know that to them it is an evil day and evil only. And some cry in their hearts from day to day: “Even so come, Lord Jesus.”—Editor.

*“The night is far spent; the day is at hand.”*

My soul vibrated for a moment like a harp. Is it true? The night, the long night of the world’s groping agony and blind desire, is it almost over? is the day at hand?

Again: “*They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things come to pass, look up and rejoice, for your redemption is nigh.*”

Coming!—The Son of man really coming into *this* world again with power and great glory?

Will this really ever happen? Will this solid, commonplace earth see it, Will these skies brighten and flash? and will upturned faces in this city be watching to see Him coming?

So our minister preached in a solemn sermon; and for moments, at times, I felt a thrill of reality in hearing. But, as the well-dressed crowd passed down the aisle, my neighbor Mr. Stockton, whispered to me not to forget the meeting of the bank directors on Monday evening, and Mrs. Goldthwaite poured into

my wife's ear a charge not to forget her party on Thursday; and my wife, as she came out, asked me if I had observed the extravagant toilet of Mrs. Rennyman.

"So absurd," she said, "when her income, I know, cannot be half what ours is! and I *never* think of sending to Paris for my things. I should look on it as morally wrong."

I spoke of the sermon.

"Yes," said my wife, "what a sermon!—so solemn. I wonder that all are not drawn to hear our preacher. What could be more powerful than such discourses? My dear, by the by, *don't* forget to change Mary's opal ring for a diamond one. Dear me! the Christmas presents were all so on my mind, that I was thinking of them every now and then in church; and that was *so* wrong of me!"

"My dear," said I, "sometimes it seems to me as if all our life were unreal. We go to church, and the things that we hear are either true or false. If they are true, what things they are! For instance, these *Coming* sermons. If we are looking for *that* coming, we ought to feel and live differently from what we do; Do we really believe what we hear in church? or is it a dream?"

"I *do* believe," said my wife earnestly—(she is a good woman, my wife)—"Yes, I *do* believe, but it is just as you say. Oh, dear! I feel as if I am very worldly,—I have so many things to think of!" and she sighed.

So did I; for I knew that I, too, was very worldly. After a pause I said, "Suppose Christ should really come this Christmas and it should be authoritatively announced that He would be here tomorrow?"

That evening the thoughts of the waking hours mirrored themselves in a dream.

I seemed to be out walking in the streets, and to be conscious of a strange, vague sense of *something* just declared, of which all were speaking with a suppressed air of mysterious voices.

There was a whispering stillness around. Groups of men stood at the corners of the street, and discussed an impending something with suppressed voices.

I heard one say to another, "*Really* coming? What? tomorrow?"

And the others said, "Yes, tomorrow. On Christmas Day He will be here."

It was night. The stars were glittering down with a keen and frosty light: the shops glistened in their Christmas array: but the same sense of hushed expectancy pervaded everything. There seemed to be nothing doing, and each person looked wistfully upon his neighbor, as if to say, "Have you heard?"

Suddenly, as I walked, an angel-form was with me, gliding softly by my side. The face was solemn, serene, and calm. Above the forehead was a pale, tremulous, phosphorous, radiance of light, purer than any on earth,—a light of a quality so different

from that of the street lamps that my celestial attendant seemed to move in a sphere alone.

Yet, though I felt awe, I felt a sort of confiding love as I said:

"Tell me,—is it really true? *Is Christ coming?*"

"He is," said the angel. "Tomorrow He will be here!"

"What joy!" I cried.

"Is it joy?" said the angel. "Alas, to many in this city it is only terror! Come with me."

