

Practical Christian Living—Introduction to the Course

Welcome to the Course

This Introduction constitutes a welcome to all who will study the Course, whether in Class or through the Notes and Cassettes. It is a course which should be greatly enriching to all who take it, especially those who give time, attention and thought to it. It should not be considered a difficult Series of Studies. Much of our difficulty in understanding is not a matter of intellect, but of the will. Jesus said, 'He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.' Nor do we have to cover and absorb all that we hear and read. If we can consciously receive some of it, we will probably find that much of it is absorbed unconsciously, anyway. No one is called upon to repeat the material, but even possession of the Notes is valuable. They can often be reread.

The Reason For the Course

The early Christians--from the day of Pentecost onwards 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (doctrine)' Acts 2:42). The coming of the Spirit on that day brought revelation of the truth (cf. John 16:12-15), and so in the experience of new birth truth comes to the believer (cf. I John 2:18-27). That is, all the truth is given to us in the anointing of the Spirit. Even so, it needs to be taught, especially in the context of the fellowship of the church. For this reason we undertake teaching,

- (i) that we, might come to know consciously what we have already been given (1 John 2:21, 27). The Epistles often say, 'As you know,' or 'Knowing this . . .'
- (ii) to be taught constantly is to constantly be refreshed in what we have been given. See Philippians 3:1; II Peter 1:12-24. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is the 'reminding Teacher' (John 14:26) as well as 'the Teacher who leads us into all the truth' (John 16:13).
- (iii) Learning as we do, we are able to teach others. See II Timothy 2:1. Teaching others not only enriches them but helps us to know better what we have learned.

The Nature of the Course

Generally speaking, the Course is divided into Three Sections, the First Section covering coming to the Christian faith, and what happens when God works in a life which is responsive to His grace. The Second Section deal with the process in the life of the Christian which we call 'maturing. The Third Section also deals with maturing, but does this in the context of the People of God as they live together, as they are part of the Body of Christ-the church.

Whilst we deal with these Three Sections in a kind of chronological and topical way, yet virtually all elements are one—all of these things are happening together, so to speak. This is the life we live personally and corporately, and whilst in one sense we are making progress—i.e. are going through stages of maturing—yet in another sense we are always dependent upon the grace of God working in us.

It is, however, helpful to study the various elements of the apostolic doctrine, and to be able to understand them consciously so that we can also practice them.

Practical Christian Living Itself

Often people think of the term ‘practical’ as meaning the method by which we operate—a sort of ‘how to’ principle. It is not quite like this in Christian living since the believer lives in Christ, Christ lives in him or her, each believer walks by the leading and enablement of the Holy Spirit, and all are children of God, under His protection and obedient to Him as their Father.

We say, then, that the Christian life is a relational one, i.e. we firstly relate to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then to one another as brethren, as members of the Body of Christ, and as God’s people living in the world, and doing His will. All of this requires relational living, and so it rather defies a methodological way, although it is nevertheless mostly methodical!

Those who seek to find out ‘how to’ *will* need to have the background of the apostolic truth, and the apostolic practice. How to live practically will then come naturally. The truth in the heart *will* always help to direct the mind of the person to know how to act, what to say, and how to live.

An Outline of the Course

The following outline *will* help to give us an overview of what we will be doing.

Section One—Foundational Basics of Coming to Christ, the Kingdom and the Christian life.

Coming to the Kingdom

The Fullness of New Birth

Steps to New Birth--1: Repentance

Steps to New Birth--2: Faith

The New Birth and Forgiveness

The New Birth and Regeneration

The New Birth and the Gift of the Spirit

The New Birth and the Gift of Love

The New Birth and Sanctification

The New Life and Sonship

The New Life and obedience

The New Life and Discipleship

The New Life in Holiness

The. New Life in Christ

Section Two-Going on in the Christian Life, to Maturity

The goal is Maturity
Knowing the Enemies
Knowing the Enemies' Defeat
Overcoming the Enemies-1: Sin
Overcoming the Enemies-2: Satan
Overcoming the Enemies-3: Flesh
Walking in the Spirit
Living Under God's Law
Living Under Christ's Law
Maturing in Love
Living in Christ's Body
Living in God's Family
The Mature Christian

Section Three-Living the Christian Life Together in This World

God's People at Prayer
God's People at Warship-1
God's People at Worship-2
God's People at Worship-3
God's People Serving God
God's People Serving Man
God's People at Witness
God's People at Proclamation-I
God's People at Proclarnation-2
God's People in Suffering
God's People in Hope

STUDY ONE

Coming to the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God: its Fact and Nature

The Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God. This firstly covers all creation, including mankind, and celestial creatures. Secondly it covers both loyal and rebellious elements within mankind and celestial creatures, i.e. it is the Kingdom which contains rebels. Thirdly it covers the special character of God's Kingdom, and fourthly the 'coming of the Kingdom' in the person of Christ and his victory over evil through his death and resurrection. Lastly it covers the final appearing of Christ, the subjugation of all evil, with the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. In all this God is King, Sovereign over all.

For our purposes the Kingdom of God is that reign of God and realm of living into which we were brought by new birth (John 3:3-6), that is we have been 'translated from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love' (Col. 1:13). We live at present in this Kingdom in what we may call its hidden form, but will one day inherit it in its ultimate form.

New Birth Essential For Entrance Into the Kingdom

Passage for study is John 2:23-3:15.

- (i) The signs in 2:23 are signs leading to the Kingdom (cf. John 20:30-31). To read these signs and so to believe in Christ brings eternal (new) life.
- (ii) One cannot read these signs apart from the activity of God upon a person, i.e. the working of the Spirit.
- (iii) Rebirth is (a) by the action of the Spirit ('born of the Spirit'), (b) by repentance ('born of water', i.e. baptismal water, and (c) by faith ('whoever believes in him').
- (iv) Rebirth is related to the death of the Cross and to the Resurrection. See John 3:14, Numbers 21:4-9, 11 Corinthians 5:16-21, Galatians 6:14, 1 Peter 1:3, 23, James 1:18, 1 John 4:7-10.
- (v) Rebirth is related to the Holy Spirit. See Ezekiel 36:24, 37:1-14, Joel 2:28ff., Psalm 104:29-30, 11 Corinthians 3:6, 17, Romans 8:1-3, 9-11, Romans 7:6.

The New Birth is the Act of God Bringing Us into the Kingdom

John 2:23-3:15 and John 1:11-13 show us this is an act of God. Titus 3:4-7, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:3, 23 confirm this fact. When man exercises faith and repentance he is born again.

STUDY TWO

The Fullness of New Birth

The New Birth is of God Alone

In our last study we saw that new birth comes through (i) the action of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-6, Titus 3:4-7, John 16:7-11), (ii) repentance, and (iii) faith. Since repentance and faith are gifts of God (Acts 5:31-31, 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 1:29) then the work of the new birth is the work of God, and that man responds to God's initiative.

The Fulness of the New Birth

In this Study we will limit ourselves to those things which are set out in John's First Letter, and which relate to the new birth. John has five statements concerning new birth:

- (i) Everyone born of God does righteousness. 2:29. John 1:11-13 shows the action of new birth to be of God. John uses the term 'Father' many times. Here he is saying-against the antichrists who deny the Father and the Son (I John 2:22)-that he who is born of God shows the family traits of righteousness, for He Who is the Father is righteous. Righteous deeds are those done in conformity with God's law.
- (ii) Everyone born of God does not, and cannot, commit sin. 3:9-1, cf. 5:18. In the context here there are two groups, (a) those who sin, and (b) those who do righteousness. They correspond respectively to 'the children of God' and 'the children of the devil'. When John says God's children *cannot* sin, he is not saying it is impossible for them to sin (cf. 2:1, 1:8), but that they do not have to have a general thrust to sin, i.e. 'practice sin', as do the children of the devil. 'God's nature abides in him' means 'God's seed' or life, for God's life is in him, i.e. the life of the Father, the Son and the Spirit (see 5:12, 2:27, 4:18. Likewise the child abides in the Father (2:27, 3:8, 3:24, 4:18).
- (iii) Everyone born of God knows God and loves. 4:7, cf.4:19. In this context God is shown as love through propitiation, and knowing this brings life (4:9-1), and so one loves both God and man (4:19). See also I Peter 1:22-23, I Thessalonians 4:9.
- (iv) Everyone born of God loves the begotten of God, 5:1-2. The principle of loving the brethren set out in 4:19-20 is repeated here, i.e. by faith in Messiah we come to new birth, and then we love God's children and do righteousness, i.e. keep His commandments.
- (v) Everyone born of God does not sin, but is kept from evil, 5:18, cf 3:9. The context shows that someone may sin 'mortal' i.e. death-dealing sin, but that is foreign to the child of God. He is kept by God from the Evil One (cf. 2:13-14, 4:4, 5:4).

Conclusion Regarding the New Birth

Just listing these five references to new birth may seem prosaic. However each facet is dynamic, life transforming, and indicative of the mighty truth that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit dwell in the (new) child of God who thus is righteous and loving in action.

STUDY THREE

Steps to New Birth-1: Repentance

Repentance Essential to New Birth and Entrance in the Kingdom

John demanded the baptism of repentance for entrance to the Kingdom of God (Matt. 3:2, 7-10, Mark 1:4). So did Jesus (Mark 1:45-15). Jesus called for repentance on other occasions (Matt. 11:21, Luke 5:32, 13:3, 5, 15:7,10, 16:30, 17:3). Jesus said this message of repentance was to be preached among the nations, and he linked it with the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:45-47). Peter demanded repentance on the day of Pentecost, and later (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22). It was part of Paul's preaching (Acts 17:30, 20:21).

The Greek word *metanoia* means 'change of mind, attitude, understanding' (Greek: nous). It is not identical with converting (*epistrepho*), although the two are often linked. Converting ('turning around') is really a fruit of repentance (Acts 3:19, 9:35, 11:21, 26:18,20, 28:27) Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18, cf. II Tim. 2:25), and so the initiative is on God's side. The goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4-5). Repentance is demanded because man's mind is wrong towards God (Rom. 1:21ff.).

Whilst such ideas concerning repentance are now understood, repentance as a means of escaping judgement was not seen this way in early Israel, where sin was punished radically (Exod. 34:6-7). The healing brought to rebellious Israel through the bronze serpent seemed innovative. For the most part propitiation as God's way of forgiveness was understood, but then one had to have a right attitude (penitence) to offer up true sacrifice. See Psalm 51:16-17, I Sam. 15:22-23). David's two Psalm (32 and 51) show the way of repentance and confession. It was this understanding of repentance that John the Baptist brought with his proclamation of the Kingdom, forgiveness of sins and the baptism of the Spirit.

The Fact and Act of Repentance

Rom. 2:4-5 gives us the key to repentance, i.e. God's goodness evokes repentance. God The gift of repentance is for both Jew or Gentile. Repentance, then, results from a revelation of God's grace. See Acts 2:36-38, 3:18-19, 10:36-48, with 11:15-18. Revealing the Kingdom was enough to evoke repentance, although some did not genuinely respond (Matt. 3:1-10). Special examples are the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), Zachaeus (Luke 19:1-10), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43, cf. Acts 2:39, 11:18, 17:24-31).

Living With a Change of Mind

'Repentance towards God' is always linked with 'faith in the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21) as the saving act of God. Only propitiation saves but faith and repentance are the response to prior grace (cf. Rom. 3:24f.). In this sense repentance is a once-for-all unrepeatabe act. Christians are not exhorted to further acts of repentance in the Epistles.

STUDY FOUR

Steps to New Birth 2: Faith

Faith and the New Birth

We have said that entrance into the Kingdom is by new birth, and new birth is dependant upon the Spirit of God who convicts of sin, and brings the gifts of repentance and faith to a person. That faith is required is shown in John 1:12-13 where believing and receiving are the one in act. In Acts 2:38 repentance is demanded explicitly but not faith, whilst in Acts 10:43 faith is explicitly demanded, but not repentance. Yet faith was present in the first case (Acts 2:41) and repentance in the second (Acts 1:18).

Faith is a Gift

It is clear from Ephes. 2:8-10 and Phil. 1:29 that this is so. It is also clear that the gifts come into action when the Spirit is present, and when, through him the Gospel is proclaimed (I Thess. 1:15, I Cor 2:1-5, I Pet. 1:12). The elect who receive this gift must exercise it.

What is Faith?

Faith is man's response to the faithfulness of God when that faithfulness is revealed by the Spirit, and so seen in the Gospel. God's faithfulness is, in fact, the same as His truth. Yet that truth is never apart from grace (John 1:14). God is full of truth and grace. With every revelation of God, Jesus called for belief 'in him who sent me', and in 'the only Son of God'. Expanded we can say that faith is that genuine belief in, and trust of God by the man who has been informed of the truth and knows the facts of the truth and sees them in the Persons of the Father and His Son. Because the Gospel is primarily a command (Acts 6:7, 17:30, Rom. 10:16, I Pet. 1:22, II Thess. 2:8, cf. I Cor.1:18) faith is then obedience to the word of God as first uttered and later written. Because it is trust in God's faithfulness, it issues in dependence upon God and continuing obedience to Him. This continuing exercise of faith and obedience is called 'faithfulness' (Gal. 5:22), cf. Col. 1:21).

How Faith Comes to Man

Belief in God is not only that He is Creator, but also that He is Redeemer. This latter can only come from hearing the Gospel, as Paul says, 'So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.' The power of the word of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18), i.e. the Gospel (Rom. 1:17) and the Spirit (I Thess. 1:5) are the same. It is not the Gospel-as such-which is believed, but the Gospel of Christ, i.e. faith is in the person of Christ, and the work he has done.

Grace is Always Prior to Faith

This is seen in Rom. 3:24-26, John 3:14, 16, 5:24, Rom. 4:3 with Acts 7:2 (cf. Gen. 15:6). Only when the Spirit reveals the truth of the Gospel of grace, does man respond in faith. This is called 'saving faith' as in Acts 11:17, 13:46, 16:31, 20:21, 26:17, Ephes. 1:13, Gal. 3:1-6. The faith that saves is the faith that justifies, although-in fact-grace first justifies (Rom. 3:14).

Saving Faith in History

'Faith in Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21) was preceded by faith in God. Hebrews ch. 11 shows us the vast number who believed and were saved. They were all in the Kingdom, even if not in its ultimate state. In the Gospels also many are described as exercising faith, i.e. the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:48-50), the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:46), and the Samaritan leper (Luke 17:2). In the Acts and the Epistles justification and even sanctification by faith are taught (Rom. 3:14ff., 5:1f., 5:17, Gal. 2:16-21). Of course grace precedes faith, but then faith receives the gifts of God. Even the Spirit is one of those gifts received by faith (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:1-6, 13-14, Rom. 5:5)

STUDY FIVE

The New Birth and Forgiveness

The New Birth, Repentance and Forgiveness

We have seen that the new birth is linked with repentance., Repentance and forgiveness are often linked. See Luke 24:45-47, Acts 5:31-32, 10:43-44 with 11:18. Forgiveness and justification are also linked, cf. Acts 13:38-39, Rom 4:1-8. Thus repentance, forgiveness, faith and justification are all elements linked with the new birth. Especially see Titus 3:4-7 where regeneration and justification are coupled, and I Cor. 6:11 where sanctification and justification are effective because of Christ and the Spirit. Cleansing is linked with the Holy Spirit and faith in Acts 15:8-9.

All these things show us that there is a 'salvation-complex', i.e. many facets of the one saving act of God by the Gospel, and these are conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement; the gifts repentance; faith; the forgiveness of sins; purification from sin's pollution; justification; regeneration; adoption (sonship of God) and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the heart. One should not really be discussed apart from the other, since together they constitute one dynamic act of God's grace. We will now, however, specially discuss the forgiveness of sins.

The Fact and Nature of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a theme found within the covenant of God with Israel, made through His servant Moses. Forgiveness came through the sacrifices which themselves were quite detailed. Repentance-as such- did not bring forgiveness. Leviticus chapters 4 and 5 show how serious a matter was the obtaining of forgiveness. There was no forgiveness 'off the cuff'. The yearly sacrifice of the Atonement was for the sins of the nation.

The Psalms speak strongly of the effects of sins, i.e. 'the guilt of sin', and the power of such guilt to torment the person who refused to confess to God. They also speak of the immense relief which comes through confession and received forgiveness. Probably they did not think of such apart from the sacrificial offerings. The Prophets made predictions of the coming of Messiah and of his Kingdom, and of a new covenant. Chapters such as Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31-amongst others-spoke of a promised purification of the heart, and of the total forgiveness of sins, and these not seemingly linked with the Jewish sacrificial system. The famous passage of Isaiah 52:14-53:12 spoke of a Suffering Servant who would 'bear the sins of man', and would 'make intercession for the transgressors'

The Kingdom and Forgiveness

John the Baptist linked repentance and forgiveness with baptism for entrance into the Kingdom (Mark 1:4) and he pointed to Jesus as the one taking away the sin of the world.

(John 1:29). Jesus preached the same message (Mark 1:14-15). In his ministry of the Kingdom (Matt. 12:28, cf. Acts 10:38). Jesus brought people to the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9:2, Luke 7:47). He indicated the new covenant had come in his death, and it would be for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). Acts 1:3-8 indicates that the Kingdom will be in all the world, i.e. for Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. Each group was admitted by the outpourings of the Spirit (Acts chapters 2, 8 and 10).

Forgiveness Is For All

Matt. 26:28, Luke 24:46-47, Acts 5:31-32, 10:43, and I John 2:2, indicate that forgiveness is now universal, conditional of course, upon repentance. There can be no forgiveness apart from the Cross/Resurrection Atonement event (Rom. 4:25, I Cor. 15:3, 17), and forgiveness is a personal pardon from God, and must be since all sin is against God (Psalm 51:4). Forgiveness cannot be apart from justification, for justification clears believing man from the judgement of the law (Rom. 3:24, 4:1-7, 25, Acts 13:38-39).

Knowing Forgiveness in a Personal Way

Psalm 32:1-6, 103:1-4, Jer. 31:31-324, II Cor. 5:19, Ephes. 1:7, Col. 1:13-14, Heb. 1:3, 9:14, 10:22 show us that forgiveness reconciles us to God, cleanses away the pollution of sins, destroys the power of sin, heals from the fear of death, God's wrath and judgement, and causes us to see God's love and respond to it. We are now free people, but we must keep remembering that our sins are not counted against us, that they are forgiven and their guilt has gone, and we must never 'forget that we were purged from our old sins' (II Pet. 1:9). God personally forgives us.

This means we are free people, out of the bondage of guilt, free to live as true human beings, in the ease and power of grace.

