

## Short Papers — Section 9 of 10.

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### PRAYER

By all means persevere in prayer for the object you name. God may see it good to keep you waiting. The exercise is very healthful for the soul. There is a very encouraging word in Philippians 4, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” And what then? Does Paul say, “You shall immediately receive what you ask for?” No, but “The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This is a most precious word. It presents a character of prayer so blessedly simple. We are encouraged by it to come to God about everything, no matter how small, without raising a question as to whether we have faith. We are to “make known our requests to God,” though surely He knows them before. He loves to have us coming to Him about all our little matters and resting in the happy assurance that He will do what is right and give us what is good. Whether He gives or withholds, His peace shall guard our hearts and minds.

With regard to your difficulty in the matter of prayer, many are tried in the same way. It may be that you ask for things which would not be really good for you or it may be the Lord sees it right to exercise your heart by keeping you in the attitude of continued waiting upon Him. We have often been struck with the teaching of 1 John 3: 21-22 and vv. 14-15. If we are in communion with God we shall ask for those things that are pleasing in His sight, we shall ask in faith and we shall assuredly get an answer. See also John 15: 7, “If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” This is very practical. May God Himself be your teacher.

It is regretfully possible that a Christian may find himself not in the spirit of prayer. When such is the case, he ought to judge himself and cry to God to lead him into a right state of soul. There is no value in form without power, but God is the abiding source of all power and freshness. And, blessed be His name, “He hath given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Hence, when you find yourself not in a spirit of prayer, do not have recourse to a form but to the living God.

Our Lord does not forbid *frequent* repetition but “*vain* repetition.” He Himself, blessed be His name, in His agony in the garden, prayed the same thing three times over. This is sufficient to prove that there may be repetition which is very far indeed from being “*vain*.” An individual in the privacy of his closet, or a number of Christians in public assembly, may earnestly, fervently, perseveringly and importunately urge and re-urge a certain matter which presses heavily on the heart, without being open to the charge of “*vain* repetition.”

In Romans 8: 26-27 we are taught that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. He it is who is the Author of every true and right desire in our hearts. He teaches us to pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus. It is only by the Spirit that we can pray as we ought. As to the question of praying *to* the Holy Spirit, we do not think it intelligent. True, the Holy Spirit is God and is to be viewed in His own distinct Personality, but still the New Testament teaches us that He prays *in* us *to* the Father *by* the Son. A person praying to the Holy Spirit can hardly see with clearness the Spirit's indwelling.

In Acts 7: 59 we have Stephen addressing prayer to the Lord Jesus. We cannot see how anyone could object to our doing the same. We must beware of being hyper-critical.

An intelligent worshiper will always address God in the character and by the name in which He is

pleased to reveal Himself. His name to us is “Father.” True, the One who is our Father was and is “the God of Jacob,” “the Almighty God .... Jehovah,” but to us He is Father. Precious title! May we ever live in the sunlight of His countenance! We would all readily say that it is not a question of bodily attitude in prayer, but rather of the state of the heart — the true attitude of the soul. At the same time we must confess we like to see people kneel down when they can. We say, “when they can” because in many cases, it is utterly impossible when people are so packed together as to be hardly able to move. There is no attitude which so aptly expresses prostration of soul as kneeling. It looks lazy and irreverent to see people always sitting while praying. But we must not judge one another in this matter. Many things have to be taken into account. The Lord looks upon the heart. May He ever find our hearts in the right attitude before Him! This is the grand point.

### **THE DIVINE CHARACTER OF FAITH**

The inspired apostle James tells us that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” Does not this answer the question as to faith? Every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.

Some may have a difficulty as to Ephesians 2: 8, “By grace are ye saved, through faith, *and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*” But to us it is perfectly clear that “faith,” like every other good and perfect gift, is from God. “All men have not faith,” or as it should be read, “Faith is not of all.” If faith be not the gift of God, it is only an exercise of the human mind and thus worthless.

Faith is a divine reality worked in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It grasps the revelation of God and thus links the heart with Him in a divine way. It is all of God from first to last. “All things are of God” in the new creation. Blessed be His holy name for the assurance! Were it not so — were there the weight of a feather or the movement of an eyelash of ours in the whole matter, it would spoil all.

### **THE LAW**

Your question involves the very foundations of Christianity. We give you in reply, one brief but comprehensive statement of Holy Scripture. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Again, “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (See Rom. 7; Gal. 3). If we are to be taught by Scripture alone, then we learn that the believer is “dead to the law.” He died in Christ as the New Testament teaches us in many places. Now, what has the law to say to a dead man? Or what has a dead man to say to the law? Is the law binding upon a dead man? The idea is absurd. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

True it is that a Christian, walking in the Spirit, fulfills the practical righteousness of the law (Rom. 8: 4). But if you put a Christian *under* the law, you put him under the curse, for the apostle declares that as many as are on that ground, not merely as many as have not kept the law, are under the curse. In short, *the entire teaching of Romans and Galatians is flatly opposed to the notion of putting Christians under the law whether for justification or as a rule of life.* So far from its being the ground of justification, it is the ground of condemnation. So far from its being a rule of life, it is a rule of death. See Romans 7: 10 and 2 Corinthians 3.

Does anyone in his right mind need to be told that a Christian is not to steal or commit murder? Surely not. Let us remember that Christian morals rest on a *Christian* basis and not on a *legal* basis. The law was given to man in the old creation, to test him, prove him and cause the offense to abound. The Christian is not in the old creation but in the new (2 Cor. 5: 17). He is not in the flesh but in the

Spirit (Rom. 7: 9).

Are these things mere figures of speech or are they divine statements concerning the very foundations of Christianity? Let us look well to it, dear friend. Let us see where we are. A person who, in his actual experience, is under the law, must be a stranger to the peace and liberty of the gospel. Moreover he must be wholly ignorant of the true character of Christianity.

If we trace the history and the writings of the great apostle of the Gentiles, we find there was nothing that so grieved and pained him — nothing he so strongly denounced — as the attempt to put Christians under the law in any shape or form or for any object whatsoever. When he speaks of himself as “being under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9: 21), any competent person understands that the word is “under rule or authority to Christ” and has nothing to do with being under the law of Moses, which the apostle everywhere denounces in the strongest terms. The law-teachers get no quarter whatever from Paul. This is as clear as anything can be. Hence, if we are going to submit to Scripture, the law question is easily settled. But if any man refuses to submit to that authority, we do not see there is much use in talking to him.

In 1 Corinthians 9: 21 the expression “under the law” is one word which simply means *under the rule or authority of Christ*. Paul was not under the law of Moses, nor are we either, thanks be to God.

“The Jew” as such is bound to fulfill the law, or else to meet the curse pronounced upon “every man who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” But where is the Jew that can meet God on the ground of moral law or ceremonial law? Did you ever hear or know of one who could claim blessing on the ground of perfect obedience? It will be said, “There is mercy.” Yes, but not under law. “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy.” Law and mercy are two different things. If a man can fulfill the law, he does not need mercy; if he has not fulfilled the law, it has no mercy for him. What remains? Simply to take the place of a poor, ruined, self-destroyed, guilty sinner.

“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” What then? “In Me is thy help.” But on whom has this help been laid? On One mighty to save, even the Messiah of Israel, Him of whom Isaiah speaks in the following well-known passage: “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. So shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His bruising we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Here the repentant Jew may find the true ground of deliverance from the curse of the law. Christ was made a curse by hanging on a tree. “He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” “And all who believe in Him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Nor this only; they are delivered from the law as a rule or principle, being counted dead to it by the death of Christ.

This in no wise interferes with Jeremiah 31: 36-37 to which you refer. It has nothing to say to the question. If “the Jew embraces Christianity” he ceases to be a Jew and takes his stand on the new ground where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ. This leaves wholly untouched the promises and purposes of God to Israel which shall all be literally and infallibly fulfilled in due time. “All Israel shall be saved.” The Scriptures teem with the evidence of this grand truth. Not one jot or tittle of the promises made to the fathers can fail. To quote the proofs would demand a volume. If you will apply your heart to the study of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews, you will find a very full and satisfactory reply to your question, “What passages of Scripture tend to release the Jew from ceremonial observance?” If he believes in Jesus, he is dead to the law; if he does not, he will be damned by the law.

We cannot see how Galatians 3: 19 can possibly negate the true reading of 1 John 3: 4 which is “Sin is *lawlessness*.” The two passages are in perfect harmony. “Wherefore then the law? It was added because of transgression.” So also in Romans 4: 15: “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is there is no transgression.” Is it not obvious that to have transgression there must be law? Yes; and it is equally obvious that where there is a law there must be transgression because man is a sinner.

The law raised the question of righteousness and proved that man had none. Without law man was a lawless sinner. Under law, he was a wilful transgressor. From Adam to Moses, there was no law and therefore no transgression, though surely there was sin and therefore *death*, the wages of sin. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression” (Rom. 5: 14). Adam had a law; therefore his act was transgression. So we read in Hosea 6: 7, “They [Israel] like Adam, have transgressed.” See margin. We are at a loss to understand the difficulties of some of our friends in reference to a matter so exceedingly plain.