In a moment I seemed to be standing with him in a parlor of one of the chief palaces of the city. A stout, florid, bald-headed man was seated at a table covered with papers, which he was sorting over with nervous anxiety, muttering to himself as he did so. On a sofa lay a sad-looking, delicate woman, her emaciated hands clasped over a little book. The room was, in all its appointments, a witness of boundless wealth. Gold and silver, and gems, and foreign furniture, and costly pictures, and articles of *virtu*—everything that money could buy,—were heaped together; and yet the man himself seemed to me to have been neither elevated nor refined by the influence of all these treasures. He seemed nervous and uneasy. He wiped the sweat from his brow, and spoke,—

"I don't know, wife, how *you* feel; but *I* don't like this news. I don't understand it. It puts a stop to everything *I* know anything about"

"Oh John!" said the woman, turning towards him a face pale and fervent, and clasping her hands, "how can you say so?"

And, as she spoke, I could see breaking out above her head a tremulous light, like that above the brow of an angel.

"Well, Mary, it's the truth. I don't care if I say it. I don't want to meet—well, I wish He would put it off! What does He want of me? I'd be willing to make over—well, three millions to found an hospital, if He'd be satisfied and let me go on. Yes, I'd give three millions—to buy off from tomorrow."

"Is He not our best friend?"

"Rest friend!" said the man, with a look half fright, half anger. "Mary, you don't know what you are talking about! You know I always hated those things. There's no use in it: I can't see into them. In fact, I *hate* them."

She cast on him a look full of pity. "*Cannot I make you see?*" she said.

"No, indeed, you can't. Why, look here," he added, pointing to the papers, "here is what stands for millions! Tonight it's mine; and tomorrow it will be all so much waste paper: and then what have I left? Do you think I can rejoice? I'd give half; I'd give—yes, *the whole*, not to have him come these hundred years."

She stretched out her thin hand towards him; but he pushed it back.

"Do you see?" said the angel to me solemnly; "between him

and her there is a '*great gulf fixed.*' They have lived in one house with that gulf between them for years! She cannot go to him: he cannot come to her. Tomorrow she will rise to Christ as a dew-drop to the sun; and he will call to the mountains and rocks to fall on him,—not because Christ hates *him*, but because *he* hates Christ."

Again the scene was changed. We stood together in a little low attic, lighted by one small lamp,—how poor it was!—a broken chair, a rickety table, a bed in the corner where the little ones were cuddling close to one another for warmth. Poor things! the air was so frosty that their breath congealed upon the bed-clothes, as they talked in soft, baby voices.

"When mother comes, she will bring us some supper," said they.

"But I'm so cold!" said the little outsider.

"Get in the middle, then," said the other two, "and we'll warm you. Mother promised she would make a fire when she came in, if that man would pay her."

"What a bad man he is!" said the oldest boy: "he never pays mother if he can help it"

Just then the door opened, and a pale, thin woman came in, laden with packages.

She laid all down, and came to her children's bed, clasping her hands in rapture.

"Joy! joy, children! Oh, joy, joy! Christ is coming! He will be here tomorrow."

Every little bird in the nest was up, and the little arms around the mother's neck: the children believed at once. They had heard of the good Jesus. He had been their mother's only friend through many a cold and hungry day, and they doubted not He was coming.

"O mother! will He take us? He will, won't He?"

"Yes, my little ones," she said softly, smiling to herself. "He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom."

Suddenly again, as if by the slide of a magic-lantern, another scene was present.

We stood in a lonely room, where a woman was sitting with her head bowed forward upon her hands. Alone, forsaken, slandered, she was in bitterness of spirit. Hard, cruel tongues had spoken her name with vile assertions, and a thoughtless world had believed. There had been a babble of accusations, a crowd to rejoice in iniquity, and few to pity. She thought herself alone, and she spoke: "Judge me, O Lord! for I have walked in my integrity. I am as a monster unto many; but Thou art my strong refuge."

In a moment the angel touched her. "My sister," he said, "be of good cheer. Christ will be here *tomorrow.*"

She started up, with her hands clasped, her eyes bright, her

whole form dilated, as she seemed to look into the heavens, and said with rapture,—

“Come, Lord, and judge me; for Thou knowest me altogether. Come, Son of man, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded. Oh, for the judgment-seat of Christ!”