STUDY SIX

The New Birth and Regeneration

The Meaning of Regeneration

The word regeneration (Greek: palingenesia) is only found twice—as such—in the New Testament, i.e. in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. In Matthew it refers to the renewal or restoration of all things, and in Titus to the renewal or restoration of a person. The word does not refer to origination but to re-origination as a burned forest is said to regenerate. The Oxford Shorter Dictionary has it, ‘reborn, brought again into existence, formed anew’. There are allied verbs such as gennaō which—with another—means ‘to beget’, i.e. ‘to give birth to’ (John 1:13, 3:3-8, I John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18) anagennaō ‘to beget again’ or ‘bring again to birth’ (I Pet. 1:3, 23), and anakainōō ‘to make new’ (17 Cor. 4:16, Tit. 3:5). The linked noun is anakainōsis ‘renewal’ (Rom. 12:2, Tit. 3:5). All of these words relate to regeneration. Some scholars see regeneration as an initial act completed, and others as a crisis which leads to a process and then a final (eschatological) climax.

The Action Which Brings About New Birth

The idea of regeneration is found in the Old Testament. See Psalm 51:10, and Isaiah 57:15. The regeneration of Israel as a nation is found in Jer. 24:7, 31:31-34, 32:38ff., Ezek. 11:19, and 36:25-27. In Ezekiel 37:1-14 dry bones are regenerated to new and living bodies. Deuteronomy 30:6 is another form of regeneration, i.e. ‘circumcision of the heart’.

In the N.T. new birth commences the new life. We cannot understand the process operated by the Holy Spirit, but we can know the action. Titus 3:5 speaks of ‘the washing (bath) of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit’. The bath or washing is purification, for which see Acts 15:9, 22:16, I Cor. 6:11, Heb. 1:3, 9:14, 10:22, I Pet. 1:22, 3:21. James 1:18 (cf. I Pet. 1:22-23) speaks of the word as bringing new birth. John 15:3 (cf. Eph. 5:26) speaks of the cleansing power of the word of God. As in the beginning the word *created* all things (Heb. 11:3), so now it *re-creates* all things (II Cor. 5:17, cf. 4:6). This word is ‘the word of the Cross’ (I Cor. 1:18, Rom. 1:16-17), i.e. the Gospel. It is the proclaimed word of God which redeems because it is based upon the Atonement. Indeed it is the word of the Atonement. In that Atonement Christ bore the old and so banished it forever. By the Cross all old things are made new.

This Atonement so to speak—requires the Holy Spirit to apply it to the hearts of men and women, i.e. the Spirit effects regeneration if man by applying the power of the Cross. The Spirit does not work regeneration apart from the Cross. Regeneration is wholly of God but that man is expected to respond to Him is seen in ‘You *must* be born again’, i.e. by having faith and repenting. The command to be baptised is also involved.

Regeneration a Definitive Initial Act of God

The aorist tense used in John 1:3, 3: 3, 5, 7 shows the act is (was) complete. The perfect tense in I John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18 likewise speak of an act in the past which has its effects in the present. In Deuteronomy 30:6 the circumcised heart is the new heart, loving God. In Ezekiel 36 the new heart gladly obeys God, i.e. is loving. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 the law is livingly inscribed within the heart and obedience is natural. In the N.T. the 'new creation' (*kaine ktisis*: II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15) is also in the new man (*kaine anthropos*: Ephes. 2:15, 4:24, cf. Gal. 3:29 I Cor. 12:13) and certainly an action of progressive renewal is the continuing result of the initial act of regeneration (c.f. Co. 3:9-10), for just as birth leads to growth and development, so here. The present 'new creation' will take part in the ultimate 'new creation', i.e. the 'regeneration' of Matthew 19:28.

STUDY SEVEN.

The New Birth and the Gift of the Spirit.

The Person, Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit.

This calls for a vast description and story of the third member of the Trinity. He is mentioned from the first to the last chapters of the Bible. His being as Person is seen in his elements of knowing, willing and doing. His work is that of Agent in the creation, in man, in the patriarchs and Israel, in the prophets, the coming, birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, in the work of the church, God's plan and the ultimate regeneration and glorification of all things.

New Birth is by the Spirit.

We have seen in previous studies that the Spirit is present in the new birth, in proclamation of the Gospel and so in repentance, faith, conversion, cleansing and the forgiveness of sins. See John 3:1-4, Titus 3:4-7, I Cor. 6:11, Rom. 8:2, II Cor. 3:6, 17.

The Spirit is a Gift to Believing Man.

- (i) The Gift was promised. Joel 2:28ff., Ezek. 36:24-28, Isaiah 32:15, 44:3ff., John 1:33, Luke 11:13, Acts 1:3-8. He was called 'the promise of the Father', or 'the promised Spirit' ('the Spirit of promise'). Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, Gal. 1:14, cf. Ephes. 1:13-14.
- (ii) The gift of the Spirit immediately promised. Acts 2:38.
- (iii) The Spirit given. Luke 11:13, John 14:16, 20:22, Rom. 5:5, Acts 5:32, 8:15,18, 11:17, 15:8.
- (iv) The Spirit was given by the Father and the Son. John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7, (see 'promise of my Father, etc. in '(i)' (above.)). Acts 2:33, I Pet. 1:12. Note that 'the gift' is not something (someone) we receive and control, but rather that when the Spirit comes he leads, guides, empowers, enables, gives us gifts, helps in prayer, worship, love, unity, fellowship, ministry etc.

The Spirit is Received by Faith.

The promise of God must be believed. Believing is in Christ, by which the Spirit is received, see John 7:37-39. The many promises (see 2:1 above) come to fulfilment through obeying the Gospel (Acts 5:32) which is having faith in the promises. See Gal. 3:1-3, 13-14, Acts 11:17, cf. 10:43-44. The word 'receiving' (Greek: *lambano* 'to receive', 'to take') is linked with the Spirit See John 20:22, Acts 2:38, 8:15, 17, 19:2, Gal. 3:2, Rom. 8:15, I Cor. 2:12, II Tim. 1:7, cf. James 4:5.

The Spirit Dwells in Us.

The new man is spiritual (I Cor 2: 13-15, Rom. 8:9-11, Gal. 6:1, etc.) because the Spirit dwells in him (John 14:15, Rom. 8:9, I Cor 6:19, II Cor. 1:21, II Tim. 1:14).

God Goes on Supplying the Spirit: We Go on Being Filled.

God goes on supplying the Spirit, Gal. 3:5, cf. Phil. 1:19. We should go on being filled with the Spirit, Ephes. 5:18, Rom. 12:11. This means obedience to the Spirit makes for 'fulness' (Ephes 4:30, I Thess 5:19), i.e. walking in the Spirit. Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:16, 18, 25-26.

STUDY EIGHT

The New Birth and the Gift of Love

God is Love: God's Love

God is love (I John 4:8, 16). His love differs from ours. I Corinthians 13 speaks of God's love-not ours, although that is the love we must exercise.

God's Love is Linked With New Birth

I John 4:7-10 (especially verse 7) shows that new birth and love are linked. To know God is to love, to be born again. God is known as love in and through the forgiveness of sins. Cf. Luke 7:47-~18, I John 4:9-10, Jer. 31:34.

God's Love is a Gift to Us

See Rom. 5:5-10, I John 4:7-18. See also Gal. 5:22. We come to know God as love through the Atonement (death and resurrection), and then through the fruits of the Atonement, e.g. forgiveness, cleansing, the gift of eternal life, and sonship. See I John 3:1-3. See also John 3:16, Ephes. 2:4-7, II Thess. 2:16, I John 3:16.

Love is to Each, and to the Whole Community of Christ

Each is given the gift (Rom. 5:5), and all are expected to love (John 13:34, 15:12-13, I John 2:7ff. 3:10ff. 4:7ff, 5:1ff. II John 5). The goal and intention of new birth is love (I Pet. 1:22-23, I Tim. 1:5). That the community did love is seen in Ephes. 1:15, Col. 1:3, 8, 1 Thess. 1:3, 3:12, II Thess. 1:3.

The Principle of Loving

This is seen in I John 4:19, 3:16, 4:7,11. We are constrained by God's love (II Cor. 5:14, I John 4:11), and so we love. Love is demanded on the basis of God's loving us. When our awareness of God's love and our abiding in it (I John 4:16) diminishes, then our love for others diminishes. It is in the great act of the new birth that we become aware of God's love, and so we love. II Pet. 1:9 warns us against deliberate forgetfulness of that love.

STUDY NINE.

The New Birth and Sanctification.

Sanctification Comes by the New Birth

Studies 9 and 13 ‘The New Life in Holiness’ are closely linked. We will use the word ‘sanctification’ for the initial act of purification, and for the category of ‘the sanctified people of God’ given by grace. ‘Holiness’ we will use for the life and experience of the sanctified. I Peter 1:22-23 link sanctification and the new birth. So also I Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:5-7, cf. Acts 22:16 and 15:9. This side of sanctification is purification. See Heb. 9:14, 10:10, 14, 22. The other side is election and calling, i.e. inclusion by grace into God’s people (see 3. and 4. below)

Our Sanctification Was Planned Before Creation

See I Peter 1: 2-3, II Thess 2:13-14. It is clear from Phil. 1:6, 2:12-13, Col. 1:22 and I Thess. 5:23-24 that what He has planned He will fulfil.

Sanctification is Setting us Apart from the World, and Including Us in His True People

Exodus 7:6-8 with Leviticus 11:44 show that Israel was constituted as God’s holy people. This was a matter of grace (cf. Deut.7:6-8) and not of the innate worth of Israel (Deut. 9:4-5). So too the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s people was a matter of grace I Pet. 2:9-10 parallel Exod. 19:5-6, I Pet. 1:14-15 parallel Lev. 11:44. See also Rev. 1:5-6, 5:10.

Being God’s Holy People Arises from God’s Election, i.e. His Calling

Deut. 7:6-8 and 9:4-5 (cf. Mal. 1:2-3) show Israel as called. Ephes. 1:3, I Pet. 1:2, II Thess. 2:12, I Thess. 4:7, I Pet. 2:9-10, Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2,7 all show that sanctification is a matter of calling, and not of attainment.

God is Holy: His People Must be Holy

This principle is seen in Lev. 11:44, I Pet. 1:15-16. That God is holy is axiomatic. In fact he is holiness. Hence to see Him we must be holy: see Heb. 12:14, Matt. 5:8, Psalm 24:3-5, Psalm 18:26, cf. Rev. 21:27, 22:11, 22:4. Note that seeing God’s holiness was painful to Isaiah (ch.6) because of his own impurity.

We must remember that God’s holiness is not only ‘ethical purity’, but is dynamic, active, destroying evil (Hab. 1:13) thus redeeming His elect. See Isaiah 43:3, 14, 48:17, 54:5, ‘Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel . . .’ The people of God in the N.T. must be holy, for God is the Holy Father, and they must be the holy children. See I Pet. 1:14-17, 1 John 3:1-3, cf. John 17:11, Matt. 6:9. In our next study (10) we will see the Spirit who brings

the new birth to pass (regeneration) also brings sonship (adoption) to pass (Gal. 4:4-7, Rom. 8:14--17).

Through New Birth We Are God's Holy People

We have seen that the new birth produces a new creature (James 1:18, I Pet. 1:22-23, John 3:3-6, II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, etc.). This is the same as being 'called to be saints'. All believers are saints, i.e. 'holy people'. This not only a category God has given, but the gift of holiness, which we may call 'elective holiness', i.e. consecration or sanctification, for what God sanctifies is His holy possession. Whilst God's people may not be - of themselves - intrinsically holy, they are treated as such (cf. Heb. 10:8-22). This gift of grace is an incentive to live lives of holiness, and of this we will be speaking in Study 13.

STUDY TEN,

The New Life and Sonship

The New Birth Brings Sonship

The new birth is primarily a matter of regeneration, whilst adoption is the matter of given sonship. For new birth see John 3:3-14, 1:12-13, James 1:18, I Peter 1:22-23, I John 2:29 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18. For in see Rom. 8:14-17, 23, Gal. 4:4-7, cf. Rev. 21:7.

Sonship Planned Before Creation

Ephes 1:5-6 speaks of planned sonship. I Cor 2:7 speaks of planned glorification, which is, itself, linked with sonship, Rom. 8:21, 23, 29, cf. I John 3:1-3. This sonship was not to be in Adam, but ‘through Jesus Christ’ (Ephes. 1:5).

God is the Father of All Men: But Not All Are the Children of God

Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28 in conjunction with Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1-2, I Cor. 11:7 suggests man was created as a child of God, but Gen.3 (cf. Rom 5:12ff. and 1:20ff.) shows that where man fell he forfeited such sonship. John 1:12-13 shows that man-through Christ-was given authority to become a child of God. This is also implied in ‘you must be born again’.

Man Comes to Father by the Son

The Son revealed (reveals) the Father, John 1:14, 18, 5:19ff, 14:6-10, Matt. 11:27. The Father knows the Son (Matt 11:27) and has given all things into his hands (John 3:35, Matt. 11:27), but the Father draws men to the Son (John 6:44, 65). John 14:6 with Heb. 2:9-10 (cf. John 17:1-5), shows that it is by the cross and resurrection that the Father reveals Himself through the Son, and as love (I John 4:9-10).

The Spirit Brings Sonship of God to Man

The Spirit reveals the Father and the Son (John 16:12-15, I John 5:7-10), and this is now by the Gospel (I Cor 2:4-5, I Thess. 1:5, I Pet. 1:12). The gift of the Spirit (see Study Seven) brings the experience of sonship to the new believer (Gal. 4:4~, Rom. 8:14-17).

Living as Sons of God

The principle behind John 5:19ff. (cf. Christ’s Sonship in obedience) is the principle of living as sons of God. The true Son is a Conqueror (he became Lord of all by his life, death, resurrection and ascension) for he is now conquering (I Cor. 15:24-28, Rev. 11:15, etc.). True sons of God walk in the Spirit, and are led by him (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:16,18, 25) and they are conquerors (Rev. 21:7, cf. Rom. 8:37). They participate in the work of the Father, and live in holiness (II Cor 6:16-7:1, I John 3:1-3).

STUDY ELEVEN.

The New Life and Obedience.

Introduction: The New Birth and Obedience

In I John 3:9-10 the new birth is linked with obedience. This is by contrast with disobedience. See also I John 5:1-3, and I John 2:3-6.

There is First Obedience to the Gospel

The Gospel is a proclamation to be obeyed. See I Cor. 1:18 ('word of the cross'), I Pet. 1:22-23, Acts 6:7, Rom., 10:16, II Thess 2:6-8. This involves also the gift of the Spirit, Acts 5:31-31.

Christ Called for Obedience

(i) He gave commands, John 13:34, 15:12, cf. Matt. 28:20, Acts 1:2. (ii) Obedience was the sign of discipleship. John 15:10. (iii) Love would be the constraint, John 14:15, and obedience the consequence, John 14:21.

Christ was the Example and Paradigm of Obedience

See Heb. 10:5-7 with Psalm 40:6-8, Heb. 5:8, Phil 2:9-11, and many references in John's Gospel such as 4:34, 5:19f., 8:28-29, 10:17, 14:10, §: 30-31.

Obedience Comes From the Love Constraint

We saw this in John 14:15. II Cor 5:14-15 speaks of this constraint. Jesus lived under such a constraint (John 14:30-31, cf. 10:17). For the person who has come to new birth, love had invaded him (Rom. 5:5, I Pet. 1:22-23), and the Spirit of love is present (Rom. 15:30).

The order of this constraint of love is (i) God loves us, showing and effecting His love in the Atonement (I John 4:9-10, cf. 3:16, John 3:16, Ephes 2:4-10), and, (ii) We love because He first loved us (I John 4:19). Not to love means we have not yet seen that he loves us (I John 4:20). A new view of law, especially as law is seen as love, has come, and obedience is a joy.

Obedience is For All the Nations

Phil 2:11 shows that all will ultimately bow to Christ's Lordship. However the rebellious forces though forced to bow will not be obedient from the heart. Gen. 49:10 speaks of the ultimate obedience of the nations. Psalm 2 shows the nations in rebellion against God., but

God giving His Son-Messiah all the nations for his inheritance. The mandate of Matt. 28:19-20 calls for the obedience (discipleship) of the nations. Paul makes it clear in Rom. 1:5, 15:18, and 16:26 that the Gospels is for the nations-to bring them to the feet of Christ. Rev. 21:22-27 shows the nations coming into the Holy City (cf. Rev. 7:9-15). Doubtless it will only be the elect who will be obedient, but then they will be the true people of God.

The Dreadful Nature of Disobedience

I Sam. 15:22-23 gives the essential nature of disobedience, i.e. idolatry. This links with Romans 1:18ff. II Thess. 1:6-9, II Pet. 2:9, 3:9ff, and Jude 14-16 show that judgement is coming to the disobedient. Even so disobedience itself is that action of man which utterly destroys his integrity of personhood, plunges him into distress and misery, because true law is the way of peace, and disobedience the way of misery.

Obedience is the Way of Love and Joy

To disobey is to reject the true nature of God, and so, of His law. Deut. 4:5-8 shows the joy of love of God, and obedience to Him out of the constraint of love (cf. Exod. 4:22, 20:1ff). II Cor 5:14 (cf. Deut 30:6) shows that love is the true constraint for obedience and I John 5:3 shows that obedience is not difficult. Heb. 10:5-7 with Psalm 40:6-8 - as Christ personally showed - tells us that obedience is a matter of joy. John 15:10 shows us that it is also the way of fruitfulness.

STUDY TWELVE

The New Life and Discipleship

1. The Call to Discipleship

The passages relating to Christ's call to discipleship are Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-35; Matthew 10:34-39; 11: 25-30. This call was first to those who would be apostles (Luke 6:13). They did not choose him, but he chose them (John 15:16). His second call was to seventy disciples (Luke 10:1ff.).

2. The Meaning of Discipleship

Greek word *mathetes* = Latin word *discipulus* = Hebrew word *limmud*. A disciple is a pupil, a learner, a student, a follower of a certain person. A disciple is under the discipline of the teacher. Old Testament use of the word can be seen in Isaiah 8:16 and I Chronicles 25:8. In the New Testament, John the Baptist (Luke 7:18; John 4:1), Pharisees (Mark 2:18), Paul (Acts 9:25), and Jesus had disciples.

3. Conditions For Discipleship

For Jesus a disciple was an undistracted learner (see Luke 9:57-62). There were five tests for discipleship: (i) forsaking all (Luke 14:33), (ii) belief and obedience (John 1:49; 2:11; 8:30), (iii) loving the brethren (John 13:34-35), (iv) fruitfulness (John 15:8), and (v) total identification with Christ (Matt. 10:40; John 6:54; Luke 22:19f.). Note that discipleship is personal, and not merely an abstract category. Note Matthew 11:25-28, i.e. sons are disciples, and disciples sons of the Father.