We judge there is still a little confusion in your mind as to “the old husband” in Romans 7. We do not think it is the flesh any more than the law, though, assuredly, the flesh is to be reckoned dead, for such it is in God's account, and faith always takes God's view of matters. We are apt to get confused through not distinguishing in Romans 7 between the *illustration* of the marriage tie and the *application*. In the illustration the *husband* dies, but in the application it is *we* who have died. In short, death dissolves the tie — not the death of the law but *our* death. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” And again, “But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held” (See Margin). In chapter 6 the question of “the flesh” is handled. In chapter 7 the question of “the law.” Death delivers from both the one and the other.

We believe that in Romans 7 the apostle gives us the exercise of a quickened soul not knowing deliverance. It is, to use a figure, a man who has got out of a trap, describing his feelings when he was in it. Do you think Paul was a “wretched man” crying out for deliverance when he penned his epistle to the Romans? Most certainly not! He was a happy man rejoicing in full deliverance. But he is describing the exercise of a quickened soul still under the law and having no power against sin. This is not proper Christian experience. Can a Christian never do right? Must he always do wrong? Can a Christian say, “How to perform that which is good, I find not?” The fact is, in all this part of the chapter, you do not get the Holy Spirit in His indwelling power. There is new life but there is no power, no sense of full deliverance, no consciousness of victory. All this you have in chapter 8 which is proper Christian experience.

We believe many of God's beloved people have never gotten out of Romans 7. While we must admit that we should much prefer being honestly in chapter 7 to being falsely in Romans 8, yet we do not and cannot admit that chapter 7 is the proper place for one who ought to know the setting free

power of these words, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is very good for the soul to pass through Romans 7, but it is not for the glory of God that he should stay there. If it is right for all to remain in chapter 7, then for what end did the Holy Spirit pen chapter 8?

## **MARRIAGE**

We do not feel free to offer any counsel in your case. You must wait only upon God. Each one must learn for himself, in communion with God, his proper path in this solemn matter. We have invariably found that those who were most forward in offering counsel were the most incompetent to give it. On the other hand, those whose counsel would be worth having were slowest to give it. Do not suppose, dear friend, that we do not sympathize with you in your exercise; we do most deeply. But we believe you must ask counsel of God.

1 Corinthians 7: 32-34 teaches that the unmarried are the most free from care, but verse 7 as distinctly teaches that "every man hath his own proper gift of God." Each one must know for himself what his proper gift is. It is one thing to say, "Follow Paul's example" and quite another thing to have the "proper gift" to do it. It is a fatal mistake for anyone to expect to walk in a path for which God has not given him a call or given him the spiritual power. Remember in these days of ritualism and revived monasticism, that marriage is a holy and honorable institution, established by God in the Garden of Eden and sanctioned by His presence in Cana of Galilee. It is pronounced to be honorable in all by His Spirit in Hebrews 13: 4. Thus much as to the general principle, but the moment you come to individual cases, each one must be guided of God. To Him we affectionately commend you.

We cannot understand why you should have occasion to seek a human opinion on a point where Hebrews 13: 4 and 1 Timothy 4: 1-4 are so clear. Oh! when will people learn to open their Bible and bow down to its holy authority in all things? We have an abhorrence of that mock spirituality, sanctimoniousness and transcendentalism so apparent in the remarks to which you call our attention. To us it seems to be simply holiness in the flesh, which we know is one of Satan's crafty wiles. As we said, marriage was instituted by the Lord God in the Garden of Eden. It was sanctioned by the presence of Christ in Cana of Galilee. It is pronounced honorable by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 13. To forbid it is said to be a doctrine of demons in 1 Timothy 4. This is quite sufficient for us, let pious sentimentalists and hyper-spiritualists say what they will.

It must be entirely a question of individual faith. You must walk before God in happy loving fellowship. You should both wait upon God together and seek to be of one mind in the Lord. This is your happy privilege. It is of the utmost importance for man and wife to cultivate the daily habit of waiting together on the Lord. It has a marvelous effect upon the whole range of domestic life. Bring everything before God, pour out your hearts together. Have no secrets, no reserve. Then will your hearts be knit together in holy love, and the current of your personal, conjugal and domestic life will flow peacefully and happily on, to the praise of Him who has made you one and called you to walk together as heirs of the grace of life.

We have often raised a voice of warning against the terrible evil of mixed marriages. We believe it to be a fatal step for anyone to marry an unconverted person, and a sad proof that the heart has departed from the Lord and the conscience has slipped from beneath the light and authority of God's Word. It is amazing how the devil succeeds in casting dust into people's eyes in this matter. He leads them to believe they will be a blessing to the unconverted partner, a lamentable delusion! How can we possibly expect blessing upon a flagrant act of disobedience? How can I, by going wrong, hope to set another right? Further, it frequently happens that persons, when bent on taking an unconverted partner, deceive themselves into the belief that the partner is converted. They claim to be satisfied with

evidences of conversion which, under other circumstances, would utterly fail to command their confidence. The will is at work. They are determined to have their own way. Then, when too late, they discover their terrible mistake.

With regard to the question of how we should deal with persons who transgress in this matter, we are not aware of any direct instruction in the New Testament. Solemn remonstrance and faithful reproof there should be, most surely, but we judge it to be rather a case for pastoral dealing and personal discipline than for any action of the assembly.

In the painful case you name, we do not believe it to be the right thing for a son to “try and manage a reunion” between the father and mother. If the husband wishes to come back, the wife should receive him. This is clearly involved in 1 Corinthians 7: 13. “The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.” If he wishes to come back, it is tantamount to “being pleased to dwell with her,” and if she be told “not to leave him,” it is tantamount to being told to receive him. At least, so we judge. It may be the Lord is about to bring the husband to Himself. If so, it would be very sad if a Christian wife should prove a stumbling-block by failing in grace. No doubt, he has greatly failed in his duty as a husband by leaving his wife, even were there nothing more serious. But if he really desires — apart from any management or any influence brought to bear upon him — to come back, we cannot but judge it to be the duty of a Christian wife to receive him and to seek “by her chaste manner of life, coupled with fear,” to win him for Christ. Should she refuse and he be then driven away into sin or hardness of heart, she could never forgive herself.

### **CHILDREN**

The grand point in dealing with children is to insist upon obedience. It is of great importance. If this be carried out from the very first, it will save a world of trouble to both parents and children.

Children are called to yield implicit obedience to their parents. This is their divine role. Parents are to beware of provoking their children to wrath by arbitrary conduct, by exhibiting partiality towards one more than another, and by needless crossing of the will of the child merely to make a display of parental authority. The child should ever see that the parent has his real interest at heart and that true love is the motive spring of every act. But we must insist on the obedience of children, even in this age of independence — an age specially marked by disobedience to parents and by gross disrespect.

Many of the young people of the present day seem to regard their parents as belonging to the old school and being deficient in education. Hence, the readiness to contradict their parents and set up their own opinion. All this is unnatural and ungodly. It ought not to be tolerated. And we may also add a hint as to the very objectionable habit adopted by many young people of calling their father and mother by heartless, objectionable names. We would entreat all our young friends to watch against these things and against the spirit from which they proceed, and to cultivate a reverential spirit which will surely lead to a respectful manner towards their parents. It is a good proof of a good education when children respect their parents. Need we add that in all matters where God's authority is concerned, it must rise above all other claims! Oh, for the adjusting power of grace and truth!

We cannot understand how anyone calling himself a Christian parent can adopt a system of harsh and cruel treatment towards his children. It can only result in making them liars and infidels. They will tell lies to escape the strap. They will despise the religion which stands connected with such inordinate severity. Such treatment as you describe is more worthy of a cruel slavemaster than of a Christian parent. There are cases in which some discipline is necessary, but it should be administered in such a way as to convince the child that it is only for his good and not the fruit of bad temper or of arbitrary severity. The rod should be most reluctantly lifted. It should be the very last resource. In short, the

Christian parent should ever keep before him as his model his heavenly Father's dealings with himself. Does *He* inflict punishment for confessed sin? The thought is blasphemy. He only chastens in love, to make us partakers of His holiness. It grieves Him to have to use the rod. "His soul was 'grieved for the misery of Israel.'" This should be the Christian parent's pattern.

We do not believe in the everlasting whipping system. It only hardens and brutalizes. And we would further add, dear friend, that the father and the mother should be wholly one in the administration of discipline. For a child to have to appeal to one parent to shield him from the other, reveals a condition of things in the domestic circle perfectly shocking to every well-regulated mind. The father and mother should not have a single divergent thought in reference to the system of training. They should appear before their children as one authority, one influence. The firmness of the father and the tenderness of the mother should be so sweetly blended that their joint action might be felt in the entire system of training. But how is all this to be realized? *By the parents being much on their knees together before God.* This is the true secret of domestic training. If the father and mother do not pray together, they will not act together; and if they do not act together, the education of the children must suffer. May the Lord in His infinite goodness help all Christian parents to discharge aright their high and holy functions so His name may be glorified in the households of His people!