Again I stood in a brilliant room, full of luxuries. Three or four fair women were standing pensively talking with each other. Their apartment was bestrewn with jewelry, laces, silks, velvets, and every fanciful elegance of fashion; but they looked troubled.

“This seems to me really awful,” said one, with a suppressed sigh. “What troubles me is, I know so little about it.”

“Yes,” said another, “and it puts a stop so to everything! Of what use will all these be tomorrow?”

There was a poor seamstress in the corner of the room, who now spoke.

“We shall be ever with the Lord,” she said.

“I’m sure I don’t know what that can mean,” said the first speaker, with a kind of shudder; “it seems rather fearful.”

“Well,” said the other, “it seems so sudden—when one never dreamed of any such thing—to change all at once from this to that other life.”

“It is enough to *be with Him*,” said the poor woman. “Oh, I have so longed for it!”

“*The great gulf*,” again said the angel.

“Come, LORD JESUS! come quickly!”

—Stowe.

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### JESSE P. LOVING.

After a long life of toil and trial, great usefulness and influence, Brother Jesse Loving, well-known, respected, honored in his own city (Sherman, Texas) and the region round about, departed in peace in the Lord on November 25th, 1919, at something over 84 years of age. As I grow older I appreciate more and more what it means for a man to live to old age, to rear a family, to acquit himself creditably, to finish his course with honor, to get through blameless in the eyes of the world, and faithful in the sight of the Lord. Such, to my best knowledge and information was the life of Brother Loving. For many years he has been a faithful member of the Houston Street Church of Christ at Sherman, who with his children and relatives and personal friends, are chief mourners.

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He who isn’t contented with what he has, wouldn’t be contented with what he would like to have.—*Auerbach*.

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The great secret of success in life is for a man to be ready when opportunity comes.—*Disraeli*.

# ON FOREIGN FIELDS.

## MISSIONARY NOTES.

DON CARLOS JANES.

"*The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.*" \*\* Brother and Sister Harry R. Fox, of the Highland Church, Louisville, Ky., took passage on the China Mail Steamship Nanking at San Francisco, December 10, *en route* to Japan.

A missionary in India reports 17 baptisms in a month, adding the words: "But you must understand that we could get hundreds every month if we were wanting numbers only." \*\* The *Gospel Herald*, Harper, Kansas, (which can be had with this Journal for \$1.50 a year), will soon issue a special missionary number. Subscribe and get these and the other good things Brother Armstrong and his co-laborers have to offer.

Four missionaries from the "loyal" churches of Christ sailed for foreign fields last year. In 1916, the Adventists sent 147 new missionaries besides a number who were returning after furlough. Say, brother, is there any virtue in Adventism which qualifies them for a work of that magnitude, or is there any disqualification in "pure New Testament Christianity" which prevents others from doing similarly? \*\* Brother Fujimori has reported a gradual growth in his field.

The Moravians have averaged \$18 a member in gifts for mission work in one year. \*\* "Brother Rhodes is doing good work."—Bixler. \*\* China has 370,000,000 who can't read, but the phonetic writing recently adopted by the government makes is about as easy to learn to read Chinese as English. \*\* The church of Christ in the U. S., needs to feel its responsibility more. There are thousands of foreigners in this country and next to no effort to reach them in their own tongues. A certain religious body of rather small strength conducts work in 120 languages and publishes in about 100 tongues. The work Brother Hebert is doing in Louisiana deserves hearty support. Much more needs to be done here at home and this will not hinder us doing a great deal more away from home. A man is much needed to open work in the Hawaiian Islands and two couples should be sent to Africa. In eleven years the Adventists sent out 1,123 foreign missionaries and a few years ago they were working in 92 countries. Why are we so far behind them? How our teachers should feel the responsibility that rests upon them to declare the whole counsel of God in which missionary work is a fundamental item! \*\* Brother McCaleb was in Tennessee in December. \*\* "We are having good meetings all the time and it is very encouraging. However there are plenty of things to discourage."—*Brother Rhodes*. \*\* "Busy as a bee these days. Never felt better."—*Sister Rhodes*.