4. Discipleship in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles

The term for Jesus' followers in the Gospels was 'disciples'. It is not used of them at all in the Epistles. Why not? Closest to the principle is II Timothy 2:1-2 and 4:1-5. In the Acts the term is used, but mainly as an outsider's word for believers. 'Brethren' is the inside word. In the Gospels the Father teaches (John 6:42-45), but primarily it is Christ who teaches. He is 'Master', 'Lord', Teacher'. Even so, Jesus pointed to the coming Teacher, the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), for he would lead into all the truth (John 16:12-15), and the Spirit taught (I Cor. 2:10-16). Again, in the Gospels Jesus called disciples and taught them *in the context in which he operated*, hence such statements as 'taking up the cross'. For them the Cross lay ahead. The early church was in a different context, hence 'the offence of the cross' (I Cor. 1:23). The Cross lay behind them.

5. What Were the Disciples Taught?

John the Baptist came preaching the Kingdom, with injunctions to repentance and baptism, telling of forgiveness of sins, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus taught the truth of God, which included those elements John taught, but greatly expanded and detailed. His teaching was not merely the imparting of information, but the action of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23-24; 12:28). He taught by words, life (John 6:63), and actions, i.e. the truth in action. He also taught by what he was, i.e. example, and his relationship with the Father (see Matt. 28:18-20).

6. What Did the Disciples (Apostles) Teach?

The whole counsel of God (see Acts 2:20ff; 26:16-23; cf. I Cor. 15:3ff.). The Kingdom was 'secured' by the victory of the Cross, and the 'Gospel of the Kingdom' became the 'Gospel of salvation'. It had to be taught to the world (Matt. 28:18-20; cf. Luke 24:44£; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:19ff.). Teaching was by apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The Pastoral Epistles emphasize pastoral teaching.

7. Discipleship is Not For Salvation But is Its Fruit

Christ did not demand the conditions of discipleship as a means to salvation. Salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:6, 8-9; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7). Forsaking all, hating one's closest relations, etc., follow salvation.

8. Points to Ponder

1. Why is the term 'disciple' not used in the Epistles or the Revelation? Why the terms 'believers' and 'brethren'?
2. Should we speak of 'taking up the Cross' today? If so, why and how do we do this? Why do we say 'disciples are sons' (Matt. 11:25ff.)?

STUDY THIRTEEN

The New Life in Holiness

1. Introduction: **Sanctification and Holiness**

If we look at first term's Study Nine, 'The New Birth and Sanctification', we will see that it relates primarily to the initial act of God in purifying sinners (by faith), and then in consecrating them to Himself, i.e. incorporating them into His people. Whilst the words 'sanctification' and 'holiness' are often used interchangeably in the New Testament (in different versions), yet in this study we use 'sanctification' (Greek: *hagiasmos*, with verb *hagiazō*) for that elective act of God by which He purifies and consecrates His people to Himself. The word 'holiness' we use for holiness of living.

2. **Sanctification and Holiness Are By Faith**

In I Corinthians 6:11 washing precedes sanctifying. This was the order in the Old Testament (Exod. 40:12-13; Lev. 16:4). In Acts 15:9 'cleansed their hearts by faith' must mean (a) purified them through the work of the Cross, and (b) sanctified them—the Gentiles—i.e. admitted them, into the holy people of God. This will be the same meaning in Acts 26:18 where the Gentiles are granted 'a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me'. Holy living must also be a matter of faith since, 'the just shall live by faith'. We must say that holiness of living is based upon God's elective act of sanctifying. The dynamic of purification (Heb. 1:3; 9:12-14; 10:10, 14, 22; I Pet. 1:22; 3:21; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5; cf. Eph. 5:25-27) sets the basis for practical living in holiness (cf. Col. 1:22). We must avoid thinking that initial forgiveness-justification-sanctification are the one work of God (monergism) but that practical holiness is a twin work of God and man (synergism). Romans 7:13-25 shows that redeemed man-of himself-is unable to effect holy actions. He needs the power of God (Rom. 8:13, 37; II Cor. 2:14; Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; 4:13;), and the grace of God.

3. **Practical Holiness is Required of Believers**

This fact is plain from the following passages: (a) Hebrews. 12:13; Revelation 21: 8, 27; 22:11; I Corinthians 6:9; II Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; and (b) I Thessalonians 4:3-8; II Timothy 2:21-22; I Peter 1:13-17.

4. **God is the Prime Mover in the Life of Holiness**

God's power and grace moves in us to effect practical holiness as well as initial sanctification (see Phil. 1:6; I Thess. 5:23-24, Col. 1:22, Eph. 5:25-26). He requires our obedience in this action, as is seen in Philippians 1:6-11; 2:12-13; Colossians 1:22-23; I Thessalonians 3:12-13. The principle is seen in Romans 8:13, where the believer mortifies the deeds of the body by the power of the Spirit as over and against his own power, as is seen in Colossians 2:20-23.

5. The Actions The Believer Effects for Holy Living

- (a) Romans 6:1-23. Paul shows the believer has died to the guilt (penalty) of sin. Sin's power lies in (objective) guilt; hence where guilt is finished (by the Atonement), there sin's power is broken (cf. Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:55-56).
- (b) Colossians 3:1-15. Paul speaks of the following for living in holiness, (i) concentration (vv. 1-4; cf. II Cor 3:18; Heb. 12:2); (ii) mortification (vv. 5-7; cf. Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:24); (iii) vivification (vv. 9-15; cf. Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25).
- (c) I Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17 and Ephesians 5:1 are Scriptures which speak of imitation of Christ, the Father, and even of Paul. Galatians 2:20; John 14:21-31; 15:1-8; 17:20-21; I Thessalonians 1:1; John 14:16; Romans 5:5; II Corinthians 1:22 all speak of habitation by God the Father, the Son, the Spirit in man. The two principles are essential to practical holiness. The second principle is seen in Philippians 2:12-13.
- (d) Realization (awareness of power) is a dynamic aid to holiness (see Eph. 1:17-20; 3:16; 6:10; Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:37; I John 4:4; 5:4).
- (e) The principle of abstinence (I Cor. 6:18; II Tim. 2:22) and the principle of self-purification (I Tim. 2:20-22; II Cor. 7:1; I John 3:3) are linked in the action of holiness.
- (f) Love is a true way to holiness (Phil. 1:9-11; I Thess. 3:12-13). Rom. 5:5 shows the gift of love. Holiness and maturation are linked.

6. Some Points to Ponder

- 1 How does 'initial sanctification' affect (and help to effect) practical holy living?
- 2 What is 'sanctification by faith'? Does the believer not do works, and if so, how does the doing of works affect the principle of grace in regard to living out a life of practical holiness?

STUDY FOURTEEN

The New Life in Christ

1. All is In Christ

Romans 6:23 shows that ‘the gift of eternal life is in [through] Jesus Christ’. I John 5:12 says ‘he that has the Son has life’. In Philippians 1:21 Paul says, ‘For me to live is Christ’, and in Colossians 3:3, ‘Your life is hid with Christ in God’. These Scriptures show us that all we have is ‘in Christ’. The term ‘in Christ’ (or, ‘through Christ’) is used many times by Paul, and especially in the Letter to the Ephesians. We cannot think of the Christian life apart from Christ.

2. Christ is All

I Corinthians 1:30 says ‘He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption’. There is nothing we have which is not from Christ because we are in Christ. Hence in Colossians 2:10 it is said, ‘And you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority’. Ephesians 1:3 has it, ‘He [God] has blessed us in Christ with every [or, all] spiritual blessing in the heavenly places’.

3. The Believer’s Standing in Christ

- (a) Christ is **Saviour** to the believer (I John 4:14; cf. 2:2; Matt. 1:21). The believer is saved in order to serve (Eph. 2:8-10; Luke 1:74).
- (b) Christ is **Lord** to the believer (Rom. 10:9; 14:7-9; II Cor 4:5; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). The believer is obedient to his Lord.
- (c) Christ is **Elder Brother** to the believer (John 20:17; Matt. 28:10; Heb. 2:10-13; Rom. 8:29). He is our Brother within the Family of God (Heb. 3:1-6; Eph. 2:18f.).

4. The Believer’s Life in Christ

Firstly, we must see that the believer who is ‘in Christ’ is also ‘in the Father’ (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; Gal. 4:5-7; Rom. 8:14-17), and ‘in the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). We mean that ‘life in Christ’ is also ‘life in the Father’, and ‘life in the Spirit’.

Secondly, we must see that such life is one under the constraint of grace which manifests itself in (i) fear (B Cor. 5:11; II Cor 7:1); (ii) love (II Cor. 5:14; John 14:15; cf. I Cor. 9:16; see first term’s Study 8) ; (iii) worship/service (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 7:9-15); and (iv) holiness (I John 3:3; II Cor. 7:1; see this term’s Study 2).

As we saw above, this is life under the Lordship of Christ. It is also under the teaching and guidance of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25).

Thirdly, we must see that it is a life lived in the community of God's people (see I Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:7-11; Rom. 12:3-21; cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; Eph. 4:1-6; Phil 2:1—11). All are members of the one body; and each senses the needs of others, and ministers to them as gifts and ministry permit.

Fourthly, life in Christ is one of proclaiming the Gospel to neighbours and the nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16f; Luke 24:44ff.; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). The proclamation is made in accordance with the gifts and calling of given ministries. This is a ministry in the context all the community of Christ which is priestly (I Pet. 2:4-10; Heb. 13:15-16; Rev. 1:6), prophetic (Acts 1:8; 2:14ff.; Rev. 19:10), and royal (i.e. of the Kingdom of God: Rev. 1:6; 5:10; cf. Rom. 5:17; II Thess. 1:5), for in these three collective roles the community proclaims the Kingdom of God, which is linked with the Gospel of salvation.

We conclude, then, that life in Christ is really Christ living out his life through his people, whilst for their part they have his (eternal) life, and it manifests itself in the ways we have outlined above.

5. Some Points to Ponder

1. For a believer, is there any such thing as 'life outside of Christ' since Christ is Mediator of creation, redemption, and 'the regeneration of the world'? What, then, is to be understood by 'life in Christ'?
2. If we say 'life in Christ'-eternal life-is 'Christ living His life through us', then what is our personal life? We need to consider this in the light of Galatians 2:20.

STUDY FIFTEEN

The Goal is Maturity

1. Maturity is the True Goal of the Christian Believer

Paul said, 'Him [Christ] we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ' (Col. 1:28). The following are some of the references to becoming mature:

Matt. 5:48,	'be perfect as your . . . Father is perfect';
Matt. 19:21,	'If you would be perfect, . . . ';
Rom. 12:2,	' . . . the will of God which is good and acceptable and perfect';
I Cor. 2:6,	'Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom';
I Cor. 13:10,	' . . . but when the perfect comes';
I Cor. 14:20,	' . . . but in thinking be mature';
Gal. 3:3,	'Having begun in the Spirit are you now ending in the flesh?';
Eph. 4:13,	' . . . to mature manhood';
Phil. 3:15,	'Let those of us who are mature . . . ';
Col. 1:28,	' . . . that we may present every man mature in Christ';
Col. 4:12,	'that you may stand mature and fully assured';
Heb. 5:14,	'But solid food is for the mature';
Heb. 6:1,	' . . . let us go on . . . to maturity';
Heb. 9:11,	'the greater and more perfect tent';
James 1:4,	'let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect';
James 1:25,	' . . . looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty';
James 3:2,	'he is a perfect man';
I John 4:18,	'but perfect love casts out fear'.

2. The Meaning of Maturity

The above references—with others—show us that maturity is a matter not simply of flawlessness (impeccability), but of fulness and completion. Becoming mature is by steady growth and a moving towards God's goal for us. To be mature will be to be finished, fulfilled, or completed. Some passages which show this are Philippians 3:10-15; I John 3:1-3; Philippians 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 3:12-13; I Corinthians 13:8-13. The first four references speak of our working towards maturity. The fifth speaks of us being matured by love. Conversion brings the crisis which begins the process of maturing, and glorification is the climax and completion of maturity.

3. Maturity and Immaturity

See the following passages: (i) Hebrews 5:11-6:3; (ii) I Corinthians 2:6-10; (iii) Colossians 1:28; (iv) I Corinthians 3:1-4; (v) Galatians 3:1-5. In these we can see that

moving towards maturity is the normal expectation for a true believer, and that failing to mature results from the deliberate fleshliness of those who do not wish to 'work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling'.

4. Maturing and Maturity-Crisis, Process, and Climax

(i) Crisis

To be born again, i.e. become a new creature, was the crisis. See John 3:3-14; Titus 3:4-7; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3, 22-23; I Corinthians 6:11; II Corinthians 5:17. This entailed hearing and believing the Gospel, coming to repentance, the forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, sonship, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and love. Paul speaks of this as 'beginning in the Spirit'.

(ii) The Process

- (a) Galatians 3:1-5 indicates that *beginning in the Spirit* (being born and purified by the Spirit) requires *going on in the Spirit*. This is shown as 'going on being filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 12:11), 'walking in the Spirit' (Gal. 5:16, 25), 'being led by the Spirit' (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18).
- (b) Colossians 2:6 indicates that beginning in Christ's Lordship implies going on in it.
- (c) Hebrews 5:11-6:3 and I Corinthians 3:1-4 teach that whilst the 'milk of the word' (I Pet. 2:2) is good for babes in Christ, we must go on to 'the meat of the word'. This makes demands on us, but is essential to growth.
- (d) II Peter 1:3-11 (cf. Phil 3:10-15; 1:9-11; I Thess. 3:12-13) insists that spiritual growth is the adding of one thing to another. Philippians 2:12-13 obtains here, i.e. us working out our salvation with fear and trembling whilst God works within us to fulfil His goal for us. Philippians 1:6 and I Thessalonians 5:23-24 encourage us to press on because of this inward working of God.
- (e) I Corinthians 3:18 and Hebrews 12:1-2 (cf. II Cor. 4:16ff.) tell us the process is working, going from one stage to another. Suffering is entailed in this (Rom. 8:17ff.).
- (f) Colossians 3:1-10 (especially verses 9-10) shows us that whilst we are being changed, yet we must share in this by concentration (on Christ), self—mortification (of the flesh) and vivification by obedience.
- (g) Obedience is the key to maturing. This is to the Father (cf. John 5:19ff.; Rom. 8:13-17; I Pet. 1:13E); to the Son (Col. 2:6ff.; Matt. 7:21f; I Pet. 3:15), and to the Spirit (Rom. 8:13-14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25; Eph. 4:30).

(iii) The Climax

This strictly belongs to the subject of glorification. We can see, then that the outcome of the process is ultimate glorification (cf. I Cor. 2:6-10; Eph. 1:11-14; Rom. 8:17ff.; II Cor. 4:16).

5. Points to Ponder

- 1.) What connection is there between holiness of living, and maturing?
- 2.) How does maturing relate to relationships with God and man?
- 3.) What is the part of grace in the crisis, process, and climax?

NOTE: Studies 3 and 6 in Term 3 take us further in the subject of maturity.

STUDY SIXTEEN

Knowing the Enemies

1. Introduction: The Fact of the Enemies

The promise of relief from enemies is in Luke 1:71 and 73. Israel would always have enemies but God would defeat them (Deut.33:29, Ps. 106:10). God always delivered them from their enemies. This deliverance would be final (cf. Matt. 1:21). See Isaiah 26:12-14.

2. The Enemies Must Be Known

To know them is to be alert against them, and to live in God's defeat of them. Paul says, 'We are not ignorant of Satan's designs' (II Cor. 2:11). Our enemies are deceitful, i.e. Satan (Rev. 12:9; 13:10), sin (Rom. 7:11; Heb. 3:13), the lusts (Eph. 4:22), etc., so that apart from revelation we cannot really know the nature of the enemies.

3. These Are Our Enemies

Man—no less the Christian man—has the following enemies: Sin, Satan, the world powers, the world system (including the Dragon, the Beast, the second Beast, the false Prophet, the idols, i.e. the 'lords' and 'gods'), the flesh, death, the law, the conscience, and the wrath of God (including 'the curse'). In order to know these enemies we will now look at them.

(i) Sin

Sin has no true ontology: it is an excrescence on created reality. It came into the world through man (Rom. 5:12f.). It is a tyrant (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:9; John 8:34; Rom. 5:12ff.; Prov. 5:22-23; James 1:14-15; II Pet. 2:19). It has three elements, (a) power, (b) penalty, and (c) pollution.

(ii) Satan

Oracles against the kings of Babylon and Tyre indicate the principle of Satan's 'origin' or 'fall' from his celestial reality (Isa. 14:12ff.; Ezek. 28). In the Old Testament he is seen as accuser (Job 1 and 2; Zech. 3) and his accusations are seated in the fall of man with which he had much to do (Gen. 3:1-10; cf. John 8:44ff.; I John 3:8-11). He has all mankind—apart from persons of faith—in his 'world system' (Eph. 2:1-3; I John 5:19; Luke 4:5-7; Luke 11:21f.). He threatens (I Pet. 5:8), deceives (Rev. 12:9; Eph. 2:1-3; I John 5:19), seduces (II Cor. 11:14) and blinds people to the truth (II Cor. 4:4). He rules man by fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15; John 14:30-31; cf. Jude 9), and accuses the saints (Rev. 12:10).

(iii) The World Powers and System

For powers see Eph. 6:10-12; Rom. 8:37-39; Col. 2:14-23; Gal. 4:8-10; Dan. chs 10-11; cf. Gen. 28:12; Deut. 32:8; John 1:50-51; II Pet. 2:4ff; Jude 8ff; Rev. 12:1ff. For the world system see John 7:1f.; I John 2:15-17; I Cor. 1:20; Gal. 1:4; Rev. chs. 13;14; 17; 18.

(iv) The Flesh

This is 'the inner enemy', i.e. our fallen humanity, linked with 'the old man' (Rom, 6:5), i.e. our humanity fallen and affected by sin (see Rom. 8:5-13; Col. 2:11-15; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 2:2-3; I John 2:15-17).

(v) Death

This is the most dreaded enemy of man (see Rom. 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:55-56; Heb. 2:14-15). Fear of death is really fear of judgement, and so it is connected with God's wrath (I John 4:16-18). It is man's 'last enemy' (I Cor. 15:26).

(vi) The Law

This is a 'good enemy', i.e. it has nothing evil in it, although sin uses it to deceive and defeat us (Rom. 7:7-11). Through the law man is in guilt, for the law is ruthless to the sinner, because the law has its 'curse' (Gal. 3:10) and slays the sinner (Gal. 2:19).

(vii) Conscience

Man has an evil conscience (Heb. 10:2, 22) a seared conscience (I Tim. 4:2), a defiled conscience (Titus 1:15), and a conscience that is filled with dead works (Heb. 9:14). Conscience is the means by which Satan accuses, the law threatens, and is the place where God's wrath (the curse) operates. The conscience itself is a 'good' enemy.