We do not see any difficulty as to the term "children" in Ephesians 6: 1. In the entire context, the Holy Spirit is exhorting Christians in their various relationships to discharge the functions given them therein. Only Christians are addressed or exhorted in the epistles. Hence it follows that the "children" here addressed are Christians. Christian parents are exhorted to bring up their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. This takes in *all* our children whom we are to train from the very beginning for the Lord, counting on Him for them, and He will never fail a trusting heart. We are to take God's ground for our children in the entire system of moral training from their birth. He will assuredly honor the faith that thus counts on Him for the children and trains the children for Him. He cannot deny Himself, blessed forever be His holy name!

1 Corinthians 7: 14 stands in contrast with the Mosaic enactment which obliged men to put away, not only strange wives, but the offspring of mixed marriages. It is *now* not a question of the practical state of the children themselves — whether they are saved or not saved. The passage simply states that the children were sanctified by the fact of their relationship with the believing parent and need not therefore be put away. But the idea of building upon such a passage the monstrous error that the children of Christian parents are saved, as such, without the quickening grace of the Holy Spirit, is too gross to need a moment's consideration.

We can assure you of our hearty sympathy and interest in the subject of your letter. Your path is very simple. You have only to train your dear children for God and count on God for your children. The Spirit of God alone can make a child understand divine things, and it is not for us to fix a limit as to the precise age at which a child can take in the truth of God. It is the Spirit's work. He can make babes as well as mature people understand. A little child is the very model on which every person must be formed who will enter the kingdom of God.

We believe that Matthew 18: 10-14 furnishes the foundation of the precious truth of the salvation of infants. Do you not believe this? Are you not fully persuaded that all who die in infancy are saved? That inasmuch as their little bodies undergo the penalty of Adam's sin, their precious souls partake of the benefit of Christ's atonement! Well, if you believe this, why should your heart be troubled as to the destiny of your infant child in the event of the Lord's coming? Can you not fully trust that blessed One who, in the days of His flesh, said with such touching tenderness, "Suffer the little children to come

unto Me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God?" Can your heart entertain for a moment the unworthy thought that your gracious Lord, when He comes for His people, could take the mother to be with Himself and leave her babe behind to perish?

You ask if we "can tell you of any Scripture which shows what becomes of the infant children of believers when the Lord takes His Church to Himself." We reply, Matthew 18: 10-14. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.\* How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

{\*In Luke 19: 10, where it is not a question of infants, we read, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."}

Now, dear friend, is not this a precious answer to your question? Is it not divinely calculated to hush all your anxiety in reference to your precious babe in the event of the Lord's coming? Do you think the loving Savior who uttered these words, will ignore them when He comes for His Church? The very thought is blasphemy. Ah! no; our loving Lord will be fully glorified in receiving to His bosom and taking to His home the infant children of His people, as well as the parents. It is not His will now, and it cannot be His will then, that one of these little ones should perish. May your heart find settled rest as to this question in the eternal truth of God and in the rich and precious grace which shines so brightly and blessedly in Matthew 18: 10-14.

## **SERVANTS**

The passage you quote at the opening of your letter contains the divine answer to your question and completely demolishes all your objections. The sentence, "They that have believing masters," proves that some had not. And yet you say, "But although the Word is clear as to this, I do not see that a servant" in a worldly family "can be really separate from the world." If the Word is clear, you ought to be able to see — and we doubt not you will be able to see it when you learn to bow your will to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. We consider that when Scripture speaks on any subject, all discussion is closed for the humble, teachable soul. We certainly cannot understand any true Christian saying, "The Word is clear, but I cannot see it." Would you think of saying to your earthly master, "Sir, your directions are very clear, but I cannot see them?" If you were to speak so, we judge he would very speedily dismiss you from his service.

It seems to us, dear friend, you are completely mistaken as to the position and duty of a Christian servant in a worldly family. You say, "There may, it is true, be an opportunity of being a light for Christ by bringing the Word to bear upon their consciences." Now, we should judge that the very best possible way of being a light for Christ in any family, would be to fulfill with holy fidelity all the duties of your situation. It is not so much bringing the Word to bear on their consciences as letting it act on your own and proving that it does act by your cheerful temper, your humble deportment, your gracious manner, your earnest diligence at work, your faithfulness, your strict integrity, your unselfish devotedness to all the interests of your master. These lovely fruits of righteousness would bring more glory to your Lord and tell more powerfully upon the conscience of your master, than if you were preaching to him from morning till night.

Indeed we very much doubt the moral propriety of servants preaching to their masters. It needs special grace and wisdom to speak on divine things under such circumstances. The Lord may give an open door at times, but great tact is needed, owing to the unique position of a servant in relation to the master. The grand point is to let the *life* speak. “Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters,” whether converted or unconverted “and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining; but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2: 9-10).

The Word of God sets forth in the fullest and plainest manner “what should be the conduct and general bearing of Christian servants towards their employers.” For example, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ; not with eye service as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service *as to the Lord* and not to men, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (Eph. 4: 5-8). Similar is the teaching of Colossians 3: 22-25. Also in Titus we read, “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

We are not aware of any specific direction in Scripture as to the conduct of servants toward one another, but surely the general teaching as to Christian walk and character would bear upon that relationship as upon every other. If Christian servants will only study their model and seek to be formed thereon, it will regulate their conduct both towards their employers and toward one another. Further, Christian employers have to look well to the manner in which they conduct themselves in their relationship, for we may rest assured that to this question, as to all others, there are two sides.

## **BUSINESS**

A man who puts pasteboard into shoes and sells them for leather is unworthy of the name of Christian; indeed he is not even an honest man. We may be told, “It is the custom of the trade.” Well, how does this alter the matter for one who desires to walk in the fear of God and keep a good conscience? It may be the custom of the trade to put inferior yarn into cloth and to put water in the milk. But can a Christian or even an honest man do such things? Most assuredly not. The conscience of a Christian must be regulated, not by the custom of the trade, but by the Word of God. If this be lost sight of, there is an end to all practical Christianity in commercial life.

A Christian manufacturer could no more think of putting pasteboard into shoes and selling them as all leather, than he could think of picking a man's pocket. If indeed it be the custom to put pasteboard into shoes — if everybody does it and everybody knows it, then there is no deception in the matter. But if I sell a pair of shoes as all-leather when I know they are made of leather and pasteboard, then I am a liar and a thief. I am morally worse than a highway robber since he openly avows what he is, what he does and what he wants. A man who adulterates his goods is guilty of the very worst dishonesty.

Suppose a person is not a manufacturer but a salesman in a warehouse or shop. What is he to do? He does not adulterate, he merely sells. Is he dishonest? Is he untrue in selling adulterated goods? Unquestionably, if he sells them for genuine. How could a true Christian — any really honest man — declare an article to be genuine when he knows it is not? We heartily wish there were more honesty in commercial life.

But it will not do in the world. But what does this prove? Simply that the world is untrue and dishonest. If truth and uprightness cannot get on in the world, then what must the world be? Still, the Christian must be honest. His object is not to get on in the world or to make money, but to glorify God in his daily life. Can he glorify God by adulterating goods and telling lies?

We feel the immense importance, dear friend, of the subject which you have brought before us. We believe it demands the serious attention of all Christians engaged in manufacture and commerce. There is immense danger of being drawn away from the path of Christian integrity and falling into the wretched spirit of covetousness and competition so prevalent on all hands. We have to bear in mind that Christianity is a living reality. It is divine life coming out in all the practical details of our daily history. It is not confined to the benches of a meeting room. It has more ways of showing and expressing itself than by preaching, praying and singing — most precious as all these are in their place. It must come out in the factory, in the warehouse, in the shop, in the office, in the daily occupation, whatever that may be. How terrible to think of a man singing and praying on the Lord's day, and on Monday morning adulterating his bread and selling it as genuine!

Oh! let us be honest, come what may. Let us walk in the fear of God. Let us, like the blessed apostle, “exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and man.”

True, it may cost us something. We may have to suffer for righteousness' sake. But what is all this when compared with the deep joy of walking with God in that narrow path on which the blessed beams of His approving countenance ever shine? Is not a good conscience better far than thousands in gold and silver? Our God will take care of us. He will meet all our *real* need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Why should we ever devote ourselves to the contemptible “tricks of trade” in order to make money or make a living, when our Father has pledged Himself to care for us all the journey through?

It is very important that the Christian should be thoroughly clear and above-board in all his ways. There should be nothing questionable in any of his transactions — nothing hidden. We should not put our hand to a single thing which would not bear the strictest scrutiny. Hence, if this person “who works for a large firm in London” is doing anything which she would not wish the firm to know; if she is receiving anything which she wishes to hide from their knowledge, it is evident she is not acting uprightly. If she is perfectly clear in what she is doing, why send this question to us? Can she with a good conscience take the discount from the person who supplies her with the things? Should it be termed “discount” or “bribe”? “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” And again, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” If it is an understood thing on the part of the firm that discount is given, it is all plain and right, but anything underhanded is utterly unworthy of one who is called to walk in the light of the divine presence.