## FIRST LORD'S DAY LESSON OF JANUARY.

The Scripture Text used in these lessons is the American Standard Revised Version, Copyright, Nelson & Sons.

Lesson 1.

January 4, 1920.

### PETER PREACHES AT PENTECOST.

**Golden Text:** "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21.

**Lesson Text:** Acts 2:14; 22-24; 32-42.

14. But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words.

22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; 23 him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

32. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. 34 For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself

The Lord said unto my Lord,  
Sit thou on my right hand,  
35 Till I make thine enemies the  
footstool of thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the

Why was this such an important occasion? (Acts 1:4, 5; Luke 24:49.)

Verse 14. Why was Peter the first to address the world? (Matt. 16:19). Was the gospel "by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven" ever preached before? (1 Pet 1:12) Whom does Peter address? Why only Jews? (Rom. 1:16). Did the same apostle open the door to the Gentiles also? (Acts 15: 7, 14). Is the gospel to the Jews different from that to the Gentiles? (Gal. 1:8, 9; Eph. 4:4-6; Rom. 10:12). Where was the testimony of Christ to begin? (Acts 1:8).

Verse 22. What was Peter's great Theme? As what did he first introduce Jesus? How had God shown His approbation of Him? Were these signs done in secret, or did the whole populace know them? (Acts 26:26).

Verse 23. Was Christ's death an accident? Was it a mere incident?

Verse 24. How did God reverse the sentence of men? Was it possible that the snares and cords of Death should hold the Prince of Life? (John 10:18).

Verse 32. What proof does Peter here offer that God raised Jesus? How many were the witnesses? Did they have ample opportunity to know and to test? (Acts 1:3). What made the disciples, recently so timid, now so bold, and ready to stake their lives for their testimony?

Verse 33. How does Peter know that Christ was exalted? (1. By Christ's own word, that thus it should be. 2. By the prediction of the Scriptures, vs. 34, 35. 3. By the outpouring of the Spirit, which depended upon Christ's exaltation and glorification.— Note the double testimony borne: Peter's direct testimony of that to which he could personally testify; and the



promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. 40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. 41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Spirit's testimony of what transpired in heaven. (John 15:26, 27). What had this throng seen and heard? (Acts 2:5-7).

Verses 34, 35. (Read the scripture quoted in Acts 2:25-28, and see how Peter shows in verse 29, that David was not speaking of himself. So he shows here also that it was not David who rose and ascended and was exalted to God's right hand). What does David call the One who was thus exalted? Comp. Matt. 22:43, 44. How long should this "Lord" of David's occupy that supreme position? What is meant by that? (Josh. 10:24).

**Verse 36.** What was the great conclusion? What did Peter mean by telling them to **know assuredly**? How was Jesus proved to be **Lord and Christ**? Of what does Peter accuse this multitude?

**Verse 37.** What effect did this speech produce? Who really was the Author of this speech? (Acts 2:4). What had Jesus foretold the Spirit would do? (John 16:8, 9). What did these convicted sinners ask of Peter and the rest of the apostles? Had they any good reason to expect any mercy? Were they appealing to the proper party for an answer to this serious question? Matt. 16:19.

**Verse 38.** Did Peter answer their anxious inquiry? Was it Peter's own answer or the Holy Spirit's answer through Peter? What two things were they commanded to do? What would follow if they repented and were baptized? What should they receive? Did he mean a gift given to them by the Holy Spirit, or was the Holy Spirit Himself the gift? (1 Thess. 4:8). Is this answer of Peter valid today? What ought to be told every convicted sinner?

**Verse 39.** What promise is meant? (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13; Heb. 9:15; 1 John 2:25). Are the "children" here spoken of **infants**, or those of their descendants old enough to hear, and respond to, the call of God? Who are they that are "afar off?" (Eph. 2:11-13).