(viii) The Wrath of God

The enemies-death, the law, the curse and the conscience, along with accusing Satan-are the means by which wrath operates in man. Romans 1:18 speaks of God's present wrath (cf. Ezek. 7:8-9; Ps. 7:11; 38:1ff.), but there is a future judgement of wrath (I Thess. 1:10; Rom. 2:5, 8). God's wrath is not sin, but sin (its guilt, effect, etc.) are God's wrath upon man, the burning fire in his conscience. The wrath of God is a 'good enemy'.

4. Conclusion: Man Beset With Fearful Enemies

Man lives in death because of the oppression of his enemies. For the most part these enemies are concealed from him, and he blames other things for his misery, i.e. God, man, heredity, parental upbringing, circumstances, environment, etc. He does not see himself as responsible for having these enemies!

5. Points to Ponder

1. How did man come to have all these enemies?
2. What can man do-of himself-to rid himself of such enemies?

STUDY SEVENTEEN

Knowing the Enemies' Defeat

1. Introduction: Sinful Man & the Enemies

Our last study showed us the vast array of enemies which face sinful man. We noted that they-for the most part-conceal themselves because primarily Satan and sin are deceivers. We also saw that we are responsible for being under their power. Man needs to extricate himself from these enemies. However, he cannot liberate himself for he is the slave or victim of these terrible 'lords' which dominate him. For this principle see John 8:34; Romans 6:16; Proverbs 5:22-23; II Timothy 2:26. For man's innate weakness, see Romans 5:6; 7:13-15; Isaiah 40:6-9; I Peter 1:24-25.

2. The Power and Means of Keeping Man in Bondage

Had man not sinned he would never have been subject to any of the enemies. It is the guilt of sin which keeps man in bondage. This can be seen in relation to the enemies:

- (a) *Sin* (John 6:34 with Rom. 6:12-14; I Cor. 15:55-56; Ps. 32:3-4).
- (b) *Satan* (Jude 9; cf. John 14:30-31; Heb. 2:14-15; cf. Luke 11:21f.).
- (c) *The world powers and the World* (Col. 2:14-15; Gal. 1:4; 6:14).
- (d) *The flesh* (Rom. 8:5-8, 12; Col. 2:11-15).
- (e) *Death* (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 6:23; I Cor.; 15:55-56; cf. I John 4:16-18).
- (f) *The Law* (Gal. 3:10; Exod. 34:7b; Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 2:19).
- (g) *Conscience* (Rom. 2:15-16; Heb. 10:2, 22).
- (h) *The wrath of God* (Rom. 1:18; Ps. 7:11; 38:1ff.; I Thess. 1:10).

If we examine all these references and their implications, we will be driven to see that it is only guilt of sin which holds man in bondage to the enemies.

3. The Nature of Human Guilt

Psalm 32:5 says, ' . . . thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin', Isaiah 6:7, 'Your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven', and Jeremiah 33:8, 'I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me'. 'Guilt of sin', then, is significant. It is inseparable from sin. There is no sin without guilt, or guilt without sin. The two are one, and their components are such things as dread, fear, uneasiness, confusion, sense of wrongdoing, rebellion, self justification and self-atonement, heaviness, etc. Guilt is (i) objective, i.e. some-thing we have done which is culpable, and (ii) subjective, i.e. something we 'feel'. The latter is not trustworthy, being no indication of the extent of our guilt. Guilt, strictly speaking, is punishment, hence 'I will forgive all the guilt of their sin' must mean, 'I will remit the punishment'.

4. The Destruction of Man's Guilt: The Defeat of The Enemies

Matthew 26:28 linked the Cross with Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:24-28). It was for the remission of sins, i.e. remission of guilt. The following references show Christ bore both sin and guilt on the Cross—I Peter 2:24; 3:18; Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12; II Corinthians 5:21—and became a curse for us (Gal. 3:10-14), making purification of our sins in their pollution and guilt (Heb. 1:3; cf. Heb. 9:14; 10:22; I Pet. 1:22).

What happened on the Cross met the demand of the law (Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 3:24ff.; I John 4:10; Gal. 3:13-14). It also took the accusation of all evil against mankind (John 14:30-31; cf. Jude 9; Luke 22:53) upon which both Satan (Heb. 2:14-15) and the evil worldly powers (Col. 2:14-15) depend for their hold over mankind. By being made sin (II Cor. 5:21), fallen mankind (Rom. 6:6), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and thus bearing human guilt, Christ defeated the enemy by his death and resurrection. The death and resurrection are the one act of atonement (Rom. 4:25) by which all enemies are defeated. Thus Christ's assertions as found in John 12:31, Luke 11:21ff., John 14:30-31 and 16:11 were fulfilled, and Zechariah's prophetic words of Luke 1:71-75 were justified.

5. The Enemies are Defeated Totally by the Atonement

The one factor by which man is held in bondage-guilt-was dealt with in Christ's suffering. Now the enemies have no hold upon mankind.

6. Some Thoughts to Ponder

- 1 What other method could possibly have effected atonement for sin, when Leviticus 17:11 is made the basis for atonement?
2. Is it true that the Father and the Holy Spirit also participated in the work of the Cross? If so, how?

STUDY EIGHTEEN

Overcoming the Enemies--I: Sin

1. Introduction: The Enemy is Sin

We have already seen that sin is a powerful enemy. We can talk about four elements of sin, i.e. its power, penalty, pollution and presence. Its power lies in (i) its guilt (Rom. 6:12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:55-56), (ii) in its habituation, i.e. constant practice (cf. Prov. 5:22-23; II Pet. 2:19), and, (iii) its alienation of the person from God (Isa. 59:12). Its penalty---adjudged by God--is linked with guilt, so with the law, the conscience, and the judgement (wrath) of God. Its pollution is a fact, for pollution comes when man is separated from God (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20ff.; Titus 1:15). *Its* presence never ceases to be present with man (cf. Rom. 6: 12, 14; 7:13-25), at least not until 'the redemption of the body' (Rom. 8:23).

2. Christ has Overcome Sin in the Atonement.

- (a) He has overcome sin's **power** by bearing the guilt of sin; himself (see I Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Isa. 53:4ff.; II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:24; I John 4:10). The power of sin lies in its objective guilt, so by bearing the guilt he has broken the power (cf. Rom. 6:7, 10, 12, 14).
- (b) He has borne **the penalty** by bearing the guilt of sin (see Gal. 3:10; Col. 2:14-15; and other references just above). Man, then is free from law (Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 3:24f.) and thus there is no fear of death (I Cor. 15:55-56; cf. Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 4:18), i.e. of judgement (see Rom. 8:1).
- (c) He has borne **the pollution of sin**, taking it upon himself in the Atonement (see Heb. 1:3; 9:14; cf. John 1:29; Matt. 26:28; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:4-7).
- (d) Sin's **presence** has not yet been overcome, although being present (indwelling sin) it is yet without *effective* power through the Atonement. Ultimately it will be utterly banished.

3. The Practical Understanding of Liberation From Sin

Romans 6:7 (cf. Acts 13:38-39) with Luke 7:50 (*passim*) provide the key. To be justified from sin (Rom. 6:7; cf. 3:24; 5:1; 5:17) means man is in the clear with God (II Cor. 5:19; cf. Isaiah 59:1-2), has been forgiven by Him (Jer. 31:31-34 with Matt 26:28; Heb. 10:10-18). The total cleansing (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:21; Heb. 10:22; Cor 6:11; Titus 3:5) means a pure conscience (Heb. 10:22; Titus 1:15) and a breaking of *the habituation* of sin (II Cor. 5:17).

All of this understanding is without value if there is no faith. Romans 1:16-17; 3:22, 25; 5:1 and Galatians 2:16-21 show (a) grace is prior to faith and so its initiator and founder (i.e. the grace of God in Christ; cf. Heb. 2:10; 12:2); and (b) faith rests on grace and appropriates its gift. Thus Romans 6:1-23 speaks of power over sin because of faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Without the 'knowing' (v. 9), 'considering' (v. 11), and 'yielding' (13, 16, 19) of faith, this freedom from sin is not practical.

4. The Continuing Practice of Freedom From Sin

- (a) The 'knowing', considering' and 'yielding' of faith (Rom. 6) has to be habituated. This refuses power to sin (Rom. 6:12, 14).
- (b) Sin which is unacknowledged (I John 1:9) becomes a problem. Confession does not obtain forgiveness, but forgiveness demands and constrains us to confession. Thus 'the blood goes on cleansing' (I John 1:7) and Christ goes on being 'the propitiation for our sins' (I John 2:2). Thus daily, pollution and guilt are cancelled.
- (c) Sin, of itself, is always more powerful than 'I, of myself' (cf. Rom. 7:13-15). That is why it must be 'I, in Christ, by the Spirit', in order to have power over sin (Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:6; Rom. 8:37; Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25).
- (d) One must live in a good conscience (I Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 10:22; Titus 1:15; cf. Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 4:1-4).
- (e) One must live in constant vigilance (Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 1:13; 5:8; Eph. 4:26-31), for 'eternal vigilance is the price of security'. Sin has its own deceit (Heb. 3:13), so that the principle of 'flee' or 'shun' is profitable (II Tim. 2:22).
- (f) 'Putting to death', 'putting off', and 'putting on' are all necessary in the constant battle against sin. (see Col. 3:1-17).
- (g) We must understand the nature of temptation, which is primarily a 'testing', as in James 1:2-4. We are always enabled in this (I Cor. 10:13) to overcome. Temptation is not sin, but see James 1:13-15.
- (h) We must go on using 'the means of grace' such as prayer, the Word of God, worship, fellowship, ministry, the sacraments (etc.). These will help us to grow and mature. They will confirm us in Christ's Lordship and the love of the Father.

STUDY NINETEEN

Overcoming the Enemies-2: Satan

1. Introduction: Knowing the Enemy Satan

In Study Five we saw something of the nature of Satan. Now we need to develop that knowledge even more. The following is helpful to know:

(i) Satan seeks to build a system which will at least rival that of God

On this basis we would expect to see a counterpart of everything that is God, and this we find:

- (a) God is Father: Satan is a father (I John 3:10ff; John 8:44f.).
- (b) God is King over all: Satan has a kingdom (Luke 11:18).
- (c) All nations are under God: Satan claims all the kingdoms (Luke 4:5-6; cf. Rev, 13:7-8).
- (d) All worship belongs to God: Satan seeks that worship (Luke 4:5-7; Rev. 13:4, 8; cf. II Thess. 2:4).
- (e) God is Triune. Revelation 13 shows us the dragon as ruler of all, the first beast as himself incarnate, being wounded but rising from the dead (a mortal wound which was healed), and the second beast who is as a lamb with horns and has ‘breath’ (spirit) and who prophesies, i.e. an unholy spirit.
- (f) God has His woman (mother, bride, wife) and Satan has Babylon, ‘the mother of harlots’.
- (g) God has His Holy City: Satan has his unholy city, Babylon (‘that great city’).
- (h) God’s people have His Name (‘Father’) written on their foreheads: those of the dragon have the ‘mark of the beast’ inscribed on them.

(ii) Satan has a power complex by which he seeks to achieve his goal

It is composed of one third of the angels, including special principalities and powers (Rev. 12:4, 7). He also has demonic forces (see Rev. 9), and captive mankind (I John 5:19; Eph. 2:1-3) which has rebelled against God.

(iii) Satan uses many means to trap and keep his victims

(Cf. II Tim. 2:26). He threatens (I Pet. 5:8), deceives (Rev. 12:9), seduces (II Cor 11:4), lies (John 8:44), blinds man’s eyes to the truth (II Cor. 4:4), and is a killer (John 8:44; cf. Gen 3:3-4; John 10:10). He rules man by fear of death, i.e. fear of judgement (Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15). This comes through accusation via the conscience.

(iv) His character is shown in names or descriptions of him

That is, ‘devil’, ‘dragon’, ‘tempter’, ‘accuser’, ‘destroyer’ (John 8:44; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:3; Matt. 4:3; Rev. 12:10; Rev. 11:18; etc.).

2. Overcoming the Enemy, Satan

- (a) Christ has already overcome Satan (John 12:31, 16:11; cf. John 14:30-31; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15), by destroying human sin and guilt, thus destroying the fear of death.
- (b) Christ lives in us—greater than Satan, who is, anyway, only a creature (I John 4:4; 5:4; cf. I John 2:12-14). It is he who leads us in victory (I Cor. 15:55-58; II Cor. 2:14).
- (c) Thus we overcome Satan daily by faith (I John 5:4; I Pet. 5:6-9; James 4:7; cf. I John 2:12-14). This faith must be entirely in Christ, his atonement, and his present working, and must be wholly in humility, since pride—even of defeating Satan—is dangerous (cf. I Tim. 3:6).
- (d) This faith is in the finished work of Christ, and so it refuses accusation (Rev. 12:10-11). Even so, the believer seeks to have a clear conscience in this faith (Acts 24:16; Heb. 10:22; Titus 1:15; cf. I Tim. 4:1-4).
- (e) Constant vigilance—though not fearful and nervous apprehension—must be exercised (I Pet. 5:6-9; cf. Eph. 6:18; I Pet. 1:13).
- (f) We must live daily in the security and strength of the armour of God (Eph. 6:10-18). This means practical living in truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and in proclaiming the Gospel of peace, using the Word of God.
- (g) We must have no links with darkness (i) by occultic practice (see Acts 19:11-22), and (ii) by refusing idolatry in any form (i.e. ‘covetousness’, Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5). I Corinthians 10:19-22, Leviticus 19:31 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14 show us that demons are linked with human idolatry.
- (h) We must be careful not to ‘give a place to the devil’ (Eph. 4:26ff), especially by having anger, even ‘righteous anger’.
- (i) We must recognize that we are in a constant battle, but that we do not fight a lonely individualistic warfare, but are in company with Christ, his people, and his celestial powers.

STUDY TWENTY

Overcoming the Flesh

1. Knowing the Enemy: Flesh

(i) Flesh in a Good Sense

The word ‘flesh’ in the Bible stands for many things, such as ‘the human body’, ‘humanity’, ‘transient humanity’, ‘collective humanity’ (‘all flesh’), humanity which is spiritless, humanity opposed to God, going its own fallen, lustful ways. ‘Flesh’ as created is not fallen, unclean, or evil. There is nothing evil about the human body, although there may be evil uses of the body. Whilst in one sense it may be said to be mortal, yet death, as such, was brought about by sin (Rom. 5:12; Gen. 2:17; 3:1-16). Man as flesh is weak, but only comparatively so. Created humanity (true flesh) is functionally strong *as man*, but then weak in regard to stronger creatures, and innately weak as to moral ability.

(ii) Flesh in a Bad Sense

The enemy-flesh-we need to know is *humanity as affected by the Fall*; i.e. humanity under sin, rebellious man who is opposed to God and His law. See Genesis 6:1-7 where man becomes ‘flesh’ in that he is Spiritless. When man lost life at the Fall he became Spiritless, although still having biological existence. In regard to the evil of ‘flesh’, Paul’s statement cannot be bettered: ‘The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God’ (Rom. 8:5-8). This flesh takes many forms, for it is human pride in its ability to do what it wishes, even to self-atonement, and self-salvation. Some of the elements of flesh are:

- (a) All men are ‘born of the flesh’, i.e. of sinful humanity (cf. Gal.4:29), they are lost, i.e. they are ‘fleshly’. Ordinary birth of flesh (John 3:3f.; 1:12-13) is not necessarily evil, but see Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; 15:14. Note Romans 8:3 ‘sinful flesh’.
- (b) *There are lusts (desires) of the flesh.* See Ephesians 2:3; Romans 7:5, ‘the passions of our flesh . . .the desires of the body and mind’. See also I John 2:16; Galatians 5:17.
- (c) *There are the works of the flesh.* See Galatians 5:19 (cf. 5:13, 17). These should be looked at in detail, for they are fearsome.
- (d) *Sowing to the flesh results in death* (Gal. 6:8; cf. Rom. 8:6).
- (e) *The flesh pollutes man* (Jude 23; cf. Eph. 2:1-3).
- (f) *To seek to be perfected by the flesh (using law) is the opposite of grace* (Gal 3:1-5). See especially Colossians 2:20-23. Flesh and law are linked (Gal. 3:25; 5:16-18). The flesh is a deadly enemy of the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), and of law (Rom. 5:8), but it uses law, just as sin also uses law (Rom. 7:7-11).

NOTE: The ‘flesh’ and ‘our old humanity’, whilst not wholly the one, are closely linked. ‘Flesh’ is that evil principle which works in our bodies and minds, seeking to enslave and destroy us. ‘Our old man’ is the corporate Adamic humanity in which we are involved, and of which we are part.

2. Overcoming the Flesh

- (a) *We were in debt to the flesh through our sins and guilt.* See Colossians 2:13-15; Romans 8:12a; cf. Romans 8:6; Galatians 6:8. Because of our flesh we were doomed to death, i.e. judgement.
- (b) *In taking the judgement Christ released us from the bondage of the flesh.* This is the same as releasing us from the law (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:5-6). By faith we must see this (Rom. 8:12).
- (c) *His crucifixion defeated the flesh* (Gal. 5:24). By faith we must see this for it virtually, then, amounts to our having crucified the flesh.
- (d) *Because we are not under law, we are not under flesh.* See Galatians 3:1-5, 13, 16-18. We do not then have to be involved in ‘works of the flesh’. Faith must take its stand on this basis.
- (e) *The opposite of ‘flesh’ is life in the Holy Spirit.* See Romans 8:5-14; Galatians 5:16-26; cf. 4:21-31. Thus we must (i) have the mind of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5ff.); (ii) walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16ff.); (iii) be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18); (iv) put to death-by the Spirit the ‘deeds of the body’ (Rom. 8:13). So we must go on being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- (f) *The way of love is opposed to the way of flesh* (Gal. 5:13). To defeat flesh we must walk in love (Eph. 5:1ff.).

All of this is equivalent to saying that we are triumphant (only) in Christ (Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:37; I Cor. 15:55-58).

NOTE: *We need constantly to distinguish between ‘flesh’ as man’s natural weak being (Matt. 26:41; I Cor. 3:1; Rom. 7:14; 25); and man’s fleshliness which is deliberate giving over of himself to wrong desires and wilful decisions (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3; Gal. 5:19-21).*

STUDY TWENTY-ONE

Walking in the Spirit

1. The Gift of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is given to all believers. This is seen from (a) the promises in the O.T., such as Ezekiel 36:24-28; 7:1-14; Joel 2:28; Isaiah 32:15ff.; 35:6f.; 43:19f.; 44:3ff.; (b) promises in the N.T., such as John 1:29-34; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 11:13; Acts 1:3-8; 2:38; (c) the giving of the gift in Acts 2:4ff; 2:38f.; 8:15-17; 9:17; 10:44f.; 19:6; and (d) mentions of the gift in the Epistles; Romans 5:5; 8:9-11; II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14; Galatians 3:1-3; 4:5»6; and II Timothy 1:14. From John chapters 14-16 we see that the Spirit is (was) sent by both the Father and the Son (cf. Acts 2:32).