It must be entirely a matter between your own soul and the Lord. We ought not do anything with a doubtful mind or anything on which we cannot, with perfect confidence, ask God's blessing. This is a great broad moral principle applicable to all Christians in all their circumstances. As to the special case which you have laid before us, we question how far you are responsible for the use which your customers make of the article you name. There are some things which could not possibly be made a good use of, as for instance, an infidel or immoral book. Hence we could not sell such, but we can see nothing wrong in the sale of the little flower you name. True, it may be turned to a superstitious use, but it need not be so and was not till lately. If people in business are to be held responsible for the use which may be made of their goods, the questions would be unending. Still, dear friend, it is of great

importance that we should exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offense both toward God and man. May the Lord Himself be your teacher and guide! May He keep you walking in His presence and satisfied with Himself! Then all will be right.

It is a question for individual conscience. There is a very wide difference between a wine merchant and a keeper of a bar, at least so we judge, but it is not our province to lay down rules for other people's conscience. One thing is certain, the path of a true Christian is an exceedingly narrow one.

We thoroughly enter into your difficulty and sympathize with you. It would be to us a most serious question, were we engaged in printing or bookselling, as to what we printed or sold. But, dear friend, it is one of the many things as to which you must walk before God with a pure conscience. We certainly should not do anything that leaves a soil on the mind or a sting in the conscience, but no one can be a guide for another in such matters. The Lord is so good! He will guide and keep you.

We are of the opinion that you would be happier as a Christian and safer as a man of business, to work your present trade on sound principles, than to get into a large thing such as you describe which can only be carried on by a system of credit. We are fully convinced of the possibility of carrying on trade without going in debt and we strongly urge all our friends to do so. Why cannot a man in trade pay for what he buys as well as a private individual? True, he might not cover so large a surface, but he would have a more solid foundation. His trade might be small, but it would be safe and his mind would be in peace. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 5: 5). This is a reasonable word for Christians in this day of busy speculation and restless ambition.

There is urgent need, dear friend, for watchfulness lest we be ensnared by the money-loving spirit of the day. The devil is seeking to blind the eyes of professing Christians in various ways. He furnishes them with a thousand plausible reasons why they should push and grasp and scrape together. He will even misquote and misapply the Word of God to furnish a plea for money-making to those whose hearts are secretly set upon that object. But oh! the wretchedness of having before the heart such an object as to "make money." Surely as is the object so is the character. Only think of a saint of God, an heir of glory, hoarding up this world's miserable riches! Think of this in the face of so many of God's people in want and in the knowledge of the claims of the Lord's work at home and abroad! How can we suppose the existence of the life of Christ or the love of God in a soul that can lay by his hundreds and see his brother in need? Impossible. Oh! for a large heart!

The only counsel we can offer you is to wait on the Lord and ask Him to guide you. He has said, "I will guide thee with Mine eye," and "He cannot deny Himself." It may be He would have you plod on patiently with your present occupation. We are in a much safer position, morally, when our business is the burden on the back and not the idol of the heart.

One grand objection to a trades union is that it introduces a third party between master and servant which the Word of God nowhere recognizes. A master may dismiss his servant or the servant may leave his master if so disposed, but for any body of men to attempt to interfere and regulate terms between master and servant is a thing entirely opposed to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Furthermore, the Christian master is taught in Scripture to "give unto his servants that which is just and equal," but the union interferes with this and insists upon his giving the same wages to an idle incompetent workman as to one who is really worth four times as much. *Finally, for a Christian to join a union or any other club is to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*

We look upon a trades union as a most unwarrantable interference with the rights of individual conscience. It usurps an authority without a shadow of Scripture foundation. The Word of God puts each in his right place and teaches him how to carry himself therein. If master and men would but listen to its holy teachings, there would be no need of unions. But sadly, they do not, and no doubt in many cases, the masters have not been as kind, as generous or as considerate as they ought, and the men have proved rebellious. Or — for there are two sides to every question — the men have proved idle and unprincipled and the masters have become severe and exacting. But the Christian, whether master or man, has to walk with God and to be governed by His Word, not by the demands of a trades union.

### **MONEY AND DEBT**

We have read your letter with deep interest and we can enter into your feelings. We believe the Christian is bound to provide for his family, day by day — bound to educate his children and put them in the way of earning an honest livelihood. All this is so plainly commanded in the New Testament as to admit of no question. But these sacred duties leave wholly untouched the question of hoarding up and of speculation. We do not believe in these latter at all. We believe that hoarding covers the soul with rust and speculation fills the heart and mind with care and anxiety.

We love and honor diligent and honest toil, but Scripture tells us that “the love of money is the [a] root of all evil” and we do not believe that God's blessing rests upon His children when they become *shareholders* in worldly companies. You yourself, dear friend, have proved this. We think you would have done better had you purchased a house, either to live in or rent, than to invest your money in such a company as you describe. But all these matters must be arranged between the Lord and one's own conscience. We merely add that there is a vast difference between committing actual sin and falling short of a high toned discipleship and personal devotedness. For ourselves, we earnestly long for the latter. We believe there is a sad lack of it in our day.

The tide of worldliness is rolling rapidly in upon us and we know of no more effective barrier with which to resist it than thorough heart-devotedness and consecration to Christ and His cause. Where the real bent of the soul is Christward, one is not troubled with questions as to the right or wrong of this or that; but where it is not, the heart can muster up a thousand plausible arguments. And it is labor lost to seek to answer such arguments, since there is no spiritual capacity to see the force of the answer. May God bless you, dear friend, and comfort your heart under your heavy loss. May your undivided confidence be in Him, and He will prove Himself better than ten thousand “limited companies.”

We see nothing wrong in a Christian applying, in a becoming manner, for an advance of wages, provided it be not the fruit of covetousness, but simply for the support of his family. But we cannot attempt to lay down a rule. Very much will depend on the circumstances of the case.

We have long been in the habit of explaining Luke 16: 9 by 1 Timothy 6: 17-19. We consider it a very fine commentary on the passage. Worldly riches are not what properly belongs to us as Christians. Our riches are heavenly; our blessings spiritual, in the heavenlies, in and with Christ. Worldly riches belong properly to the Jew, but to the Christian they are the mammon of unrighteousness or the riches which do not rightly pertain to us. But if at our conversion, we happen to possess such riches, we are taught by Luke 16: 9 to make friends of them by spending them in the Lord's service and for the poor, thus laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come.

The expression, “that they may receive you” is idiomatic and may be rendered as follows, “that

they may be the means of receiving you.” This is the true way to use riches, the very best mode of investing capital. It will yield a hundred fold, and where is the bank that can come up to this? Many of God's people have lately been called to taste the bitter fruit of seeking after what they considered profitable investments. It is a question if the tremendous crashing of banks and limited companies has not been the result of God's dealing with His children who were connected with them. The very best thing we can do with our money is to spend it for the Lord. Then, instead of being rust on our souls, it will be treasure in heaven. But we must remember that Luke 16: 9 and 1 Timothy 6: 17-19 are addressed to *disciples*, not to the unconverted. If this be lost sight of, we shall only cast dust in the eyes of men by leading them to suppose that the gift of God can be purchased with money. To one who thought this of old, Peter said, “Thy money perish with thee.”

We take Romans 13: 8 in its plain, broad sense. We believe it teaches us to owe no man anything. Would to God it were more fully carried out! It is painful beyond expression to see the sad lack of conscience among professors as to the question of debt. We would solemnly call upon all who are in the habit of going in debt, to judge themselves in this matter and get out of a false position at once. It is better far to sit down to a dry crust and to wear a shabby coat, than live well and dress well at our neighbor's expense. We regard it as positive unrighteousness. Oh! for an upright mind!

The first grand business of a person in debt is to get out of it. We must be just before we are generous.

## **INSURANCE**

As to the question of insurance, it must entirely depend upon a man's faith. We assuredly believe it is much better to trust in the Living God than in an insurance policy. But then it must be a real thing. It is a poor affair for a man to say he is trusting in God and therefore he will not insure his life, if he is not really in the truth and power of what he is talking about. It may often happen that a man refrains from insuring his life so he will have more to spend on himself, while he deceives himself by the mere profession of faith without one atom of reality.

In the case of a mere man of the world, it is very commendable in him to curtail his personal expenses to secure something for his wife and family in the event of his death. But in the case of a Christian, he ought to be able to trust God. It is his privilege to do so, and God will assuredly answer faith. Insurance is not faith, but faith gives assurance. God is better than insurance, but God must be known in order to be trusted. There is no use talking about faith if one has not got it. Faith is reality; mere profession is a sham. May God make us real!

It must be entirely a question of individual faith. The Word is plain, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” If anyone says you ought to lay up, he must settle the matter with the Lord Christ. Ephesians 4: 28 teaches us that the object for which a man is to work with his hands is, not to lay up, but that he may have to give to him that needeth. It is a fine question to put to the heart — which would you rather have, a hoard of money or the living God? A genuine faith will not hesitate long about giving an answer.