**Verse 40.** Did Peter say more than is here recorded? What was the sum of what he said? What is meant by "save yourselves from this **crooked generation**?" (Comp. Numb. 16:26, 27; Rev. 18:4). How can a man save himself? (Rev. 22:17). In what sense can no man save himself?

**Verse 41.** What two classes are here implied? What did those who **received the word** do? How were those who **rejected the word** known? (Comp. Luke 7:39). How many rendered obedience to the faith that day? To what were they added? (See Notes).

**Verse 42.** How was their newly found life in Christ Jesus sustained? Is that necessary today also?

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## NOTES ON LESSON 1.

### ON PENTECOST.

The unsearchable riches of Christ, and Jesus as the Christ, were for the first time publicly proclaimed. This day marks the first proclamation of the gospel in its facts and fulness. (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

The Descent of the Spirit marks the **Beginning of the Church**. Like in the case of Solomon's Temple, the material was all assembled and built, but the building did not become the **Temple** until the glory of the Lord descended and filled it. (1 Kings 8). So the spiritual house of God was assembled, and when the Spirit came down and filled them, they became thenceforth the church of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16). It was to this that the 3,000 were added by the Lord as well as the daily increase. (Acts 2:47).

## SECOND LORD'S DAY LESSON OF JANUARY.

Lesson 2.

January 11, 1920.

### PETER AND JOHN HEAL A LAME MAN.

Golden Text: "Freely ye have received, freely give." Matt. 10:8.

Lesson Text: Acts 3:1-16.. (Read Acts 3; Isa. 35).

3. Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. 2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. 8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him,

11 And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? 13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. 14 But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a

Verses 1-3. How long had the man been lame? How did he get his living? Where was his daily and usual post? Was he seen and known by many? Whom did he see on this day? What did he ask of them? What had the Lord taught them always to do in such a case? Matt 5:42. Does that mean that we must always give to every man exactly the thing he asks for? Does the Lord Himself do that? Did Peter and John do that on this occasion?

Verses 4-6. What did Peter say to him? Did the man turn his attention to them? What did he expect? Did he expect as much as he was destined to get? What indicates the common poverty of the apostles? But what was it Peter had that was far beyond all money and price? What command did he address to the lame man? Was it not cruel to tell a helpless cripple to get up and walk? Why not? Are there moral and spiritual cripples as well as cripples in body? What does God say to them? (Acts 3:19 and 17:30). Will He enable them?

Verses 7, 8. How did Peter aid him make the start? Was he lifting a mere dead weight, or did the man respond on his part? What made him able to respond? What caused that strengthening of his feet? How did he use his new-found ability? To whom did he give the praise?

Verses 9-11. Was this miracle "done in a corner?" (Acts 26:26). Who witnessed the effect? How was the multitude affected by this occurrence?

Verse 12. Was there really anything in the man to be marvelled at? Or was it the apostles' power and godliness that enabled the lame man to walk? To whom only was the credit due?

Verse 13 For what purpose had God done this? Was this the same and only God, whom their fathers knew? Did this God endorse Jesus as His servant? What had they done to Him? How did they prove themselves more wicked than the Gentiles?

Verses 14, 15. Had they had oppor-

murderer to be granted unto you, 15 and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And by faith in his name hath his name made this man strong, whom ye behold and know: yea, the faith which is through him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

strong? How did Christ's Name make him strong? Can the Name of Christ avail us at all if we do not have faith in His Name? (John 3:18). What is the benefit of believing in His Name? (John 1:12; 20:31; Acts 4:12). What is His Name? (Matt. 1:21; Isa. 9:6) To believe in His Name is to accept and acknowledge Him as what He is, according to the rank and power and character in which He is revealed to us in God's word. The first test and expression of such a faith is confession and baptism.

tunity to know that Jesus was holy and righteous? Who was the murderer they had preferred to Jesus? (John 18:40). What strange thing did they do to the Prince of life? How did God reverse their act and judgment? What witness was there to the fact?