NOTE: The Spirit is received by faith. See Acts 2:38; 10:44; Galatians 3:2;14. Faith is an act of believing the Gospel (see Acts 5:32).

2. We Walk in The Spirit when We are Born in the Spirit.

See first term's Study Seven, 'The New Birth and the Gift of the Spirit'.

New birth comes by the Spirit and regeneration and is the entire renewal of the believing repentant person (see Titus 3:5-7; I Cor. 6:11; John 3:3ff).

3. To Walk in the Spirit Simply Means to Live by the Spirit.

For 'walk', see Romans 6:4; I Corinthians 3:3; II Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 4:1; 5:2, 7; etc. The following are the ways we live in the Spirit:

- (a) We have power for holiness of life: (i) to come to sanctification (II Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 15:8-9; I Cor. 6:11); and, (ii) to live in daily holiness (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16-26).
- (b) We have power for proclamation (Acts 1:8; 2:4ff.; 4:31ff.; I Thess. 1:5; I Cor. 2:45; I Pet. 1:12).
- (c) We have power for praise and worship (John 4:20ff.; Phil. 3:3; Acts 13: 1ff; Eph. 5:18ff.).
- (d) We have power for prayer. (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26-27; Jude 20).
- (e) We have powerful weapons for warfare in the Spirit (II Cor. 10:3; Eph. 6:10-18, espec. v.17). The battle is spiritual, so that we cannot fight apart from the Spirit, especially as the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit.
- (f) We live by the Spirit in love, unity and fellowship (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22-23; Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:1-6; Phil. 2:1f.; Col. 1:8).
- (g) We have hope by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:5; Rom. 8:18-25).
- (h) We are led (guided) by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; cf. Luke 4:1). See Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2, 4; 16:6-7; 21:4, 11).

- (i) We live in the Kingdom by the Spirit (Rom. 14:17).
- (j) We are given gifts by the Spirit (I Cor 12:4ff).
- (k) We are given ‘the harvest of the Spirit, i.e. we bear the fruit he gives (Gal. 5:22—23).

4. There are Conditions for Living in the Spirit

- (a) We must live lives of obedience. Obedience is exercised by the Spirit, but it is also obedience to the Spirit (Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:2-14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25; cf. Rom. 8:12).
- (b) We must not grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; Isa. 63:10; cf. Acts 7:51; 5:3).
- (c) We must not quench the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 5:18-20).
- (d) We must be constantly filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; cf. Rom. 12:11; Gal. 3:5; Phil. 1:19). This will keep us continually in the ‘mind-set’ of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-6).

STUDY TWENTY-TWO

Living Under God's Law

1. The Nature of God's Law

- (i) The Christian believer lives under God's law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13; James 1:22-25; 2:8-11; I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; cf. John 13:34; 15:12; I John 2:7). See also Psalm 1:2 and Romans 7:22.
- (ii) Gen. 26:4-5 indicates Abraham knew God's law/s (see Rom. 2:12-16).
- (iii) Psalms 1, 19 and 119 (amongst others) tell us of the rich nature of law to the true believers in Israel. Israel thought 'the giving of the law' (Rom. 9:4) a great event (see Deut. 33:1-5; 4:5-8). Note the law came through angels (mediating) and a man, Moses (Acts 7:35; Gal.3:19; John 1:17).
- (iv) Disobedience to God's law was fraught with terrible consequences, as also obedience with wonderful blessings (see Deut. chapters. 28-30).

2. Man's Disobedience to God's Law Brought Death

- (i) See Genesis 3:1-6 where the law of Genesis 2:17 was disobeyed. Note that man sought to have moral judgement; apart from God!
- (ii) Romans 5:12ff. shows that this disobedience brought man under the reign of sin and death. Only grace could rescue him from law.

3. Christ's Death Delivered Man From the Condemnation of the Law

- (i) Man was under bondage because of the law, and could not be justified by it (see Rom. 3:9-20; Gal. 2:16; Ps. 143:2; Gal. 3:10).
- (ii) Christ delivered man from the judgement of the law (Rom. 3:24ff.; Gal. 2:19-21; Rom. 5:1; 9; 17-21; 8:1).

4. The New Covenant Promise Was That of a New Obedience

See Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-41. Ezekiel 36:24-27; cf. Luke 1:70-75.

5. The Christian Living Under Law

- (i) Deliverance from the condemnation of the law (Rom 8:1) is not a liberation from the principle of living under law. We do not live under Israel's law, but we live under the law of Christ, which is the law of love, but involves true righteousness. See (a) that the law has been 'satisfied' by Christ's propitiatory sacrifice (Rom. 3:24ff.), and (b) that the believer still believes he should obey law, though not for self-justification (Rom. 10:1-3) See the whole argument of Romans 7.

- (ii) The whole of the law is love, as seen in Galatians 5:13 and Romans 13:8-10, and so is ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; John 13:34; 15:12; I John 2:7). See also I John 5:2-3.
- (iii) The constraint for obedience is love (II Cor 5:14; John 14:15; cf I John 4:19; 5:3).
- (iv) The law is not bondage but freedom. This can be seen from Psalms 1; 19; and 119. It can also be seen from James 1:22-25 and 2:8-12 (see Psalm 119:45). Note that the law was true freedom to the Israelite.

6. The Problem of Nomism and Antinomianism

Those who believe they are freed from any obligation to any law are antinomians. Those who believe that in any way they can justify themselves by law, or lose justification through disobedience, are nomists, i.e. legalists. Legalists tend to separate the law from God (a dangerous practice), and so they come under condemnation of conscience. Antinomians tend to believe that God does not worry Himself about law but only ‘spontaneous obedience’. If there is no law then what can obedience be? This approach leads to relativism in ethics; **i.e.** leaves the discernment of right and wrong actions to the person. Jeremiah 10:23 stands: man needs God’s law (instruction) in order to walk properly. For the believer the law is ‘internalized’ by grace; by the Spirit, as in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-27. Internalized it may well be; but it is still the law of God, and we are expected to ‘fulfil the righteousness of the law’ (Rom.8:4), and this by grace (cf. Rom. 7:6).

We must also note that people with weak faith (Rom. 14) and with weak consciences (I Cor. 8) have difficulty because they are in a tension of grace and law, not fully understanding the nature of both, or of the freedom brought by justification and love.

STUDY TWENTY-THREE

Living Under Christ's Law

1. What is Christ's Law?

- (i) Two terms regarding the law of Christ are found in the Epistles : (a) I Cor.9:21, 'under the law of Christ', and this could mean, in its context, 'I am under law to (in) Christ', whilst (b) Gal. 6:2, 'fulfil the law of Christ' in its context could mean, 'Wherever a person is under a burden too great for him, assist him' (this can be seen in Rom. 15:1-3, even if slightly different in nature); (c) I John 2:3-5 and 5:2-3 link love—obedience and the commands.
- (ii) Christ spoke much about his disciples and others obeying his commands. For this we should see John 8:51-52, 13:34-35 with 15:7-15, 14:15-23, and Matthew 28:18-20 (cf. Acts 1:1-2).
- (iii) The Sermon on the Mount constituted Christ's law and commands. See Matthew 7:24-28.

We conclude, then, that there is something which can be called 'the law of Christ', or 'commands which Christ gave, and for which he expected obedience'.

2. God's Law and Christ's Law

- (i) Romans 8:1-4 is important because (a) it shows we are freed from the condemnation of the law, and (b) it shows that we 'fulfil the just requirements of the law' when, and as, we walk in the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16-18).
- (ii) The law of God as set out in the Ten Commandments is shown in the N.T. to be the true law, and the law of love (Matt. 22:34-40; cf. Matt. 19:16-22); Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13; and James 1:22-25; 2:8-13. We conclude that God's law is the law of love, and Christ's law is the law of love, therefore they are the one law. (Note: John 10:30; Eph. 5:5, Rev. 11:15; I Cor. 15:24-28 show that the Son and the Father are one in everything, e.g. John 3:35; Matt. 11:17, therefore theirs is the one law).
- (iii) The new law promised with the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-28) is not a different law, but the law seen differently. It is certainly not the Jewish Torah, although the Torah enshrined the law of God. Seen under condemnation (Gal. 2:16ff; 3:10ff.) the law is harsh and condemnatory. Seen under grace (see John 1:14-17; Rom. 5:12-21;6:12-14; Gal. 5:16-18) the law of God is not harsh. Paul shows that by grace and the Spirit we have a new view of it, and a rich practice of it (Rom.7:6, cf. 6:7).
- (iv) Christ insisted that he had not come to abolish the law, but that the law would stand 'until all is accomplished' (Matt.5:17-18). Paul says, 'Christ is the end of the law that everyone who has faith may be justified' (see Rom. 10:1-4). This does not mean that Christ ends the law, but he does end it as a law of condemnation. For those who have been justified 'the law is [still] holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good', for 'the law is spiritual' (Rom. 7:12, 14).

3. The Nature of the Law of Christ

If we look closely at the references we read above-(a) I Cor. 9:21; Gal.- 6:2; (b) Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:1-2; (c) John 8:51-52; 13:34-35 with 15:7-15; 14:15-23; and (d) I John 2:3-5; 5:2-3; (e) Matt. 7:24-28; and (f) Matt. 22:34ff; with Matt. 19:19-then we draw the following conclusions:

- (i) Christ's law and God's law are the one. There is only 'the law of God'.
- (ii) Christ's commands and his words are the one, and they proceed first from the Father, and then from him (cf. John 8:28; 14:10).
- (iii) Christ's law is that of the new covenant, which is 'old' law seen through 'new' grace. He explicates the whole body of truth in a new way without denigrating law as given.
- (iv) Christ's law is the law of love (as ever it has been) but it is love now shown by Christ uniquely; hence the new view of law, i.e. 'As I have loved you'.

4. Living Under Christ's Law

- (i) We need to come under his Redeeming Lordship (Rom.10:9; 14:7-9).
- (ii) Every thought must be brought into captivity to Christ (II Cor. 10:5; cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26).
- (iii) We are obedient by the constraint of love (II Cor. 5:14; John 14:15; cf. I John 4:19 with 4:9-10; Rom. 5:5).
- (iv) Through the Spirit we live truly under Christ's law (Rom.5:5; 14:17; Gal. 5:16-18). If we live in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 12:11; Jude 20; Phil. 1:21; Gal. 3:1.-6; Rom. 8:14ff) then we will obey Christ's law.

STUDY TWENTY-FOUR

Maturing in Love

1. Maturity is God's Goal for His People

In Study Four, Term 2, we saw God is drawing His people to maturity, the fulness of which will be glorification. We repeat here the first paragraph to remind ourselves:

Matt. 5:48,	‘ be perfect as your . . . Father is perfect’;
Matt. 19:21,	‘If you would be perfect, . . . ‘;
Rom. 12:2,	‘ . . . the will of God which is good and acceptable and perfect’;
I Cor. 2:6,	‘Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom’;
I Cor. 13:10,	‘ . . . but when the perfect comes’;
I Cor. 14:20,	‘ . . . but in thinking be mature’;
Gal. 3:3,	‘Having begun in the Spirit are you now ending in the flesh?’;
Eph. 4:13,	‘ . . . to mature manhood’;
Phil. 3:15,	‘Let those of us who are mature . . . ‘;
Col. 1:28,	‘ . . . that we may present every man mature in Christ’;
Col. 4:12,	‘that you may stand mature and fully assured’;
Heb. 5:14,	‘But solid food is for the mature’;
Heb. 6:1,	‘ . . . let us go on . . . to maturity’;
Heb. 9:11,	‘the greater and more perfect tent’;
James 1:4,	‘let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect’;
James 1:25,	‘ . . . looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty’;
James 3:2,	‘he is a perfect man’;
I John 4:18,	‘but perfect love casts out fear’.

2. The Meaning of Maturity

The above references show us that maturity is fulness, completeness and having reached the goal (the telos), though not flawlessness or impeccability. One of the best passages is Galatians 3:1-6. In this we see that the believer begins the Christian life with (i) seeing the Cross (with the resurrection), understanding its message and being changed through its redeeming power, and, (ii) receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and beginning life in the Spirit. The whole point here is that the way we begin is exactly the same way we go on, and the way we ultimately come to maturity.

This, in fact, is what we have been looking at all this year, i.e. coming into the kingdom by repentance and faith, being forgiven, justified, sanctified, regenerated, given the gifts of life, sonship, love and the Holy Spirit, so beginning in discipleship, obedience, knowing the enemies and their defeat. By Christ through the Cross, and how, ourselves, to overcome them by faith, by walking in the Spirit, i.e. living under the law of God and of Christ. In particular, now, we want to see how love matures.

3. Maturing in Love

- (i) God's love in the act of the Atonement causes us to love (I John 4:19; cf. I John 4:9-10; Rom. 5:5-10), i.e. we love God, and we love the brethren (see Study 8, 1st Term). Personal maturity comes from right relationships with God and the brethren. As we love we further mature.
- (ii) Love causes us to live 'in obedience (II Cor. 5:14; John 14:15; I John 2:3-5; 5:23). We mature as we obey, and as we mature we further obey.
- (iii) God Himself teaches us love (I Thess. 4:9), for (a) He is always in us (Phil 2:12-13); (b) He helps us to mature by chastisement where it is needed (Heb. 12:5-11); and (c) He holds us in His love (Rom. 8:35-39). NOTE: If Paul seeks to bring his people to maturity, how much more the Father!
- (iv) Obedience through love causes us to do those works which are pleasing to God. Thus see 'the first works' (Rev. 2:1-7, esp. v. 5) and 'the second [latter] works' (Rev. 2:19). The 'latter works' are from 'the more mature love' (Phil. 1:9-11; I Thess 3:12-13). Mature love is discerning in what it sees, and what it does. Mature love loves all the world.
- (v) Maturity is not only a personal matter but a corporate matter, relating to building up (edifying) (see I Cor. 8:1-2; Rom. 14:15; 19, Eph. 4:11-16). As we build we mature, and as we mature we build.
- (vi) As we see His love we worship (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 7:15), and as we worship we grow: as we grow we worship.
- vii) Maturing in love is related to hope (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:5-6; I John 3:1-3). Hope is looking to the wider view of love in the new age (cf. I Cor. 2:10-11; I Pet. 1:13). As we are in love we hope, and as we hope we mature, and as we mature we see more of His love. Here the key verse is I Corinthians 12:13. When we 'know as we are known', then we will worship fully.

4. Conclusion: The Love and Loving That Matures Us

Loving one another God abides in us, and we in Him, for both the Father and the Son dwell in us, as we in them. In this way we are 'being renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created us' (Col. 3:10). The key verse is John 15:9-10 (cf. I John 2:5-6; 4:12, 13, 16). I Corinthians 12:8-13 shows us that we mature by love, we mature in love, and love (Himself) matures us. Note that this is not without suffering (cf. II Cor. 3:18; 4:16f).

STUDY TWENTY-FIVE

Living in Christ's Body

1. Introduction: The Nature and Fact of Christ's Body

There are a number of figures in the N.T. for the church, such as the vine, the temple, the bride of Christ, the family, the flock and the body. In fact it is not quite correct to call them 'figures' since these seem to be analogies, whereas in fact the true vine, temple, family, flock, bride and body are the realities, not simply figures. Whilst a physical body is a created reality, yet to truly understand it we must understand the body of Christ.

For the term 'body' referring to the church, see I Corinthians 10:17; 11:29; 12:13-27; Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:4; 12, 16; 5:23, 30; Colossians 1:18; 2:19; 3:15.

2. Living Together in Christ's Body

The following are the elements which are significant for living together in Christ's body, the church:

(i) The Body is Controlled by the Head, Christ Himself

In Ephesians 1:19-22 we see that Christ has been raised above every power and authority in this age and the age to come for the church, which is his body. That is, he controls everything 'outside' the church. He protects the church, and gives it scope for its operations. He is also head of the church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). He thus directs and enables all his people. Thus the church does not act on its own, but is directed, commanded, and guided by its Head.

(ii) The Body is Composed of Interdependent Members

This is brought out clearly in I Corinthians 12:12-30. Just as the physical body is a physiological unity, all members working fully in their individual parts, yet constituting one whole entity and identity, so the church. This unity comes from being baptized by the Spirit into this new unit the body. There is differentiation of all members but also complementarity of all members. Hence the marvellous oneness of the people of God.

This is in action by means of gifts, services and operations (I Cor. 12:4ff.).

Members are so interdependent that it is always 'together with all saints' (Eph. 3:18) that anything is done. When one member suffers, all suffer, when one rejoices, all rejoice. This is an operational and a relational unity. The relational unity is not merely for the ministry the church can give. It is also essential to the richness and fulness of life of the members. Good relationships equal good and useful life. Mutual love and fellowship are essential for the well-being of each member.

(iii) The Unity of the Body Brings it to Maturity in and by Love

- (a) Christ gives the body his fulness (Eph. 1:23; cf. Col. 1:10). In fact from Ephesians 4:7ff. we see this is the gifts. By means of these gifts he builds up the church, and then uses it to ‘fill all things’.
- (b) The fulness enables all members of the body to grow into the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ, and by means of ‘trusting it in love’ the church upbuilds itself in and by love. Love is the building power (cf. I Cor 8:1-2; Rom. 14:15, 19).
- (c) The fulness enables the church to minister to the whole world. See next point, below.

(iv) The Unity of the Body is Structured For Corporate Ministry

We have seen above that gifts, services and operations are part of the order of the unity of the body. That is, each member serves the others. So ministry enriches the body internally. However, the body is there to proclaim the Gospel to the world. When it is internally strong it also is externally powerful. When it grows strong in external ministry, it strengthens its internal life. See Acts 4:29-35, which is a practical example of what the church is, internally and externally.

Note that mutual exhortation, rebuke and encouragement (Col 3:16; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25) is essential to keep the body trim and for it to work at top pitch.

3. The Body is a Miracle Amongst All Other ‘Bodies’

Physiologically the human body is a marvel. The body of Christ is a greater marvel, and is unique in all the world. We should see beyond its flaws and faults to its created (ontological) reality and sense both our privilege and responsibility in belonging to it.

STUDY TWENTY-SIX

Living in God's Family

1. The Biblical Matter of Family

Study 10 of first term told us what it means to become a son or child of God. Because God created us as His children (Acts 17:28; Luke 3:38) we have a functional need of Him. The human race is the lost son to the Prodigal Father. This lostness is enmity against the Father God, occasioned by a bad conscience, and expressing itself not only in enmity to God, but hatred towards its fellow human creatures. The human race is a solitary whole (cf. Rom. 5:12ff., and as such 'family'. Heb. 11 shows us a 'family of faith', and I John 3:10ff. (cf. John 8:44) shows us an evil family of Satan.

Christ came to lead the way to the Father (John 1:14, 18; Matt. 11:27; John 5:19ff.; 8:28; 14:1-10; Heb. 2:9-10; Gal. 4:4-6). Sonship implies 'family'. Reconciled and restored to the Father, family has become the lot of the 'new humanity'.