## **GOING TO LAW**

The question of going to law has been frequently discussed. If it be a matter between brethren, 1 Corinthians 6 is conclusive. If it be a matter between a Christian and a man of the world, we can only say that if the Christian goes to law, he is doing the very reverse of what God has done with him. He

professes to have been forgiven ten thousand talents, yet he takes his fellow by the throat for a paltry hundred pence. Is this right? Is it pleasing to God? Is it yielding a true testimony to our heavenly Father? Is it representing Him? Is it imitating Him? God is not imputing trespasses. He is a pardoning God, delighting in mercy. If we go to law, we are not like Him; we are misrepresenting Him.

Why was the man in Matthew 18 called “a wicked servant?” Because, having been forgiven ten thousand talents, he took his fellow by the throat for a hundred pence. No doubt there are many questions raised on this subject. Persons may say, “What are we to do? How can we get on? We would be cheated on all hands if we did not avail ourselves of the law.” To all this we say, “Is it right, is it consistent, is it like God for a Christian to bring a poor fellow sinner to the judgment seat on any ground whatever?” If not, why seek to defend it? We have nothing to do with results; we have only to do right and leave results with God. But even were we to look at results, we question if people make much by going to law. They very often find it to be throwing good money after bad. We know many Christian men in business who do not go to law and they are none the worse for it, even from a monetary point of view. But it is our business to judge the question in the light of the New Testament, and if so judged, we believe the answer will be easily had.

Surely, dear friend, if it be contrary to the Spirit of Christ for a Christian to go to law, it must be equally so to employ a society to do so on his behalf. If it be right to go to law, let it be done openly and honestly. If it be wrong, why attempt to do it by proxy?

### **THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT**

We consider that Joel 2: 28 had a partial fulfillment at Pentecost. Its final accomplishment is still to be looked for in the history of God's ancient people. God *can* speak to men now by dreams or a vision of the night, but we consider that the true and proper way for a child of God to be guided is by the Word and Spirit of God. It is very unsafe ground indeed to be merely guided by dreams or by the *impressions* of a man's mind. We vastly prefer the solid imperishable Word of God.

It is greatly to be feared that many mistake their own inclinations for the movings of the Spirit of God — a terrible mistake! It needs much brokenness, self-emptiness and singleness of eye to discern and follow the precious leadings of the Holy Spirit. As a general rule, we should say that where the glory of Christ is the exclusive object of any act to which we feel led, we may conclude that it is the Spirit who moves us. The Lord is so gracious that we can fully count upon Him to guide and keep and use us where the heart is simple.

### **THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE**

The term “House of God” in 1 Peter 4: 17 refers to the Church in its place of responsibility in this world. God judges His house *now*. He will judge the world by and by. Holiness becomes the house of God, and He must judge everything contrary thereto. A father rules and orders his house because it is his house and because he will have everything in his house agreeable to his tastes and suited to his dignity. Thus our God deals with us. It is not a question of the salvation of the soul or of the eternal security of the believer; all that is settled. But God disciplines His children and judges His house. It is a precious privilege to stand connected with God in this world, but it is a most solemn responsibility also.

1 John 5: 16-17 refers to the case of a brother suffering under the chastening hand of God in government. Compare James 5: 15. It might be for sin which was not unto the death of the body. In such a case one may be led to pray for the sufferer and receive an answer from God in his restoration to

health. But the sin may be of such a nature that one could not possibly take it up in intercession at all, in which case the discipline must take its course and run on to the death of the body. Compare also 1 Corinthians 11: 30.

We have repeatedly referred to 1 Corinthians 11: 29-32. It teaches that God will assuredly chasten those who unworthily partake of the Lord's Supper. The passage applies to Christians *now* as well as in the early days of the Church. We are called to judge ourselves as we approach the Table of the Lord, else God will have to judge us in the way of present discipline, which may take the form of bodily sickness or even death itself. But, blessed be His name, He does this now so we may not be judged with the world by and by. It is truly blessed to hear the words, "No condemnation," amid the judicial dealings of 1 Corinthians 11, just as distinctly as amid the evangelic teachings of Romans 8.

You have solid reason, dear friend, to doubt the soundness of the teaching to which you refer, on 1 Corinthians 11: 30: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." These persons had failed to judge themselves, failed to discern the Lord's body in the broken bread. They had eaten in an unworthy manner, though they were true Christians. Hence God, in His government of His house, had to chasten them by bodily sickness even unto death, so they might not be condemned with the world. How could any intelligent person teach that "the discipline here is not connected with those weak and sickly ones?" We say it was very closely connected with them! No doubt others were called to learn and take warning from the discipline exercised upon those erring members, but surely no father would think of chastening a good child for the sin of a bad one.

It would be a very grave mistake indeed to say "that all the trials and sufferings of Christians are punishments for some particular sin." Very often these things are sent as a preventive and to draw the heart nearer to Christ. Who would presume to say that the sickness of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2 was a punishment for some particular sin? The apostle expressly tells us that "for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death." Were Timothy's frequent infirmities sent as a punishment for some particular sin?

We do not like the term "punishment" as applied to the dealings of our loving Father. There is nothing penal, in the strict sense of the word, even in His wise and faithful correction. *Christ our blessed Substitute exhausted on our behalf all that was penal.* God chastens His children to make them partakers of His holiness, as we learn in Hebrews 12. Moreover, the Father judges His house, as we read in 1 Peter 4: 17. So in 1 Corinthians 11 we are told that many of the Corinthians were visited with bodily sickness and death because of their disorderly conduct at the Lord's table. But this we are told was so they might "not be condemned with the world."

In James 5 we read, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The "if" shows that the sickness might not have been sent on account of any particular sin.

In 1 John 5 we read, "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it." For example, "Ananias and Sapphira" and the Corinthians! There may, in any given case, be certain flagrant features attaching to some sin committed, causing those who look at things in the light of God's presence to feel instinctively that they could not possibly pray for restoration. We have to do with the government of God which is a very serious matter indeed. And it is one of the enactments of that government that "whatsoever a man" (no matter who) "soweth, that shall he also reap." But it is

the Christian's happy privilege to view the actings of divine government through the atmosphere of divine grace.

Your case is painfully interesting. We are persuaded that if there be simple faith in waiting upon God, He will heal and restore. He is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. We recommend you to retire from all creature confidences and cast yourself simply upon the Living God. You have been looking to human cisterns. We also judge you have been over-anxious to get well. Seek grace to lie passive in your Father's hands and know no will but His. When once your heart can say, "Thy will be done," the great moral end of the discipline is reached. We pray that you may reap a rich harvest of blessing from all the painful exercise through which you are now passing. May God comfort you, dear friend.

Hebrews 12: 7 teaches us to leave ourselves wholly in God's hands, whatever be the character or measure of the chastening. It helps to this end to bear in mind that God is dealing with us as sons. *There is nothing penal in His chastening.* All is in perfect love, unerring wisdom and infallible faithfulness, and the purpose of God in it all is to make us partakers of His holiness. Hence, it would be a serious mistake for us to seek in any wise to take ourselves out of our Father's hand. We should rather desire that the chastening might produce the proper result and that God might be fully glorified thereby. Restless efforts to get out of trial prove we are not walking with God and that we do not see His hand or His end in the matter. Moreover, we shall find that all such efforts only increase our trouble while they rob us of the sweet consciousness that all we are passing through comes direct from the hand of our loving Father.

### **A SPIRIT OF LOVE AND GRACE**

Romans 14: 22, with the entire context, teaches us the necessity of walking tenderly in reference to the consciences of our brethren. A man may have faith as to certain things, perfect liberty in his own mind, whether as regards days or foods or many other minor things, but his faith or his liberty should not lead him to act in such a way as to stumble his weak brother. This is the spirit and teaching of this entire beautiful chapter — this lovely summary of Christian morals. Of course, if there were any attempt to impose the eating of herbs, abstinence from meats or observance of days as a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, it would be our place to resist with uncompromising decision.

Your most kind and Christian letter came to hand and we desire to give you our sincere thanks for the gracious spirit in which you write. Would that all who feel obliged in conscience to differ from us, were led to write in a like spirit and tone!

As to your first question, it might be well to ask the persons who use the language to which you refer what they mean by it. It certainly is possible to be occupied with mere doctrine apart from Christ, but we greatly fear that spirit of fault-finding which leads people to pick holes in everything and everyone except themselves. If we prayed more and talked less, we might be the means of doing some little good in our day and generation. We generally find that the fault-finding, hair-splitting generation are not the most blameless in their personal ways. The loudest talkers are generally the lowest walkers.

1 Corinthians 8: 10-11 teaches us the solemn truth that if we, by a false use of our liberty, embolden a weak brother to act against his conscience, we, so far as in us lies, cause him to perish by destroying the action of his conscience toward God. It is of the utmost importance to allow Scripture to have its full play upon the soul and not to blunt its edge by the dogmas of systematic divinity. It is a good thing to open all the chambers of the heart and have them ventilated by the pure air of Scripture. We constantly find theology acting as a barrier to interrupt the rays of heavenly light and hinder their

shining in upon the soul. The same authority that says “My sheep shall never perish” warns us against causing a weak brother to perish by a self-indulgent uncharitable use of our liberty. It will be our wisdom, as it most assuredly is for our moral security, to hearken to the one as well as to the other.