Verse 16 What is the final answer to the question how the lame man was healed? What had made this man

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## NOTES ON LESSON 2.

### GOING UP TO THE TEMPLE.

Peter and John, always closely associated, are seen together again in this chapter, the next two, and the eighth. Here they go together to the Temple at the prayer-hour, 3 P. M. No Divine orders had as yet been received by them to break off from the Jewish worship and service. That came later and gradually as they were able to bear it (Heb. 8:13), and when the time grew ripe.

### MIRACLES OF HEALING.

At the Temple-gate they see a lame man, and the story of his healing follows. Were the healings done by the Lord Jesus and His apostles done for the healing's sake merely, or to substantiate their claim, and the Divine origin of their word? (Heb. 2:4). There were no doubt many cripples and invalids round about—did Christ or His apostles ever undertake a systematic campaign of healing? The very fact that this cure created such an extreme sensation, shows the comparative rarity of such miracles. Though sometimes more numerous (Acts 5:12-15) they never became common. There was a strict purpose in them and that purpose was never the mere healing alone.

### A LAME MAN'S REQUEST OVER-ANSWERED.

The Lord Jesus never turned down an appeal for any true help; and never failed in His power to heal every form of bodily disease. Neither did the apostles (after Pentecost). This man asked for alms and received what he would not have dreamed possible, and what was priceless to him: the use of his legs and of his body. How full of gratitude and praise he was. By the way—have we not (most of us) that same priceless boon of God every day, and sight and hearing and speech and sound mind—and have we thought of thanking God?

### THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD.

The word of God is plain, intelligible utterance, to be heard, believed, obeyed. But it carries a power beyond and above all its meaning: the power to bring to pass and to produce the thing of which it speaks. God's word is a creative act: "He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." Here the word of God says to a man lame from birth, "Walk!" And what would have been cruel mockery only, if it had been man's word, became the power of God unto restoration to the poor cripple, because the word was from God. God's commands are enabling to the soul that believes and obeys. What He promises He is able to perform; and what He commands He enables us to perform. This is as true in the spiritual as in the physical sphere; and in this lies the secret why the poorest and weakest can rise up at the call of the gospel and thenceforth live a new life.

## THIRD LORD'S DAY LESSON OF JANUARY.

Lesson 3.

January 18, 1920.

### THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN.

**Golden Text:** "Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. 16:13.

**Lesson Text:** Acts 4:5-21. Read Acts 4; Ps. 124.

5. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders, 9 if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; 10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. 12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

13. Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they

Verses 5, 6. Where had the apostles spent the night? (vs. 1-4). What great court and council convened next morning?

Verse 7. What did they ask the apostles? What was "this" which the apostles had "done?" (See Acts 3).

Verse 8. What happened to Peter at that moment? (The form of the Greek word shows that Peter was "filled" there and then) Was this a fulfillment of the Lord's early promise? (Matt. 10:19, 20; Luke 21:14, 15). Did Peter seem timid or abashed before this imposing ecclesiastical tribunal? What does the Holy Spirit impart to God's servants? (Acts 4:31; 2 Tim. 1:7). On the other hand, was Peter impudent or overbearing? (Tit. 3:2; Rom. 13:7).

Verses 9, 10. Is it usual that men are brought to court to answer for a good deed done to a helpless man? Does Peter's language refer to the strangeness of this? Was he in any wise backward to let that whole assembly know "by what power or in what name" they had done this? What shows that the healed lame man was present? (See also verse 14).

Verse 11. Were these Peter's own words, or did he quote them from the Scriptures? (Ps. 118:22). What did the builders do with this "Stone?" But what did God make of him? What is meant by "head of the corner?" (Eph. 2:20).

Verse 12. Where and where only is salvation for every man? Is there any great name under heaven through which any man can be saved, except the name of Jesus?

Verse 13. To what class did Peter and John belong? What in their conduct impressed this council especially? To what did they lay it? Were they right? What effects should follow our association with the Lord Jesus? (2 Cor 3:18).