2. The Church is the Family of God

- (a) The aim of the Cross was the birth of the family of God (John 11:51-52; Eph. 1:4£; Heb. 2:10).
- (b) The church was born at Pentecost, thus the family of God began, having continuity with the old family of Israel (Exod. 4:22, Deut. 14:1, Isaiah 1:2, 63:16, 64:8).
- (c) The family came by the Spirit (Acts 2:4ff.; Gal 4:6; Rom. 8:14-17).
- (d) The church was known as the family of God (I John 2:7ff.; 3: 10ff.; I Pet. 1:22; I Thess. 4:9). Note that 'brotherly love' is the love that the people of God share with one another. For the term 'family', i.e. 'household', relating to the church, see Ephesians 2:8, I Timothy 3:15, Hebrews 3:1-6 (cf. Num. 12:6-7).

3. Marks of the Family of God

- (a) *All members first relate to the Father* (Gal. 4:6), through the Son, (John 14:6; Matt. 11:27) by the aid of the Spirit, (Gal. 4:6, Rom. 8:15) and then to one another (I John 3:14; Eph. 2:18f.). NOTE: these relationships (vertical and horizontal) are simultaneous.
- (b) *The family is holy*, i.e. no love without light (cf. I John 1:5-7; 2:11; 3:15). See 'Holy Father!', John 17:11, Matt. 5:9, I Pet. 1:13-17. Note that all members of the family are 'saints', i.e. 'the holy brethren'. See Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2, etc.
- (c) *The family is loving* (I John 3:10-21). Loving is helping to provide the needs of the family. See Acts 2:44f.; 4:32; 11:27-30; II Cor. 8:1-5.
- (d) *The family proclaims the Gospel of Fatherhood* and sonship, of inclusion in the people of God, as it seeks out the elect through this proclamation. See John 11:51-52; Heb. 2:9-10; Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 10:9ff.
- (e) *Each member of the family lives in fulness through relationship with the Father* (Eph. 4:6).

STUDY TWENTY-SEVEN

The Mature Christian

1. The Nature of Maturity

We have seen twice already in our course that maturity is that natural and full growth which that the believer knows by living as a son of the Father, being fully under the Lordship of Christ, and in being led daily by the Spirit, in whose fulness he or she lives. Maturity is fulfilling that degree of growth which God enables by grace, and which the believer lives out by personal faith. This growing in, and to, maturity is not an individualistic thing, but one lived under the headship of Christ, and the fellowship of the whole body, the church (as in Eph. 4: 11-16 and I Cor 12: 4-31). Maturity comes because the believer wants to grow, and presses forward with all the energy God has given him. See Phil. 3:10-16, where the believer forgets failures and accomplishments from the past, and never departs from the principle of life growth that he has learned.

2. How Maturity is Hindered

Maturity can become stunted (i) through sectarianism and divisiveness (I Cor. 3:14); (ii) by commencing in the Spirit and slipping over into the flesh (Gal. 3:1-3); (iii) by lack of use of one's faculties failing to discern-through practice-what is good and what is evil (Heb. 5:11-14). This is linked with not 'being skilful in the word of righteousness' (cf. Luke 8:4-21, where obedience to the word ensures we know the word and live in it); (iv) slackness, i.e. not being alert in spiritual warfare, and so falling into fleshly manners (I Pet. 1:13f.; Eph. 5:10ff.; I John 2:15f.).

3. The Pattern of the Mature Man

The true Mature Man is Christ. Of this there can be no doubt. Rom. 5:12-21 contrasts the old Adam and the new Man, Christ. We all live in the new Man, Christ, participating in him, and drawing from him. At the same time we see his manner of life, death, and resurrection and wish to be followers and even imitators of him. See Philipians 3:10 and Ephesians 5:1-2. Paul, also, is a great example for us, for he, too, imitates Christ (I Cor. 11:1).

4. The Mature Christian

The mature Christian is the person who uses all the means of grace, knowing he is weak of himself (II Cor. 12:7-10; I Cor. 15:10). His weakness is not an excuse for failure, but that which makes him dependent upon grace. The 'means of grace' are those elements which God initiates and by which He pours out His grace upon His children. The marks, then, of the mature Christian, are as follows:

(i) He is one who continually lives in faith

'The just shall live by faith', that is he believes all God has done by His grace, such as his conversion through the gifts of repentance and faith, through regeneration (new birth), in which he was washed of the pollution of his sins, forgiven the guilt of his sins, being justified from the condemnation of the law, sanctified by God's grace, given the status and experience of sonship of the Father, given the gift of love, given the gift of the Spirit, having been baptized into the body of Christ. The mature Christian does not continually doubt what has happened. He lives in the reality of it, and rejects Satanic accusations to the contrary. This is known as using 'the shield of faith'.

(ii) He is one who lives in continual obedience

Through love he is constrained to do the will of God (II Cor. 5:14; John 14:15; I John 4:19-5:3). Obedience not only conforms him to the law of Christ, i.e. the law of love, but causes him to share in the outworking (ongoing) plan of God.

(iii) He is one who continually loves

See Phil. 1:9-11; I Thess. 3:12-13; I Cor 13:7ff.; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal 5:13. His love aids him to grow in holiness. He is not mature in growth unless it is 'with all saints' (Ephes 3:18-18; 4:11-16). He loves and obeys as he knows God, and he knows and loves God as he obeys (I John 2:3-5; 5:3). His love extends to 'all men', operates in actions, and has deep compassion.

(iv) He is a person of prayer

Prayer is a life lived in communion with God, seeking and knowing His will and praying accordingly. Prayer consists of worship (praise, adoration, glorifying God), meditation, (reflection on God and His will), personal petition, and intercession for others-according to the will of God. Thus he has conscious guidance continually, keeps fresh in loving and obedient devotion, and-with the brethren-senses the mind of Christ for the body, his church.

(v) He constantly lives as a son of the Father

The church is 'in God the Father' (I and II Thess. 1:1). Hence he receives 'grace and peace' continually from the Father. That is, he is constantly dependent, not thinking he stands 'of himself' (I Cor.10:13). He is secure in that love.

(vi) He lives constantly under the Lordship of Christ

Christ is his Lord (Rom. 10:9; 14:7-9), is his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (I Cor. 1:31), and as he (the mature man) received him so he walks in him (Col. 2:6). His whole life is Christ (Phil 1:21; Gal. 2:20) and his life is hid with Christ in God (Col.3:3). He has learned he can do nothing from himself, but can do all things in Christ (Rom. 8:37; Phil. 4:13).

(vii) He lives and walks in the Spirit

There is no other way to live and be a son of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25, 26). Having the fruit of the Spirit he is free of fleshly attachments (works of the flesh) and has received-and lives in-the 'harvest of the Spirit'. All we have said (above), and say (below), cannot be so without the Spirit of God. This includes worship, ministry (service), the use of gifts, and the life of unity and fellowship in the church.

(viii) He is versed in spiritual warfare

He is not ignorant of Satan's devices. Our Studies Two to Six cover what the believer knows, and the way he lives. In the life of faith he knows victory over Satan, sin, the flesh, the world and its powers. He is not on the defensive, so much as on the offensive, and knows how to use the spiritual armour and weapons (II Cor. 10:3; Eph. 6:10-18).

(ix) He proclaims Christ's saving work to the world

This is included in (ii) above, for it is the mark of loving obedience. He sees God's plan of salvation for all history, and the climax of it in the redemption of Christ's people. He cannot mature simply by self centred 'spiritual' exercises.

(x) He lives not only in faith and love, but in hope

Faith, hope, and love are never apart, but are the one (I Cor. 13:13). In point (i) above, we saw how the believer must go on in faith of what God has done. His faith in what God will do is really hope—a fixed assurance in the *promised* future (see Rom. 5:2, 5; 8:18-25; I John 3:1-3; Gal. 5:5). When he sees what he will be, then he sets about being that now.

(xi) He develops and matures by the experience of suffering

Romans 8:17-25; II Corinthians 4:16f.; Philippians 3:10 and Colossians 1:24 show how he believer will suffer, and that suffering matures him. These will be linked with II Corinthians 3:18. Persecution is inevitable for the believer, but the deepest form of suffering lies in identifying with lost humanity and desiring to bring men to the truth which is part of 'the fellowship of Christ's sufferings'. II Corinthians 6:3-10, 11:23-29, Hebrews 11:32-38 and many passages in Revelation show us how the people of God suffer in the course of proclaiming the Gospel, and in witnessing to Christ. This is powerful for man's coming to maturation.

STUDY TWENTY-EIGHT

God's People at Prayer

1. The Nature of Prayer

Prayer is the expression of a living relationship with God, which first hears God speaking through His Word, into the heart of the worshipper, and which expresses itself in adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition and intercession, whilst it continually seeks to know the will of God.

Thus prayer is first a relationship, then an attitude, which devotes itself to the mind and the will of God, and knows that God has ordained such prayer, and not only requires it of the worshipper, but uses it in His sovereign purposes.

2. To Whom and by Whom We Pray Determines the Nature of Our Prayer

NOTE: Man is compulsive in prayer. He will pray to God or his gods. His prayer will be coloured by how he views the one to whom he prays, e.g. the prophets to Baal (I Kings 18:20-40) and the Pharisee and tax-gatherer to God, as each understood Him (Luke 18:9-14). True prayer is as follows:

- (a) When the disciples heard Jesus pray to the Father, they asked to be taught to pray (Luke 11:1f.). Jesus prayed to the Father (Luke 2:49; 3:21-22; 9:28-36; Mark 14:36; cf. Luke 10:21; John 11:40f.).
- (b) Prayer is primarily made to the Father. This is because believers are sons of the Father (Luke 11:2f.; Matt.6:6). Christ has given us access to the Father (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:28; 3:12).
- (c) Prayer is made through the Son (John 14:13-14; 15:7; 16; 16:23-24).
- (d) As Jesus prayed through the Spirit (Luke 10:21), so do we (see Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 6:18f.; I Cor. 14:13f.; and Jude 20). **NOTE:** The Father takes the initiative in all worship (John 4:23-24), and Romans 8:26 shows the Spirit takes the initiative in prayer, for we are weak in knowing what to pray.
- (e) Note the many prayers by the celestial creatures in the Book of the Revelation .

3. Those Who Have Prayed to God

- (a) We have many examples of the patriarchs praying to God.
- (b) Israel prayed to God, especially at the temple. See especially II Chronicles chs. 6 and 7 for the long prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple (II Chron. 6: 19-21; 7:12-16; Isa. 56:7). Prophets, priests, kings and others made prayer to God.
- (c) In the Gospels prayer is made at the temple, and by many. Jesus prayed there, and following Pentecost the people of the new church. Jesus addressed God in prayer in many situations.
- (d) Prayer is the constant exercise of the apostolic church (Acts 1:24; 2:42; 4:31; 6:4, 6; 8:15; 9:11; 9:40; 10:4; 9,31; 11:5; 12:5,12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 28:8).

4. The Purposes God Has For Prayer

- (a) It is part of His plan to use the prayers of His people (Rev.5:8; 8:3-5). He uses His people's prayer to help effect His plan. So see, 'Thy Kingdom come' (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; Luke 18:6-8).
- (b) Prayer is to be according to the will of God, 'Thy will be done', but the will is made known (i) through the Word, and (ii) through the exercise of prayer. See James 5:14ff. Note the power of prayer to accomplish the things prayed for (cf. Mark 11:20-26).
- (c) Prayer is made according to need, e.g. Lord's Prayer (cf. Jas 1:5; 5:2; Matt.7:7-11).
- (d) Intercession for others is a large part of prayer, for the Son (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) and the Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27) intercede for us. Acts 4:23-31 is a good 'model' prayer. Paul's prayers also teach what to pray (e.g. Eph. 1:15-19; 3:14-19; Col. 1:9-12), and he asks for intercessory prayer (Eph. 6:18ff.; I Thess. 5:25. See also I Tim. 2:1).

5. Some Things Which Hinder Prayer

- (a) Cherishing iniquity in the heart (Ps. 66:18; c£ Ps. 18:41; Prov. 1:28-29).
- (b) Disobedience to God's law (Prov. 28:9; cf. Prov. 15:8. See I John 3:21-22).
- (c) Faithless praying (James 4:2). This is empty praying (see Matt. 6:7; I Kings 18:25-29).
- (d) Selfish and evil praying (James 4:3).
- (e) Failure to have true marital relationships (I Pet. 3:5-7).
- (f) Lack of practical love (I John 3:17-22).

STUDY TWENTY-NINE

God's People at Worship-1

1. Man The Worshipper

Worship is the giving of true (i.e. appropriate) worth to God, and all elements of His creation—especially humanity. Idolatry is giving undue and undeserved worth to anything. It is making a god of anything but God. It is possible to make an idol out of God, i.e. using certain Scriptures—to the exclusive of other Scriptures—to form our desired image of God. Since all creation is ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31), i.e. is functional (Eccl. 3:11), then each element must be given its due worth. This worship and honouring will come from primary worship of God (Exod. 20:1L; Deut 6:4-6).

2. Worshipping and Honouring

The primary verb ‘to worship’ in the O.T. (e.g. Exod. 4:22) and N.T. (e.g. Rom. 12:1) is also ‘to serve’. Worshipping is serving and serving is worshipping. Some translations use the word ‘worship’ only for God and ‘honour’ for fellow humanity. Man is to worship God, but to honour parents (Exod. 20:12), all men (I Pet. 2:17), wives (I Pet. 3:7), true widows (I Tim. 5:3), the king (I Pet. 2:17), and ‘one another’ (Rom. 12:10). Failure to honour man is an insult to God (Prov. 14:31).

Man worships constantly, and cannot do otherwise. His true worship is of God, and his false worship is idolatry. To love God is to worship Him (Deut. 10:12; 30:6, 7; cf. Exod. 4:22), and to love idols is to worship them.

3. Man's Loss of True Worship

Genesis 3:1-6 and Romans 1:18-25 give the history of man's rejection of true worship of God. In Genesis 3:1-6 man is tempted to become ‘as God’ or ‘as gods’. A god is an independent entity, able to make its own discernment as to what is good and evil. It acts independently of the one true God. I Corinthians 8:5 sets out the truth of Deity. Romans 1:19-21 states that God can be known ‘by the things that are made’ (cf. Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 10:18). We should note that worship comes from knowing God, i.e. knowing the truth of Him (Rom. 1:18, 25, 28; cf. Ps. 14:1; Rom. 3:11, 16-17). Because God has Deity, and is beyond man, He cannot be known, for there is *nothing* in all creation to which He can be likened (Isa. 44:6-8; 43:10-11; 46:9; Rom. 11:33-36). God, however, reveals Himself to His creation.

Refusing the truth of God man lost his pure knowledge of God, which he had had in creation and his pre-fall relationship with God, in innocence. Hebrews ch. 11 indicates that in spite of the Fall men and women of faith have always known God—at least to some degree—and so have worshipped Him. Even so Israel had to be given a gift of God (Rom. 9:4), and a heart for God (Deut. 30:6), in order to worship Him.

4. The True, Pure Worship of God

Hebrews 9:14 (cf. Rev. 7:14) indicates that true pure worship of the living God cannot be made by man apart from a pure conscience. The only true worship of God, then, can be found in heaven, and not at this time-on earth. No matter how fine human worship may prove to be, there will be some deficiencies in it whilst the battle of ‘spirit’ (Spirit) and ‘flesh’ is present (cf. Gal 5:16-26). Many references are made in Scripture to creation praising God, but Romans 8:19-21 indicates that creation is still subjected to futility. Only in heaven then may we see pure worship, and our own pure worship is reserved for the time of the new heavens and the new earth in which we shall dwell.

5. The True Pure Celestial Worship

The subject of heavenly worship is so vast that we can only indicate certain passages in the [Book of the Revelation](#), and nominate the reasons or constraints of worship. Passages directly referring to worship and its cause are as follows:

- (a) 1:12-18. John worships the glorified Christ seen in vision form.
- (b) 4:2-11. The throne of God is the place of worship. The four living creatures and the elders worship God for (i) His eternity, (ii) His holiness, (iii) His act and power of creation.
- (c) 5:8-14. The Lamb is worshipped for (i) his power to open the seven-sealed scroll, and (ii) his great work of salvation. The living creatures, the elders, the multitudes of angels and all living creatures join in this worship.
- (d) 7:9-12. The great multitude of the redeemed worship because salvation belongs to God and the Lamb. The nature of this salvation is expressed by the angels, elders and living creatures (see v. 12).
- (e) 8:3-5. The prayers of the saints become dynamic when presented by an angel with a golden censer and incense.
- (f) 11:15-18. Worship is offered by the twenty-four elders (i) for God taking up His position of authority and ruling, and (ii) for rewarding His people and destroying the destroyers of His creation.
- (g) 15:2-4. Those who have conquered the beast now praise God for (i) His deeds, and (ii) the trueness and just nature of His ways, saying the nations will worship God because of His justice (His judgements).
- (h) 16:4-7. The judgements of God and the vindication of his martyr servants are the great causes of praise by ‘the angel of water’.
- (i) 19:1-8. God is worshipped because (i) ‘His judgements are true and just’ because He has judged Babylon and vindicated ‘the blood of the prophets and the saints’, and because (ii) the time has come for the marriage feast of the Bride and the Lamb.

All of these constraints for worship obtain here, on this earth, and are a true guide to great and noble worship by man, as well as celestial creatures.

STUDY THIRTY

God's People at Worship-2

1. Pure Worship on Earth and in Heaven

In our previous study we saw that all creation-celestial and terrestrial-worshipped God in purity (cf. Job 38:6-7; Ps. 145:10); and man's pure relationship with God was the source of true worship. Some angelic powers rebelled against God (Rev. 12:1ff.), man rebelled against God (Gen. 3:1-6; Rom. 1:18ff.) and the creation was subjected to futility-this being linked with the curse (Gen. 3; Rom 8:18ff-and so pure worship was interrupted. It now exists in heaven, through grace it is now offered on earth, and one day 'all thy works shall praise thee, O God!'

2. The Gift of Worship

Rebellious creatures-heavenly and earthly-lost true worship. Both kinds of creatures indulge in self worship, which itself, in turn, is expressed in idolatry. There have always been obedient heavenly creatures: part of the human race has been composed of men and women who are persons of faith, albeit born in sin, and often sinful in action. Hebrews ch.11 bears out this latter statement. In Genesis 4:1ff. Abel was the first in a line of faith—worshippers, whilst in 4:26 men began to 'call on the name of the Lord'. The patriarchs were worshippers, erecting altars to God, and then, wonderfully, 'the gift of worship' was given to Israel (Rom. 9:4), and this was unique above and amongst all the nations (cf. Deut. 4:5-8; John 4:4:22; Acts 17:23).