Matthew 18: 23-35 does not refer to the question of “eternal life.” Its primary application is to the Jew and his mode of dealing with the Gentile. Notwithstanding the abounding mercy which God had shown to the Jew, he would not listen to the idea of mercy to the Gentile. The consequence is, as the apostle declares, “The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2: 16, see the entire context). The apostate *nation* will never be forgiven. A *remnant* will be saved through grace and become the nucleus of the restored nation.

No doubt, we professing Christians have to learn a very important lesson from this scripture — the urgent necessity of cultivating a forgiving spirit. If we fail to act in grace, we are in danger of losing the sense of grace in our own souls. How dreadful for one who has been forgiven all his sins to drag a fellow sinner to the judgment-seat on account of a little money! Let us note particularly the closing words of our Lord, “So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also to you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.” This marks the application of the entire passage to our Father's governmental dealings with us from day to day.

It is a terrible thing for a professing Christian to harbor an unforgiving spirit. We do not see how it is possible for such to have any real sense of grace or any communion with God; nor should we wonder to find such given over to the most tormenting feelings as the expression of God's judgment upon a wrong state of heart. May we, beloved friend, ever cultivate a loving, genial, tender, forgiving spirit. We may rest assured our God delights in this. God loves a cheerful giver and a frank forgiver, because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed forever be His name!

## LENDING BOOKS

The following is an extract from a letter. “As one feeling much indebted to the good influence of books lent, allow me to say that believers might find 'a more excellent way' if, in a wise and loving manner, they lent their own books to those who are weak and uninstructed. I can but think of a dear Christian family at whose home my sister and I have often been taught the value and meaning of God's blessed Word, and of the exceeding kindness with which, on leaving, we have often been loaded with reading, which, at home, deepened the impression of what we had heard. Books we have wished to read and were unable to purchase, or those we had never known of till introduced to them by those dear friends who acted in this as though they counted not the things they possessed their own. Indeed, God has so blessed such reading to us that it has taken away the taste for much that we used to find great pleasure in.”

“Even if a believer have but little means and yet wishes to help others in this way, it is wonderful how the Lord opens ways of doing so, for if everything is brought to the Lord, 'There is much food in the tillage of the poor' for others as well as for themselves, and 'if the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light.' Perhaps the Lord may guide you to make some suggestion on the subject, for it is a way of serving the Master open to many. It pains my heart to see believers with well stored bookshelves unused for the Lord. I believe this is one way in which He is wounded in the house of His friends.”

We heartily commend the foregoing weighty words to the attention of our readers. May we all seek grace to act on them! It will, perhaps, be said that there is another side of the question to be

considered. No doubt there is. Books, when lent, are often not returned at all or returned so soiled and mutilated as to be unfit to be seen. Hence, there is a word for the borrower as well as for the lender. Surely if grace should rule the conduct of the lender, righteousness at least should rule the conduct of the borrower. Still, fully admitting the carelessness of many who get the loan of books, we should be very sorry indeed if this admission were allowed to blunt the edge of the most excellent suggestion of our correspondent.

### **ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP AND DISCIPLINE**

We recognize no membership except that of the body of Christ — no society or association except the Church of God. But you must see this for yourself in the Word of God and then you will not need to ask your question.

We entirely agree with our beloved friend “W.K.” as to receiving Christians at the table of their Lord. Any other mode or principle of action is not according to the truth of the unity of the body. There is a place at the Lord's table for every member of the body of Christ, *provided always that the proper discipline of the assembly does not call for exclusion*. There are two things which must never be lost sight of in connection with the question of reception at the Lord's table. These are, first, the *grace* which will not allow of the exclusion of any who ought to be admitted: secondly, the *holiness* which cannot allow the admission of any who ought to be excluded. If these things were allowed to act in the assembly, we should not have so much discussion and practical difficulty in the matter of reception.

The case to which you refer in 1 Corinthians 5 illustrates the nature and object of Church discipline. The man was put away from the assembly where the Holy Spirit ruled and delivered over to Satan, not that he might be lost, but “that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” In the Second Epistle he is restored to the fellowship of the Church. We believe, most assuredly, that every assembly of Christians is solemnly bound to exercise discipline and put away evil from their midst. If they refuse to do so, they are not on the ground of the Church of God at all. We are most thankful for the blessing you have received through our pages. To God alone be all the praise! Continue to pray for us.

In 1 Timothy 1: 20 the apostle delivers Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan. It sets forth an act of solemn discipline by direct apostolic power. In 1 Corinthians 5 the assembly at Corinth is commanded to deliver the evil doer to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. In both cases we take it to be an act of discipline. A person put out of the assembly where the Holy Spirit ruled, was handed over to the power of Satan so that his flesh might be thoroughly judged and crushed — serious but needed work! May we learn, dear friend, to judge ourselves in secret before our God, so the assembly may not have to deal with us. If the *roots* of evil are judged in private, the *fruit* will not appear above the surface of our practical life.

John 20: 23 refers to the administrative action of an assembly in discipline. See 1 Corinthians 5 for the regarding of sin and 2 Corinthians 2: 6-8 for the remitting of it. It is not official. It is not addressed to apostles, but to disciples. It does not touch the soul's eternal relation with God, but its present relation to the assembly.

The assembly is bound to put away a drunkard. If the excommunicated person is truly repentant, the assembly should receive him back. Both the putting out and the receiving back must be the act of the whole assembly and not of a part merely. It is of the utmost importance that none should attempt to interfere with the action of the assembly.

The greatest care, tenderness and wisdom are needed in cases such as you refer to. A man may be “overtaken in a fault” as in Galatians 6. In an unguarded moment a person may be led to take more stimulant than he ought, and perhaps he may seem to be the worse for drink. Should such an one be hastily thrust out of the assembly? Assuredly not. He should be lovingly and tenderly admonished by “the spiritual” who alone know how to do it. He should be carefully looked after, not for the purpose of finding accusation against him, but to “restore” and deliver him thoroughly from the effect of his “fault.”

In short, there is a demand for the most tender, judicious, pastoral care in cases of this nature. The assembly should never be called into action except when there is no hope of restoration in any other way. Excommunication is the last sad act of the assembly, to be performed with broken hearts and weeping eyes, and only with a view to restoration. Salvation and not destruction is the object of the assembly's discipline.

The assembly should never be called to discuss cases. It is called to act in simple obedience to the Word of the Lord. The case should be so plain, so manifest, that all discussion is closed and nothing remains but solemn and unanimous action. If this were more understood and attended to, we should have fewer complicated “cases” of discipline. If the assembly be called to discuss, you will rarely if ever get a unanimous judgment. Hence if discussion be needed, the case is not fit to come before the assembly. The spiritual must still wait on God in prayer and watch the case in patient pastoral love. There should be no haste on the one hand, no indifference on the other.

Leviticus 13 is a fine study for all who are really interested in the condition of the assembly. We cannot dwell upon it here, but we earnestly commend it to the attention of our brethren. The priest was not hastily to pronounce judgment in any given case. The most patient care was needed lest anyone should be put out as a leper who really was not one, or lest any real case of leprosy should escape. There was to be no haste and no indifference.

It is of the deepest importance to understand the real object, nature and character of discipline in the Church of God. It is to be feared they are little understood. Some of us seem to look upon discipline as a means of getting rid of people whose ways may be displeasing or discreditable to us. This is a fatal mistake. The grand object of discipline is the glory of God as involved in the holiness of His Assembly and the real good of the soul towards whom the discipline is exercised.

As to the nature and character of discipline, we should ever remember that to take part in it according to the mind of Christ, we must make the person's sin our own and confess it as such before God. It is one thing to stand up in heartless formality and read a person out of the assembly. It is quite another for the whole assembly to come before God in true brokenness and contrition of heart to put away, with tears and confession, some evil that could not be got rid of in any other way. If there were more of this latter, we should see more divine restoration.

We feel the deep solemnity and interest of the subject which your question has brought to our notice and we trust it may receive more profound attention from the Lord's people everywhere.

We would affectionately suggest to you and the “many others” who feel with you in reference to those habits which you name, whether it would not be better to make them a matter of earnest prayer than to write about them to us. Christ is the Master of the Assembly. Appeal to Him. He never fails. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.” Is not He sufficient? Cannot He keep order? What should I say if one of my sons were to write to another to correct some

disorderly conduct at my table? I should feel disposed to say to him, “What! my son, am not I competent to keep order at my own table? Must you needs write to a stranger to regulate my family?” Do we believe the Lord presides in the assembly? If so, we should look to Him to correct all abuses. If this were better understood, it would save a vast amount of trouble, avert a multitude of “cases,” bring much glory to Christ and yield a rich harvest of blessing to our own souls.