Verse 14. By what living fact and testimony was the word of the apostles backed up? Is a truly converted

called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: 20 for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. 21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.

**Verses 18-20.** Did Peter and John give them any uncertain answer? To whom is first obedience due? (Acts 5:29—with verse 20 compare Jer. 20:9; Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 9:16.)

**Verse 21.** What further did they do? What only kept them from finding (trumping up) some pretext for punishing them? What did the common people think about all this matter? Was this the only time in the world's history that the common people were fairer, juster, and saner in judgment than the ecclesiastics? (Read Notes on the sequel).

man a strong argument for the gospel?

**Verses 15-17.** What perplexed these judges now? If they knew that this miracle had been done, should they even have thought of wanting to deny it? What should they have done? Why didn't they do the right thing? (John 5:40-44). Why did they want to keep it from spreading further? Did they not miss it badly when they thought that? Against **Whom** did they clash when they undertook to stifle the voice of the gospel? (Matt. 28:18, 19; comp. Isa. 37:23).

### NOTES ON LESSON 3.

#### THE NEED OF BOLDNESS.

What immediately follows this lesson (Acts 4:23-31) shows that the disciples rightly understood this occurrence as a foretaste and warning of a great storm of persecution, and that their greatest need now was boldness to stand by their post and to testify to the gospel of Christ without mutilation or compromise. In a world in which the Lord's servants are as lambs among wolves, in which all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall inevitably suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12) and must count on going outside the camp, bearing His reproach—how great is their need of boldness! Not that so many of us would flatly renounce the Lord in the face of trouble—the danger is rather lest, under pretext of using tact, wisdom, good policy, etc., we cover up and compromise the truth. The apostles always keenly felt their need of boldness, and prayed for it and craved the prayers of the brethren to that end. (Eph. 6:19, 20; Col. 4:4). The chief exhortation running through 2 Timothy is to boldness—"Be not ashamed," "suffer hardship." All God's servants were especially required to be bold—God cannot use cowards, policy-men, time-servers, men-pleasers. (See the injunction to Joshua (1:6, 7, 9); to Jeremiah (1:8, 17); the fearlessness of David, of Daniel, of John the Baptist)

#### BOLDNESS SUPPLIED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The prayer of the disciples (Acts 4:24-30) is great. They recognized that what has already happened in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 2. (That was not a complete, final, exhaustive fulfillment of that prophecy, but it was a fulfillment). Now they realize that the experience of Peter and John was the first blast, precursor of a great coming storm. In the face of it they ask not for release from the conflict but for **boldness to speak God's word**, and for God's backing while they peril their lives for Jesus. Their prayer is answered immediately and with outward manifestation; they are all filled with the **Holy Spirit**. As a result they **spoke the word of God with boldness**. On Pentecost some of these were "filled;" but are now "filled" again. A man who has received the Holy Spirit at his first obedience in acceptance of the gospel (Acts 2:38) may be "filled" again and again, as the need requires, and filled more and more as his life is increasingly thrown open to God's possession. We are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). One of the marks of a Spirit-filled life is just this boldness.

## FOURTH LORD'S DAY LESSON OF JANUARY.

Lesson 4.

January 25, 1920.

### PETER STANDS UP FOR TRUTH AND HONESTY.

**Golden Text:** "Lying lips are an abomination to Jehovah; but they that deal truly are his delight." Prov. 12:22.

**Lesson Texts:** Acts 5:1-11. (Read Ps. 15).

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. 10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

Did it affect others besides also? esteem the church of God and trifle with it? Will there be certain retribution for

(Read the first two paragraphs of the Notes in order to understand the circumstances and the nature of Ananias' sin.)

**Verses 1, 2.** What trick did Ananias and Sapphira plot to play upon the church? Did their wrong consist in their unwillingness to give all? Or was it their pretense of bringing all, while yet secretly reserving an amount? See Notes.