The gift of worship to Israel, though unique was not perfect, it opening the way to the fullest of worship. Even so it was wonderful. We have seen that 'worship' and 'service' are the one thing. The tabernacle (later the temple) was built according to what God had showed Moses on Mt. Zion. We know Israel's worship was based on the principle of the court of sacrifice with its apparatus, the holy place with its worship apparatus, and the 'Holy of Holies', in which was the perpetual presence of God, veiled from common sight. Yet all of this was 'a shadow of things to come' (Heb.10:1-4). He said (i) there were 'true things to come', and (ii) he linked these with, Christ (10:5-22).

3.The Gift of the New Worship

A number of elements point to a (the) new worship: (i) prophecies such as Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Heb. 10:5-22; Ezek. 36:24-28; Isa. 56:6ff.; Micah 4:1ff.); (ii) Jesus' statements of the destruction of the temple (Matt. 24:1-2), and his implication that he would be the new temple, (iii) his prediction of a new worship of the Father by the Spirit (John 4:19-26).

The new worship came at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2, 8 and 10 with outpourings of the Spirit; and revelations of the Father and the Son, John 16:12-15). This is the worship of which Paul speaks in Philippians 3:3, where he contrasts the new worship with the old. The writer of Hebrews contrasts worship under the old (Mosaic) covenant, and under the New covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10) with talk of a new (heavenly) sanctuary, a new true High Priest, and Christ as ‘the new and living way’ to come to God, in contrast to the veiled Lord of the worship of Israel. The heart of the matter lies in Hebrews 9:14 and 10:9-18 where the purified heart and conscience permit sinful man to come to God in true and pure worship.

4. The Spirit and the New Worship

- (a) We have seen that the Spirit brought the new worship as he was poured out on God’s people in accordance with Ezekiel 36:24-28, Joel 2:28f., John 1:26, 33, John chs. 14-16 and Acts 1:8. We need to see that each outpouring brought the new worship to (i) Israel, (ii) the Samaritans, and (iii) to the Gentiles (nations of the world). This was a deep departure from worship for the Jews of the old covenant, and the idolatrous worship of the nations.
- (b) The principles Christ set out in John 4:20f. are (i) that God will be known and worshipped as Father, (ii) this worship must be ‘in spirit and in truth’, and (iii) that the Father takes the initiative in all worship. In speaking of my Father’s house’, and ‘the house of prayer’, he was referring to Isaiah 56:6ff., which in turn (cf. Micah 4:1ff) referred to the worship of, and in, the new temple. This is the new worship ‘in the Spirit’.
- (c) The Spirit renews (regenerates) man (John 3:3-6; Titus 3:5-7; I Cor. 6:11), which means he purifies the conscience so that man can offer pure worship in the response of love as God becomes living to him (Heb. 9:14; Rom. 12:1; cf. Rev. 7:14-15).
- (d) The Spirit is the ‘spirit of truth’ and brings revelation of God the Father and of the Son to the human spirit (I John 5:7; John 16:12-15). Hence Paul can say (of God), ‘ . . . whom I worship [serve] in my spirit’ (Rom. 1:9; cf. 15:16; Phil. 3:3). Such revelation is indescribably wonderful, the true fountain of pure worship.
- (e) It is clear from I Corinthians chs. 12-14 that the forms and spirit of worship in the apostolic church were by, and through, the Holy Spirit. Such worship involved the gifts of the Spirit.

STUDY THIRTY-ONE

God's People at Worship-3

1. God's People at Worship in the N.T.

We saw in our last study that with the coming of Christ and the Spirit a new worship began. This we saw in John 4:19-16, Philippians 3:3 and Romans 1:9. We saw that worship and love are one together, so worship sprang out of God's effective love (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 9:14; cf. 10:9-18; Rev. 7:9-15). This love was (is) made known by the Spirit (e.g. Rom. 5:5-10), and the Spirit thus brings worship to the heart of man. In Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 the coming of the Spirit brought forth the kind of worship which was (i) adoration of God and the proclaiming of His works, and (ii) the honouring of God's people by oneness in and with them (cf. Eph. 4:1:f; Phil. 2:1f.) caring for them, e.g. the daily distribution to the needy, caring for the widows, orphans, and (later) the caring of the daughter churches for the members of the church at Jerusalem.

2. The Acts of Worship in the N.T.

(i) Worship in the Acts

In Acts 2:42 the believers are at the temple at the hours of worship (every 3 hours). In 3:8 the man healed of lameness gives expression to his praise in the temple. In 4:23-31 the church prays for the apostles with powerful effects: their prayer is 'with one voice' (v. 24). In 12:5-17 the church prays for Peter who was in prison, with great effects. In 13:1-3 the church at Antioch worships (serves) the Lord, and the Holy Spirit directs them to send out Paul and Barnabas for ministry. In 14:8-18 and 17:22-31 the apostles speak against pagan worship and teach true worship. Prayer and fasting constitute the right situation to ordain elders in 14:23. In 20:7-11 we see a worship situation involving the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word of God. The address to the leaders (elders) by Paul at Miletus is teaching, and concludes with prayer. In 21:5 there is again a situation of corporate prayer, whilst in 21:10-14 there is the ministry of the prophet Agabus with the whole church at Caesarea. In 22:17 Paul speaks of his own personal prayer in the temple. In 24:14 Paul says to the governor, Felix, 'But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets'. In 27:22-26 Paul speaks of prayer with God, 'the God to whom I belong, and whom I worship'.

(ii) Worship in the Epistles

We have already seen teaching about worship (service) in the Epistles (e.g. Rom. 12:1; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 9:14) and in one sense I Corinthians chs. 10-14 are concerned mainly with the manner of worship, as also Ephesians 4:11-32 is to do with worship-service. Both sections speak of the use of gifts, and it seems that worship and the use of gifts are linked. In 11:4-5 both men and women pray and prophesy. In chs. 10 and 11 the service of the Lord's Supper is set out in terms of personal responsibility. In these chapters it is shown explicitly that the use of gifts as such does not constitute the whole of worship, but certainly gifts are used. In 14:20-25 the use of prophecy rather than tongues (as such) is recommended. In 14:26-33 the clearest description of worship is given (cf. I Thess 5:16-20; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17), and this should be studied. Hebrews is a book which takes up the old worship and the new worship, and its reference to our great High Priest, to the heavenly sanctuary, and to our 'entering in', all constitute great principles of worship, as, say, in 'the house of God' (3:1-7). Worship is practical (e.g. 13:15-16). Especially powerful is the principle set out in 12:28-29 and context. I Peter 2:4-10 speaks of a spiritual temple and a spiritual worship in words which align themselves with those of Hebrews.

(iii) Worship in the Book of the Revelation

This worship has already been dealt with in Study Eight, Point 5, 'The True Pure Celestial Worship' so that we do not need to repeat the elements of worship.

3. The Great Battle For Worship

Worship-as we have seen-is 'giving worth to'. History is really a cosmic battle for worship. God demands the worship of His creation and mankind. We have seen that original worship was 'the giving of glory and thanksgiving to God', but that Satan drew down a third of the angelic powers to worship and serve him, and *deceived* the woman into self worship, and the man *deliberately* turned to self-worship. The evil system of Satan is built on power-worship, and this is what man is at striving to do. Man's worship is expressed in idolatry which, itself, is linked with evil powers. Satan sought to get Christ to worship him (Matt. 4:8-10), and will claim to be as God in the Temple of God (II Thess. 2:3-4). In Revelation 13 the worship of the dragon, the beast and the image is the express intention and endeavour of evil. Galatians 4:8-10 and Colossians 2:16-23 show that when we do not 'hold fast to the Head' who is Christ, we revert to the control of evil powers, and false worship. The history of idolatry in both the O.T. and the N.T. show the power to deform man when he is linked with idols. Acts 7 shows that Israel was always incurably idolatrous.

We have seen that God gave the gift of worship to the ancient people of faith, and to Israel. Latterly He has given the gift of true worship to His church. In eternity the fulness of adoration will be expressed by celestial creatures, His redeemed (human) people, and all creation. We have also seen that we are most truly ourselves when we praise and worship God, and when our worship contains not only confession of (and healing for) our sins, but when-even more than this-we confess the greatness, authority, holiness, grace and love of God, and intercede for all creation. Then we truly worship. Then we truly and appropriately give worth and honour to all creatures, things, and persons of His creation.

This is our present apprenticeship for the ultimate worship in which all creatures and things-both celestial and terrestrial-shall join.

4. The Matter of Personal Worship

Finally we consider personal worship. Because God is our Father, and Christ has told us to abide in his own person, and ask what we will, we worship and adore the Father in the privacy of some place of adoration and intimacy with the Father. We know Him through the Word, the Son, and the Spirit, and we worship Him with love and thanksgiving. We must go on being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), be aglow with the Spirit (Rom. 12:11), walk in and be led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25; Rom. 8:14) so that we have ‘spiritual worship (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9). The use of the Word (written to be read, held in heart to be remembered) brings before us the nature of God, and the causes of, and inspirations to, worship. This includes purity of heart (a gift of God, Ps. 24; Heb. 9:14; etc.) and the gift of laying down our sins and failures at His feet as forgiven by the work of the Cross. Honouring others who are in need by heartfelt and Spirit-led intercession, is also part of prayer. The personal prayer of each person joins with all personal prayer by the multitude of His people, and by this corporate prayer we all grow and mature, at the same time honouring others along with ‘all the works of His hands’.

STUDY THIRTY-TWO

God's People Serving God

1. What It Means to Serve God

The main verbs 'to serve' in the OT and the NT are also the main verbs 'to worship'. Serving God as His people Israel and as His people the church equals worshipping Him. Studies 6 to 9 of this series describe the various ways of serving God, i.e. serving man, witnessing, and proclaiming the Gospel. The main word 'servant' (*obed*) in the O.T. can be understood by reading its contexts. In the NT the primary word is *doulos*, and means a slave, although, again, it may simply mean a servant such as we understand one today. Thus all kinds of services - practical, moral, spiritual and ecclesiastical - are ways and means by which man serves God.

2. Man as the Servant of God, or Himself

- (i) Man was given a general mandate for serving God, throughout history and throughout the world. Gen. 1:28f., cf. Psalm 8:3f.. This service was to be God's steward to the whole creation, so that each detail commanded reveals man's service to God, showing that there is nothing man does which is not service.
- (ii) The primal man was told to serve immediately within Eden. Gen. 2:15.
- (iii) Man's rebellion against God (Gen. 3:1-6, Rom. 1:19-32) did not free him from the creational mandate, but man sought to serve 'the creature rather than the creator', and reversed the truth to suit himself (Rom. 1:22-25). Man cannot stand alone (Jer. 10:23) so that he serves either God or the idols (cf. Matt. 6:24). It is up to him to make his choices as to which god or gods he will serve (cf. Josh. 24:15C). There is no way in which he can escape serving whether it is sin, his own flesh, angels or other humans. His service is always depicted as slavery (cf. Gal. 4:8, Col. 2:16ff, Rev. ch.13).
- (iv) There have always been those who have served God, even though they are the children of Adam the rebel, and Eve the deceived. Hebrews 11 gives an account of those who worked for God, calling them 'men and women of faith'. These worshipped God in holiness, and served him in the practice of life. Commencing with Abel, and continuing through to the ultimate saints and martyrs they were God's servants.
- (v) With the coming of Christ, his life, death, resurrection and ascension the people of God (the church) have been given another mandate, namely the proclamation of the Gospel in all the world. The slaves of Satan are forced to work against this Gospel, raising up 'counter gospels' or 'counterfeit gospels'. Such slaves are forced to work in the interests of these 'gospels' which emanate from the arch-deceiver Satan.

3. Man Serving God in History

- (i) Man's primary service - which is his whole service - is to do the will of God. God's will for His creation and history covers everything man does in obedience as the servant of God.
- (ii) Serving God is the keeping of His law. This law was always extant (cf. Rom. 5:12-14, Gen. 26:5) for it related to the nature of creation (cf. Gen. 1:31, Eccles 3:11, etc.) but was first given in written form through Moses by God, to Israel. In Israel's case certain elements of the law related to that particular society of God but the unchangeable 'law of God' (cf. Rom. 8:4) was the heart of the matter in serving God. See Psalms 1, 19, and 119 for the law as instruction in righteousness, and as service.
- (iii) The law, worship and service are all of the one piece. See Deut. chs.4 and 10 for examples of this principle. The law must not be seen simply as the living out of good morals. The law is not just 'rules and regulations'. In fact the law is doing the will of God but it is dynamic. The laws and ordinances of God are with a purpose to the fulfilment of His will in the various present, continuing, ongoing, and purposeful, actions of history. Thus man is described as 'walking the way', i.e. he is going somewhere with God. Obedience is not just 'legal' but springs from the grace and love of God (Exod. 20:1ff., II Cor 5:14), and must be seen as man working for God and with God (cf. I Cor 3:9). Thus Abraham knows and keeps God's laws and ordinances (Gen. 26:5), Israel sees the law as rich, dynamic, beautiful (Pss. 1, 19, 119), and obedience to the law comes from the 'new heart' (Ezek. 36:24-28, Jer. 31:31-34,) and the Christian believers understand this 'law of Christ' (I Cor 9:21, Gal. 6:1-2, cf. Rom. 13:10, Gal 5:13) and so obey with the 'new heart' (cf. Rom. 7:6, II Cor. 5:14).
- (iv) Service to God in the OT is not just carrying out the known law of God, but as we have said, 'the will of God', i.e. God gives certain specific directions as well as making known His law. Thus pre-flood and post-flood commands, the directions to the patriarchs and later to Israel, and much later to the church are all elements of serving God. In this way God both rules, affects, and effects history, and thus His will is carried out. This then involves all who are the elect people of God, who are joined to Him by His covenants, and who - as servants - are co-workers with Him to fulfil His plan formed before time (cf. Eph. 1:3-15, 3:8-11, Rev. 10:1-7). This is shown clearly in Hebrews 11, where men and women of faith show that faith is obedience (see especially vss.32-40). Such service included all who witnessed (cf. Study ?) to God by their actions of obedience, and so kings, prophets and priests along with men and women of all vocations are called 'the servants of God'. This vast system of service is a great marvel. See Micah 6:8, Matt. 5:16, Rev. 14:13, I Cor. 10:26.

STUDY THIRTY-THREE

God's People Serving Man

1. Man the Servant of God

In our last Study we saw God's People Serving God. We saw that since God is the true Servant and Worker, and man is made in His image, then man will also serve man, for this is what God does. Such service (as contained in Gen. 1:28f.) is not a servile work, but true work. It is part of what it means to be man - i.e. to be in action for others.

2. Man Refuses to Serve Man

Gen. 3:1-6 with Rom. 1:18-32 show us that when man rejected God, the world system as God had given it to man for stewardship, then man not only suppressed the true idea of God and creation, but necessarily rejected the true idea of man. The temptation to be a god meant he would serve none but himself. Any service he gave to others (as is the case with the 'gods') would be on the basis of payment, or profit. Moreover man would now be in competition with man, for success would mean the best opportunity for survival, especially in the light of the fear of death which had now intruded to rule man (Rom. 5:12, Heb. 2:14-15, cf. I John 4:18f). Man hopes that success will stave off death, the root of his defy fear.

3. The Law of Love

An analysis of the 10 commandments shows that they are divided into two sections (i) love to God, and (ii) love to one's neighbours (cf. Matt 22:36-40). In the N.T. Christ gives the command to love (John 13:34, 15:12), and so Paul speaks of the 'the law of Christ' (I Cor. 9:21, Gal. 6:2). In Rom. 13:8-10 the law is summed in one sentence, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself, to which is added, ' 'Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. In Gal. 5:13-14 Paul says, ' . . . through love be servants to one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself .

We conclude then that (a) the law is love to one's neighbour as well as to God, (b) that serving one another is essential to loving the neighbour, and (c) that true service is by love. Without love there is no true service, and without service there is no true love.

4. The Principle of Serving

- (i) Since God serves us, we ought to serve one another.
- (ii) The mandate of Gen. 1:28ff shows that we cannot avoid serving one another. That is ,our serving must be mutual, and requires enablement from God.

- (iii) Far from serving being servile it simply requires humility which is normal obedience to God and man where true law requires it. See Matt.11:25-30, where Jesus equates obedience with humility.
- (iv) To be great is to serve, and not the reverse. Christ showed us that he is greatest who serves. See Luke 9:46-48, 22:24-27.
- (v) Phil. 2:1-8 should be studied closely. Paul says two special things, (a) ‘Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, conceit but *in humility count others better than yourselves,*’ and (b) ‘Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but *also to the interests of others*’. This must surely mean (a) ‘Put the other person first’, and (b) ‘Have a concern for others’. Paul says that to do this we should have Christ’s mind in ourselves. The example of Christ ‘putting others before himself, and ‘being concerned for others’ is a wonderful and amazing attitude of mind which issues in remarkable action, the action of course arising only from love.

5. The Church Serving Man

It is surely clear that when we serve God we will truly serve man. If we truly serve man then we will be serving God. The church **serves internally**, i.e. all members serve all members, and in so doing promote the good health of the Body. Thus the church is able **to serve externally**. In what areas and by what means, then, does it serve mankind?

(i) *The Church Serving Internally*

- (i) From Pentecost onwards the church cared for the widows, the orphans, the poor. The ‘daily distribution’ began on the day of Pentecost (Acts chs. 2 and 4). The church at Antioch gave aid to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). In the Epistles we find Paul urging the giving of a substantial offertory to the believers at Jerusalem (cf. II Cor. chs. 8 and 9). The poor are always kept in mind (I Cor. 16:1, Gal. 2:10 cf. Acts 20:33-35). Both James and John speak of ministering to those in need (James 2:1-13, I John 3:17-18). We can say then that members of the church met the physical needs of the members.
- (ii) The serving of one another in love (Gal. 5:13) would have been done in many ways. The elders would have sought to serve in the area of emotional needs, and in relational problems. No doubt there was the organisation of the church in the form of elders, deacons, older women teaching younger women, and through them there would have been true service. Serving would also have been done by use of the *charismata*, i.e. the gifts of Christ and the Spirit. Their range was vast, and doubtless could meet all needs, and give all encouragement. Gifts such as ‘giving’ and ‘helps’ would be just as practical as the more prominent gifts.

(ii) *The Church Serving Externally*

- (i) The creational mandate (Gen. 1:28ff.) is still a demand made on all the human race, not only the church, but the church is bound to have special recognition of it.
- (ii) In Mark 10:45 Christ claimed he came to serve mankind. By what means? ‘To give his life a ransom for many’. This then is redemptional, and following his death and resurrection he gave his disciples the mandate of preaching the Gospel to every person, and of discipling all nations. For proclamation see Studies 8 and 9.

(iii) Believers should 'do good unto all men' (Gal. 6:10) which must mean that all physical and redemptive service should be accorded to everyone. Thus the poor, the needy, widows, orphans, the poor and their sick should all be served by the powers God has given in 'word and deed, by signs and wonders, and by power of the Holy Spirit'.