You do not give us your address or even your name. Yet the nature of your communication is such as to demand some sort of guarantee. We feel strongly as to the practice of some of our correspondents in writing to us about the condition of assemblies and the walk and conversation of individuals. We consider it quite wrong. We do not believe it to be according to the mind of Christ to make the failings of our brethren the subject of anonymous letters.

If it be a question of individual failure, the proper course is to go and speak tenderly and faithfully to the person himself. But this needs much grace and self-subjugation. Serious mischief may be done by approaching a failing or erring brother in a harsh, legal, knock-me-down spirit. If there be not moral power to act graciously in such a case, it is better to go and tell the Lord about it. So also as to what transpires in the assembly, if half the time spent in murmuring and complaining about this, that and the other, were spent in earnest prayer and loving intercession, how very different we should find it! We doubt not but that in very many cases, the deadness and lack of power complained of are caused by the wrong state of soul of the persons who complain.

In our experience and observation, we have always found that those persons who talked about the weakness and deadness of meetings had really need to look to themselves, whereas the really spiritual and godly members, instead of gossiping about such things, went to the Lord in prayer about them and thus brought down blessing on their own souls and on the assembly. We are not ignorant of the fact that there is everywhere much need of revival and bracing up, but we do not believe the remedy lies in anonymous communications to us.

We judge you have made a mistake in leaving the assembly because some of the members found fault with you. The discipline and surveillance of the assembly are very wholesome, though they may prove irksome to our proud and restless nature. We do not mean to say that the persons who found fault with you were right, inasmuch as we do not know the facts of your case. But speaking generally, it is a bad sign to see a person grow resistive under the exercise involved in walking in company with his brethren. You may rest assured it is far better to be rapped over the knuckles than to have our personal vanity fed by a flattering tongue. It may be that those who give the rap are wrong in how they do it. Further, it may be they also need a rap themselves. Be this as it may, we are thoroughly persuaded that the fellowship of the assembly is a safe and wholesome thing, and woe be to those who seek in pride or wilfulness to get rid of it! We strongly recommend you to humble yourself and seek to be admitted into the bosom of the assembly. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5: 6; James 4: 10).

## **THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Scripture is clear and definite on the subject of the Lord's Supper. The words are as distinct as possible, “As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.” Again, “This do in remembrance of Me.” We remember Him in death — the basis, center and spring of everything to us. The apostle calls attention to the fact that it was in the same night He was betrayed that our blessed Lord, in His thoughtful, unselfish love for us, instituted the feast, and this is full of

touching interest for our hearts. But as to the feast itself — its significance — its object — its place, Scripture is most precise: “ye do show the Lord's death,” ”Do this in remembrance of Me.” We remember a Christ who was dead; we call Him to mind in that condition in which, thank God, He no longer is. All this can only be by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no need to enter into sensational details; indeed such things are most offensive to all true spiritual feeling. We cannot keep too close to the actual, perfect language of Holy Scripture.

It is quite true that the special object in the Lord's Supper is to remember Him and show forth His death, but John 14-16 clearly proves that after the Supper, our Lord spoke on various subjects. If He did so, surely His servants may do the same. It would be a serious mistake, therefore, to shut out all teaching and exhortation except such as had for its subject the fact of the death of Christ or the circumstances attendant thereon. We believe in this, as in everything else, the Holy Spirit must lead and order. There is always great danger in taking up a certain idea and running it to seed. We most fully enter into the thought of the true nature and object of the Supper itself, but we also believe that when the feast has been duly celebrated, then is a wide field for the action of the Holy Spirit in teaching and exhortation. “Let all things be done to edifying.”

You ask, “If you found a young person who gave you the fullest assurance he was saved, enjoyed peace with God, enjoyed fellowship about the things of Christ, and whose conduct at home showed the power of it, if such an one expressed a desire to come to the Lord's table, would you receive him or would you keep him outside for a length of time if he were only 13 or 14 years old?” Most assuredly, we would gladly receive such an one and not keep him outside for a single hour. What has the question of years to do with the divine life? How old was Samuel when he first knew the Lord? or Josiah? or Timothy?

We regard your note as being anything but presumptuous, but we must persist in saying we see no foundation in Scripture for a person breaking bread alone. It is distinctly an act of *fellowship* to the integrity of which the presence of two is absolutely essential.

“Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve” (Matt. 26: 20). So also Mark 14: 17. Again, in Luke 22: 14, “When the hour was come, He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him.” Furthermore, Judas is distinctly mentioned as taking part in the feast and asking a question. And then not merely at the passover, but at the supper, our Lord says, “Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table.” We do not see how anyone can question the fact of the presence of Judas at the supper. His character was only known to the Lord. His fellow apostles did not seem to have any suspicion of him. But then to argue from this case that we ought to allow known evil at the Lord's table, is simply wicked. To say that we *may* have traitors at the table is to confess our own weakness, but to say that we *ought* to have known traitors, is perfectly shocking to any holy mind.

Where is there any warrant in Scripture for confining the Lord's supper to the first day of the week? No doubt the disciples did specially celebrate it on that day, but it was originally instituted on a week-day. We should rejoice to break bread at any time, provided people were up to the mark for it, and that all the circumstances of the case were according to the mind of God.

“The feast” in 1 Corinthians 5: 8 is the antitype of the feast of unleavened bread which, as we learn from Exodus 12, was based upon and inseparably connected with the passover. The bloodstained lintel was not to be separated from the unleavened bread. Peace and purity, safety and sanctity, must always go together.

It would be a strange and miserable application of 1 Corinthians 5: 8 to refer it to the matter of having bread without yeast or unfermented wine at the Lord's Supper. We believe, dear friend, the feast refers to the whole of our Christian life in this world. It should, from first to last, be a feast of unleavened bread, based on the great fact that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" — a life of personal holiness flowing out of accomplished redemption, known and applied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## SINGING

We regret that the friend who visited you did not seek to lead your souls to something more edifying than discussing the question of the Scripture authority for singing hymns at our meetings. Further, we marvel that a number of intelligent Christians should spend a moment in discussing such a question. You say "the question is at first sight startling." We cannot see anything "startling" in it except it be in its bearing upon those who raise it.

Let us see what Scripture says on the point. In Mark 14: 26 we read, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." You say that "Liddell and Scott tell us that the Greek word might equally correctly be rendered 'to praise.'" Here is what these learned lexicographers say: "to sing, laud, praise, sing of, tell of." And then they give the Latin "cano" which signifies *to sing*. But you say that some learned brother has informed you that "in no instance in Scripture does the word 'sing' refer to vocal music." If singing is not vocal, what is it? When Paul and Silas sang praises to God, was not that vocal? So also in Hebrew 2: 12, we have the words of Christ Himself, "In the midst of the Assembly will I sing praise unto Thee." Is not this vocal? In 1 Corinthians 14: 15 we have a different word. "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding." Here the word stands in contrast with praying. Then in Revelation 5: 9 we have another word. "They sung a new song." The same word occurs in Revelation 14: 3; Revelation 15: 3 and in Colossians 3: 16, "singing with grace in your hearts." And in Ephesians 5: 19, "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Now here we have three different Greek words rendered in our most excellent Authorized Version by the English word "sing." The question is, what idea do these words convey to the mind? Is it not that of audible praise or worship, whether rendered individually or collectively? Are not "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" divinely recognized? If so, for what are they designed? Is it not as a vehicle for the worship of Christians? We do not see how this can be called in question by any sober person. There is no analogy between *forms* of prayer and hymns. The latter are divinely recognized; the former are not. This is quite sufficient for us.

"But," you say, "there is danger of getting occupied with the tune or mere music." No doubt, and is there not danger in teaching, preaching, exhortation and even in praying of getting occupied with the language, with grammar, rhetoric or oratory? Must we therefore give up teaching, preaching, exhortation and prayer? Is there no remedy for the supposed evil except reducing our meetings to a senseless and miserable silence? It certainly is great evil in singing to forget the subject and object of our song and become occupied with the style and effect of our singing, and it is to this very evil that the revered writer to whom you refer applies the term "iniquity." But most certainly he never meant to teach that it is iniquity to use a hymn book or sing a hymn, for he has been doing both for the last forty years all over the world, and has contributed some precious hymns to help the worship of his brethren.

We have thus, dear friend, gone fully into your question. In taking leave of you we would affectionately entreat you to fling aside such foolish notions. When you come together, instead of

discussing the rightness of singing, seek to have your hearts in tune *to* sing. We dread young Christians getting under the influence of a unhealthy sentimentality, transcendental notions or a higher spirituality, falsely so called. It is sure to lead to mischief. See that you keep clear of such. Cultivate simplicity, reality, soundness of mind and earnestness. There is no telling where we may find ourselves if we take up with every whim that comes in our way. Some would suggest our breaking bread alone, thus reducing the Church of God to a state of complete isolation. Others would rob us of our hymn books and reduce our meetings to a gloomy silence. From all such wild and foolish notions, may the good Lord deliver us! May He graciously fill our hearts with an intense desire for His glory, for the good of His beloved people and for the progress of His cause. May these realities so engage all our energies and fill up our every moment that we shall have no time or thought for the discussion of unprofitable questions.