**Verse 3.** How did Peter know their attempted fraud? What had they really done? How did they lie to the Holy Spirit? Who had filled their hearts with such a wicked purpose?

**Verse 4.** Could Ananias and his wife not righteously have kept their property in the first place? After it was sold could they not righteously have kept their money? If they had wanted to give anything, little or much, could they acceptably have done so? But what had they undertaken to do? In so doing to whom had they really lied? (Is the Holy Spirit God—a Person of the Godhead? Comp. v. 3).

**Verses 5, 6.** What signal judgment befell Ananias at these words? Can the word of God slay as well as heal and make alive? (Comp. Rev. 19:15, 21). Who attended to Ananias' burial?

**Verses 7-10.** Was Ananias' wife given a fair trial? How did she condemn herself? How had they attempted to "try the Spirit of the Lord?" (Consider Exod. 17:7; Ps. 78:18-20). How did Peter pronounce her sentence?

**Verse 11.** What effect did this demonstration of the Spirit's presence and power have upon the whole church? Do men, even church-members, lightly with it? How does God regard that? the contempt of the church of God?

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### NOTES ON LESSON 4.

#### THE SETTING OF THIS INCIDENT.

The brotherly love and fellowship which sprang up in the Spirit-filled church prompted them from the first to share their goods and possessions one with another, as anyone's need required. (Acts 2:44, 45). That was

not a requirement or commandment laid upon them, but the natural expression of their early love. At the time of this lesson this had progressed to the extent described in Acts 4:32-35.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need."

#### THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

We gather from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, that while generally things were as above described, no one was compelled or even directly asked to surrender his property. It was wholly a matter of willing love and care. Those who were in need were supplied by individuals, or by the church itself under the direction of the apostles. For the money laid at the apostles' feet was put at their disposal and placed into the hands of the church for administration. The need of those who had given their all would of course have to be supplied by the church, or by any of its members who had aught to distribute.

This sets the sin of Ananias and Sapphir in its real light. It was not that they gave only a part of their goods—they could have given little or much as they chose; nor simply that they tried to appear more benevolent than they were—that alone would indeed have been a great wrong, yet perhaps not worthy of the extreme punishment of wrath without remedy; but they tried to cheat and defraud the church, taking wicked advantage of its love and fellowship. For while secretly securing themselves by retaining a part (a generous part no doubt) of the proceeds of their sale, they affected entire poverty. This of course would exempt them from all further obligation to the poor and put them in line to be helped by the church.

There was in this act not only falsehood and fraud, but a certain infidelity—unbelief in the actual presence, omniscience, and power of the Spirit—as if to say, "How doth God know? And, Is there knowledge in the Most High?" "Is Jehovah among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). They had to put Him to the test, it seems, and find out. And they did find out. Woe to them that challenge God in the way of sin!

#### THE SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH HAVING ALL IN COMMON.

On this I quote McGarvey (Com. on Acts), "Considering the large number of persons in this congregation, and the variety of social relations from which they had been suddenly drawn together it is truly remarkable and well worthy of a place in the record that they were 'of one heart and soul.' The unity for which the Savior had prayed was now enjoyed by the church and witnessed by the world. The most surprising manifestation of it was seen in that complete subsidence of selfishness which led one and all to say that the things which he possessed were not his own, but the property of all. This was not the result of socialistic theorizing, or of rules laid down to govern all who sought admission into the new society; but it was the spontaneous expression of the love of God and man which had taken possession of every heart . . . This church was not at this time a commune, or a socialistic club, as many interpreters have fancied; for there was no uniform distribution of the property of all among the members; neither was the property of all held and administered by the apostles as a business committee. On the contrary, distribution was made unto each as anyone had need; which shows that only the needy received anything, and that those who were not needy were the givers . . . This church was setting an example for all other churches in all time to come, by showing that the true Christian benevolence requires that we shall not let our brethren in the church suffer for food, even if those of us who have houses and lands can prevent it only by the sale of our possessions. In other words, it teaches us to share the last crust with our brother."

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