5. Conclusion

Serving should all spring from love. It gives man - especially Christian man - the sense of true vocation. 'It is more blessed to give than receive', and yet giving means a rich return, for, 'Give and it shall be given unto you', i.e. in the light of 'Freely you have received: freely give'. Serving as we see from Phil. 2:1-11 is not patronising.

Giving is a whole way of life. Yet all of it entails suffering for man, as it entailed suffering for God and Christ. To give by suffering, and to serve 'unto death' is sharing the nature of God in the affairs of mankind.

Note:- *'The Sons of God are the Servants of All'* G. Bingham, (NCPI, 1982) expands our present study, and should be greatly helpful as background material.

STUDY THIRTY-FOUR

God's People at Witness

1. The Meaning And Need of Witness

The meaning of the noun 'witness' (one who tells the truth of what he has seen), and the verb 'to witness' (to testify to the truth) cover a vast subject, with which we cannot adequately deal in this study. The principle of witnessing by witnesses is enormously important because (i) man is made in the image of God Who is the truth, (ii) when man rejected God he rejected the truth (Rom. 1:18-25), and keeps suppressing it, (iii) Satan, the world, the world powers, the flesh, sin, the lusts of the flesh, fallen human beings and the human heart all deceive. How then will Satan know the truth since he has been 'a liar from the beginning'? The heart of man is 'deceitful above all things'. How then shall the truth be known? The answer is 'By those who have not rebelled, i.e. angel beings, and also those whose eyes God has opened to the truth, i.e. redeemed human beings.

2. A General Idea of Witnessing

Often Christians think that witnessing means talking directly to everyone they meet of the Gospel, and getting them - if possible - to make some decision regarding Christ. Whilst this may be part of the matter it is not all of it. We cannot tell the truth unless (i) we have come to *know* the truth of God and His Gospel, (ii) unless we continually live in that truth and (iii) by obeying the truth walk in the Spirit of truth.

3. The People of God : Witnesses and Witnessing

(1) Israel the Witness

- (i) All people of faith have been witnesses, at least from Abel. See Hebrews 11.
- (ii) Israel was considered by God to be His witness. The truth of God came to them by the revelation of Himself, by His covenant, and by His law. The Scriptures (the O.T.) incorporated the books of the Law, the former prophets, the devotional and Wisdom book, and the latter prophets. The prophets were primary witnesses since they uttered the very words of God.
- (iii) Israel witnessed by being a holy priestly nation (Exod. 19:5, cf. Lev. 11:44), and God punished it by exile when it profaned His Name, i.e. because a false witness to Him (cf. Ezek. 36:16ff).
- (iv) Israel was told it would yet be God's witness (Isaiah 43:10,12, 44:8), and the special witness (Israel) is to be the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 55:4).

(2) Christ the Witness

- (i) Christ was witnessed to by (a) John the Baptist (John 5:30-35), (b) the works he (Christ) did (John 1:6-9, 5:6, 10:25, cf. 14:11, 18:23), (c) by the Father (John 5:37, 8:18, I John 5:9-10, cf. Matt. 3:37, 17:5, II Pet.1:12ff.), (d) by the Scriptures (John 5:39, Luke 18:31), and (e) by the prophets (Acts 10:43, Luke 24:27, cf. Rev. 19:10), by the Holy Spirit (John 15:26, cf. I John 5:7-8, Rev. 19:10), by the apostles and the church (Acts 1:8, I John 1:1-4)
- (ii) Christ witnessed to the Father and the truth (John 18:37, John 3:11, I Tim 6:13). He is called 'the faithful witness', 'the faithful and true witness', and 'faithful and true' (Rev.1:5, 3:14, 19:11).

(3) The Church the Witness

- (i) In Acts 1:8 Jesus said the disciples would witness to him.
- (ii) He had previously said the disciples would bear witness to him and the Gospel (John 15:26-27, Luke 24:44-49).
- (iii) The main condition for becoming witnesses was to be baptised (filled) with the Spirit. Acts 1:8, Acts 2Aff., Acts 4:29-33, for only by the Spirit could they preach the Gospel (I Cor 2:4-5, I Thess. 1:5, I Pet. 1:12. Note:- The church witnesses by telling the truth, i.e. the Gospel, and in so doing confronts men with the fact they are 'living a lie' (cf. Rom. 1:25), because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Only he can convince men in their minds and living of their falsity before God (John 16:7-15).
- (iv) The Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation have many references to the witness the people of God gave 'by word and deed, by signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit'.

4. The Way of Witnessing

It should be evident that,

- (i) the Spirit filled person has come to know the truth, for there is no other way to know the truth,
- (ii) that the Spirit filled person is empowered to witness by 'word and deed, the power of signs and wonders, and the power of the Holy Spirit',
- (iii) that witness involves (a) proclaiming the Gospel (see Studies 8 and 9), (b) the new way of holy, loving, and serving living, and (c) the way of suffering (see Study 10). It should also be evident that there is no 'How To' technique available for witnessing. The 'testimony of Jesus' is,
 - (a) showing what Christ has done through the power of the Spirit,
 - (b) being 'in Christ' so that what we do is Christ working in us in accordance with the principle of John 14:10-14, and,
 - (c) being in all that Christ is now doing for as the Father witnesses to him, so we also witness to him, and he witnesses to us. This is because we are all involved in 'the testimony of Jesus' which is his own witness, i.e. his living truth in history the truth of God which in turn is the fulfilling of the Father's plan for all time and eternity.

Note:- Those reading these notes or hearing the cassette should read 'Is Prophecy for Today' (G. Bingham, NCPI, 1982). Pages 6-13 are especially linked with this study (Study Seven). For further helpful reading see 'Christ's People in Today's World'.

STUDY THIRTY-FIVE

God's People at Proclamation - 1

1. The Command to Proclaim

There can be no question: the early church was commanded to proclaim the Gospel. John and Jesus had both proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and so had the disciples (cf. Luke 9:1ff., 10:1ff.). This had been in Palestine and to Israel only. Intimations were given that others outside Israel would be brought into the Kingdom or the Vineyard and that it (the Kingdom) would be given to another, i.e. nation or nations.

What is often called 'The Great Commission' is well known in the passages of Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-19; Luke 24:44ff.; John 20:19-23; and Acts 1:8; with Acts 10:42. Paul, it may be seen, was personally called to the apostolic proclamation (Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:16ff.).

2. God' People Under Constraint

Paul always felt himself under constraint to preach. See II Cor. 5:14; I Cor. 9:15-23; especially verses 15 and 16. One key lies in Christ's authority 'All authority is given unto me, go therefore, and make disciples of all nations', Christ was seen to be Lord by virtue of his resurrection, and so rightfully to command all history. Without this declared authority, the disciples would be accused of doing what they wished. II Cor. 5:14 (cf. John 14:15; I John 4:19) speaks of the constraint of love. This is the primary constraint, though doubtless it contains other elements (e.g. the fear of the Lord', II Cor 5:11; cf. I Cor. 9:15-17).

In the 'commission' passages at the ends of the Gospels, we see that Matt. 28:19 and Mark 16:15 really have a non-imperative participle, i.e. 'going' and this assumes the church going with the Gospel rather than commands it to do so. The other passages lack a definite imperative, all of which adds up to the principle that in going and proclaiming is from a rich constraint (II Cor. 5:14). [For the words linked with the verb 'to constrain' (*sunexo*) see Matt 4:24; Luke 12:50; Acts 18:5; Phil. 1:23; Luke 8:45 19:43; 22:63, and those of the verbs *parabiazomai*), Luke 24:29; Acts 16:15, and *anagkazo*, Matt. 14:22; Acts 28:19; Gal. 6:12.

3. The Goal of Proclamation

The goals of proclamation are many, but primarily the bringing in of God's elect (a) to salvation (justification, the forgiveness of sins and sanctification) and, (b) to ultimate glorification. These goals can be seen in the following elements:- (i) Personal salvation, Acts 16:31, (ii) deliverance from sins by forgiveness and cleansing, Acts 26:18; 15:9, (iii) deliverance from the powers of darkness (Acts 26:18), (iv) eternal life (John 5:24; Acts 13:48; regeneration (Tit. 3:5; II Cor. 5:17); (v) sonship (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15). Thus the goal of Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Pss. 2 and 110 will be seen in the ultimate glorification of God's people, His special flock, His true 'kingdom of priests', His temple and His Holy City.

STUDY THIRTY-SIX

God's People at Proclamation - 2

1. The Proclamation of the Message

- (i) The two words used are *kerugma* and *euangelion*. The first means 'proclamation', and the second 'good news'. This, then, is the message proclaimed.
- (ii) The content of the *kerugma* includes the facts that Jesus is the Messiah for he has fulfilled the prophecies made in regard to Israel's Messiah. He was attested by God through signs and wonders (Acts 2:22). His crucifixion was prophetically ordained by God (Acts 2:23) So were his resurrection, and ascension. This makes him - Jesus -both Lord and Christ. Men must obey by believing. The content of the *euangelion* does not differ, but rather the fruits of the *kerugma* lie in the offer of the gifts of repentance and faith, and the subsequent forgiveness of sins, purification (etc.) which are generally known as the *euangelion*.

2. The Means of Proclamation

These **are** set out in Romans 15:18-19:-

- (i) **the word** , i.e. the word of God, cf. I Thess. 1:5, I Cor. 1:18, Rom. 1:16-17. I Cor 2:4-5, and see the word throughout the book of Acts,
- (ii) **the deeds**, (a) the deeds which those proclaiming did, such as their way of living (such as holiness, love, care for converts, no coveting, etc.), (b) the results of preaching the word in deliverance from sin, demonic powers, and (c) the suffering of the proclaimers which seemed inevitably to accompany the proclamation,
- (iii) **the signs and wonders** for these (a) attested to the proclaimers (cf. Acts 14:3), (b) were signs of the Kingdom (Acts 8:6-7,12), and 'the powers of the age to come', and (c) acts which mercifully delivered people from sickness and demons,
- (iv) **the power of the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:8, I Pet. 1:12). Only the Spirit could confront with the word of God, convict of sin, and give the redemptive gifts, and effect regeneration, justification, sonship, etc.

3. The Matter of Proclamation

The Book of Acts shows us how Christ (Matt. 28:20, Mark 16:20, Acts 10:42, 22:18, 26:16ff.) and the Spirit (Acts 1:8, 8:29, 13:2f., 16:6-10) constrained, led and empowered the church to preach the Gospel. Pentecost, the formation of the church, the persecution of Stephen, the proclamation to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles led to the wider proclamation outlined in Acts. This proclaiming of the Gospel has continued down through the centuries. The church proclaims in its threefold ministry as the prophetic (Acts 2:17-21) priestly (I Pet. 2:4-10, Rom. 15:16) and kingly (royal: I Pet. 2:9-10, II Thess. 1:5) community. Proclamation is not allotted only to those called 'evangelists'.

STUDY THIRTY-SEVEN

God's People in Suffering

1. God's People Always Suffer'

Paul said, 'All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecutions' (II Tim. 3:12). Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 5:10-11). This does not mean Christians should look for suffering or even expect it. It will happen for the following reasons:-

(i) The world system - the system of Satan - will hate God's Kingdom and His people. (ii) The holiness, righteousness, truth and love of God and His people will always confront evil with its distortion and falsity, provoking incredible fury. (iii) Evil knows its doom, and hates the judgements which are coming.

2. The Church, the Christian and Suffering

(1) Suffering For the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake.

Evil hates the Kingdom and will try to threaten, deceive, subvert and seduce its members. See Acts 14:22; Matt. 5:10-11; Rev. chs. 12-20. Luke 11:14-23 shows that this battle is always proceeding.

(2) Suffering Is Always Part of True Ministry.

For the reason above the proclamation of the Gospel will always be attacked. This is the story of the Gospels; the Acts; the Epistles and the Revelation. The apostles suffered at the hands of the Sanhedrin; Stephen was martyred; James killed by Herod, and Paul had to go to trial. On the missionary journeys the apostles met with persecution. Passages to read are II Cor. 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:22-29; II Tim. 3:10-12. Peter's two epistles have suffering as their primary theme. In the Revelation we have 1:9; 2:10; 13, 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:7-8; 12:17; 13:9-10; 14:12-13; 17:6; 18:24.

(3) Suffering Is The True Way of Fruitfulness.

Isaiah 53:11-12 is the principle of the fruitfulness of suffering. See also John 12:24-25; II Cor 4:8-12. In fact without suffering there is no fruitfulness. See I Thess. chapter 1 one for a classic example of this. The suffering mentioned in the paragraph above illustrates this.

(4) Suffering is a Power for Holy Example and Purification.

This is the thrust of Peter's first Epistle. (i) He argues that suffering for our own misdeeds is reasonable, since we deserve it, but to be an example when unjustly punished we must be as Jesus, not fighting back. This is also seen in Rev. 13:10; 14:12-13. See 2:20-23, and 4:12-17 and compare with Rom. 12:19-21, Matt. 5:43-48. (ii) Purification by suffering is seen in I Pet. 1:6-7. In 4:1 Peter is saying that he who has suffered, has ceased from sin, i.e. he would not be suffering if he were on the side of sin!

(5) Suffering is The Way Of, and To, Glory.

None of this will make sense if we think suffering is the cost of glory, instead of its own essence. Rom. 8:17 says, 'provided that we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him'. Suffering is the way to glory. We only know the glory of God's love and Person because of the suffering of the Cross (I John 4:9-10, I John 3:16). Rom. 8:18-25 shows that creation (including us) is in pangs of suffering until the entire creation is liberated 'into the glory of the liberty of the sons of God'. II Cor 4:16ff. shows that the glory will be revealed. Meanwhile (II Cor. 3:18) we are 'being changed from one stage of glory to another'.

(6) We Must Accept the Principle of Suffering and Be Wholly In It.

Phil. 3:10 shows the principle of sharing Christ's suffering. Col. 1:24 shows that these sufferings - for and with the church - must be shared. This being so God's plan will be fulfilled. The rewards and outcome are great (see (3), above). We must not be angry with God or blame Him for suffering. Christ has already suffered all our suffering, good and bad (Isa. 53:4-6). Gen. 18:26 and Rom. 8:28 show us God works only for good, for those who love him. Suffering then is not a cause of bewilderment or anger, but only of sharing in the life of God and growing towards that maturity which He is presently effecting.

STUDY THIRTY-EIGHT

God's People in Hope

1. The Meaning of Hope

Man without hope is hopeless. This is not a foolish truism. It is reality. Man bases his hopes upon his ability to achieve certain goals, and usually he leans on his gods, and what he calls 'fate'. Hope for him is a desire, and a wishful thinking, without any true basis. Even if nothing presents itself for hope, man will have to make something for hope-hence his short-term goals. Man, because of the fall into sin, does not relate to the living God. Hence he has to have 'substitute hope'.

For the Christian, hope is a fixed certainty, an unswerving assurance regarding the future. This based on three things, (i) the nature of God as revealed by Himself through the Scriptures, (ii) the acts God has done as 'the living God', and (iii) the promises God has made regarding the future. All this presupposes the hopeful person has already experienced salvation and lives daily in the good of it.

2. God the Only Source and Basis For Hope

Jeremiah 17:5 says trust in man is futile, Job 31:24-28 that hope in riches is baseless, and Ezekiel 33:13 that trust in one's own righteousness is vain. The N.T. repeats this sentiment. A vast amount is spoken concerning trust in the idols and gods. Since the idols have no (ontological) reality, there is no point hoping in them. In Israel God is called 'Thou hope of Israel' (Jer. 14:8, 17:13), and the Israelite would cry 'Thou, Lord, art my hope!' (Ps. 71:5), or say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?', and answer himself, 'Hope in God!' (Ps. 42:5, 11). Psalm 52:9 has it, 'I mean to put my hope in your Name, that is so full of kindness, in the presence of those who love you.'

God, for His part, said to Israel, 'I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to *give you a future and a hope*'. Passages such as Isa 46:8-11, 48:12-16, Ephesians 1:3-14, 2:1-11, Revelation 10:1-7 show that God has planned everything, so His counsel and will are the true basis for hope. Amos 3:7 says God does nothing but what He first tells to the prophets. Messiah was called 'the hope of Israel' (Acts 28:20). Thus 'things hoped for' were and are the basis for faith (Heb. 12:1-2). Faith has a present hold on things hoped for. It has 'the substance' of them. We conclude this section by concluding that we have no hope apart from God, His nature, plan and grace, but in Him we have total hope, i.e. fixed assurance of the things to come. On this score we understand, 'God, Father who loved us, and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace' (II Thess. 2:16); 'We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (I Pet. 1:3, cf. I Tim. 1:1, Col. 1:27); and, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit. you may abound in hope' (Rom. 15:13). We conclude then that the basis and object of our hope is God-Father, Son and Spirit.

3. The Particular Objects of Our Hope

- (i) The hope of salvation (see I Thess. 5:8, Rom. 8:24.) In Gal. 5:5 Paul speaks of ‘the hope of justification’. He is stating a principle that all we have now is by faith. Hence we hope for its coming reality, when--so to speak we will have all things not by hope (in faith) but by sight.
- (ii) The hope of resurrection. See Titus 1:2, I Pet. 1:3, Acts 26:6, 28:20, II Tim. 2:11, cf. I Cor. 15:19.
- (iii) The hope of glory. Rom. 5:2, Rom. 8:18-25. This hope is based on many promises of glorification (Isa. 43:6-7, Eph. 1:11-14, I Cor. 2:6), of which most basic of all is Col. 1:27, ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’.
- (iv) The hope of inheritance. See Col. 1:5, Eph. 1:18, cf. Col. 1:12, Gal. 4:7, Rev. 21:7. The matter of inheritance is always linked with sonship.

4. Living in Hope

Living in hope has a number of elements:

- (i) Peter exhorts his readers to ‘*set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*’ (I Pet.1:3).
- (ii) Paul exhorts his listeners to wear the ‘helmet *the hope of salvation*’ (I Thess. 5:8). He exhorts others who are ‘awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ’.
- (iii) The writer of Hebrews says, ‘We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing *the full assurance of hope* unto the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises’ 6:9-20).
- (iv) John writes, ‘And everyone who has this hope in himself purifies himself, even as he is pure’ (I John 3:3).
- (v) Love and hope are related: without love, hope is a thing of which we may be ashamed (Rom. 5:5). This is in the context of suffering, as in Rom. 12:12, but then hope inspires boldness (II Cor. 3:12-13).
- (vi) When we have great hope, then we can say why this is so, (I Pet. 3:15).
- (vii) Hope is never apart from faith and love: the three are an inseparable triad. See I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 1:3-5; Heb. 11:1,3; Rom. 15:13; Rom, 5:1,5; Gal. 5:5-6; I Thess. 5:8; I Cor 13:7, 13.