As to the question of singing at funerals, it must entirely depend upon our spiritual power at the time. A person may be so bowed down with sorrow as to be wholly unable to sing, but you could not make such an one a model for others or hinder their singing on the ground of sympathy with him. We believe nothing can be more magnificent, more morally grand, than a hymn of praise, a song of triumph, chanted amid the very dust of death. To hear a congregation of saints singing at the grave of a brother or sister is a positive triumph over the enemy. But if anyone be so crushed under the sorrow as to be unable to sing, we feel assured the loving tender heart of Jesus feels the sorrow and puts the tears into His bottle. The one who wept and groaned at the grave of Lazarus would not rebuke the tears and groans of a crushed and desolate heart.

### **THE ROLE AND DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN**

Scripture is very plain as to the place of the woman (1 Cor. 11: 1-16). We do not believe it to be according to nature or according to revelation for a woman to be prominent either in the Church or in the world. It is our deeply cherished conviction that there is no sphere in which the woman can move with such grace and dignity as in the shade and retirement of the domestic circle. There she can prove herself the helper of the man in all good works. Home is preeminently the woman's place. The Holy Spirit has distinctly assigned her work when He declares that she is to "guide the house." There may be exceptional cases in which the Christian female, having no special home duties, may devote herself to outside work with real advantage to many, but such cases are few and far between. The general rule is as plain as possible (1 Tim. 5: 14).

As to the question of "woman's rights," etc., we have nothing whatever to do with politics. It is our desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture, and most certainly we cannot find anything in the New Testament about women having a place in the legislature. In the history of Israel, it was always a proof of the nation's low condition when the female was thrown into prominence. It was Barak's backwardness that threw Deborah forward. According to the normal, the divine idea, the man is the head. This is seen in perfection in Christ and the Church. Here is the true model on which our thoughts are to be formed. So far as this poor world is concerned, it is all in confusion. The foundations are out of course. God has said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21: 27). There can be nothing right until "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Till then, the Christian must be content to be a pilgrim and a stranger on this earth, having his citizenship, his home, his portion, in heaven. May it be thus with all who belong to Christ!

We do not expect that persons who are bent on carrying out their own thoughts; whose will has

never broken; who reason instead of submitting to the authority of Scripture; who say, “I think” instead of seeing what God thinks — we do not expect that any such will approve or appreciate what we have answered in reply to your question, but we must bow down to the authority of God in this as in all beside.

You have our fullest sympathy in all your mental exercises. We believe you are absolutely right in refusing to be present where a woman undertakes to speak or pray in public. The spirit and teaching of the New Testament are against any such practice. “Silence” is enjoined on the woman in public or in the presence of a man. As to 1 Corinthians 11, you have nothing about the assembly until verse 17 where a new subject is introduced, and as you truly remark, the Spirit of God cannot contradict Himself. He cannot in one place tell a woman to keep silence and in another, tell her to break it. It is both contrary to God and contrary to nature for a woman to come forward as a public speaker. She is to illustrate the proper place of the Church — subjection, not teaching. The Church ought not, does not teach: she is false if she does. “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach.” This is the spirit and genius of popery. To say that the Church has power to decree, enact or teach is apostasy. The Church is taught by the Word of God. She is to obey and be in subjection. She ought to be the pillar and ground of the truth — to *hold* and *maintain* the truth, but never teach. Such is the invariable teaching of the New Testament as to the Church of which the woman should be the illustration.

It will perhaps be said that God uses the preaching and praying of women for the blessing of souls. Well, what does this prove? The rightness of female preaching? No, but the sovereign goodness of God. Were we to argue from the fact of the divine blessing, what might we not be led to approve? God is sovereign and may work where and by whom He pleases; we are *servants* and must do what He tells us. In the time of the “awakening” souls were smitten in Roman Catholic chapels in the presence of the sacrifice of the mass. Does that prove popery to be right? No, it only proves that God is good. *To reason from results may lead us into the grossest error.*

It ought to be sufficient for everyone who bows to the authority of Scripture to know that the Holy Spirit strictly commands the woman to keep silence in public assembly. And truly we may say, “Doth not even nature itself teach” the moral unfitness of a woman's appearing in a pulpit or on a platform? Unquestionably. There are many and varied ways in which women can “labor in the gospel” without the unseemliness of public preaching. We are not told how “those women labored” with the blessed apostle, but most assuredly it was not by speaking in public.

As to the four daughters of Philip the evangelist “who did prophecy,” it rests with the defenders of female preaching to prove that they exercised that gift in public. We believe it was in the shade and retirement of their father's house.

In conclusion, dear friend, we express our ever-deepening conviction that home is, pre-eminently, the woman's sphere. There she can move with moral grace and dignity. There she can shine as a wife and a mother to the glory of Him who has called her to fill those holy relationships. There the most lovely traits of female character are developed — traits which are completely defaced when she abandons her home work and enters the domain of the public preacher.

We believe it is plainly opposed to Scripture for a woman to speak in the Church or to teach or in any way to usurp authority over the man. But if there be a meeting of a private, social character, there is in our judgment an opening for the free communication of thought, provided always that the woman

keep the place assigned her by the voice of nature and the Word of God.

Judging from the tone of your letter, we feel assured the Lord will guide you into the right path of service. We are not told in what specific way “those women labored with Paul in the gospel,” but we know there are a thousand ways in which a woman may serve in the gospel without ever stepping out of that sphere which properly belongs to her. As to the married woman, we feel increasingly persuaded that home is preeminently her place; there she has a hallowed and elevated sphere in which she can serve in the full consciousness of being exactly where the hand of God has set her and where His Word directs her. May the Lord bless and keep you!

Scripture is very plain as to the manner in which Christian women should be attired, not only at the Lord's table, but at all times. Surely in this, as in all beside, there is urgent need of the exercise of a tender conscience, a godly subjection to the authority of God's Word. If Christians will not give heed to the exhortation of the Holy Spirit, they are not likely to pay much attention to these pages. One of the special needs of the moment is thorough submission to the true teachings of Holy Scripture. Where the heart is under the direct government of the Word all will be right; where it is not, there will be nothing right.

### **MINISTRY AND SERVICE**

We entirely agree with your view of ministry. We believe that every member of the body has a ministry, and it is by each one knowing his place and his functions in the body, and working effectively therein, that the growth of all is promoted. On the other hand it is most disastrous for anyone to mistake his line of things, since he not only fails as to his own work but hinders others in theirs. May the Lord give us grace to know our niche and fill it! And may we learn to be content with a very little and a very humble niche. Someone has said, “I never was truly happy until I ceased to wish to be great.” This is a wholesome saying and one which we would do well to ponder. It is immensely important for each one to know his own proper work. A man's whole life may be full of mistakes simply owing to his having never really fallen into his divinely appointed line of things. This is very deplorable. Not only does it involve a loss of time and labor on his own part, but it also of necessity interferes with the work of others.

May the Lord guide and keep us! And may our earnest breathing ever be “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

May God keep His servants humble and dependent! We are increasingly convinced that the quiet, shady, retiring path is the best and safest for the Christian workman. There is always immense danger when a man or his work becomes well known. When the fame of Israel was being spread abroad among the Canaanites, the Lord commanded Joshua to “make sharp knives and circumcise the people” (Joshua 5: 2). Nature must be put in the place of death and kept there.

An evangelist is one who possesses a bona fide gift from Christ, the Head of the Church. If a man does not have this gift he is not an evangelist, though able to speak ever so fluently. We believe there is one feature which invariably characterizes a true evangelist — an intense love for souls and a thirsting for their salvation so Christ may be magnified. The glory of Christ must ever be the ruling object with every workman, whatever be his gift. We believe the evangelist ought to look for results and confidently expect them, just as the farmer looks for the fruit of his labor. He may have to exercise “long patience,” but he should fully count on God for results. An evangelist is, of necessity, more or less a traveler. The *world* is his sphere, but the Lord will ever guide those who simply wait on Him,

having no will of their own, no personal aim or object.

As to giving up our calling, provided it be a godly one, it is a most serious matter indeed, demanding grave consideration and most distinct guidance from God. If He calls us to this, He will most surely sustain us, for He will be no man's debtor. He never fails a trusting heart. But we must be very clear indeed as to the divine call, else we shall break down. We have known several who gave up their occupation to give themselves to the Lord's work, but the sequel proved in a very humiliating way that they were not called of God to enter upon that line of things. But no one can be a rule for another. Each one must walk before his Lord in this as in all besides. He is a most gracious Master, and even though we make mistakes we can cast ourselves in fullest confidence on His unfailing goodness. And where the heart is true to Him, all is sure to come right in the end.

May He guide and bless you, dear friend, and use you abundantly according to the earnest desire of your heart!

We cannot see what 2 Corinthians 11: 8 has to do with the subject of "one man ministry" or how anyone could think of quoting it in defense of such a thing. Paul received help from the assembly at Philippi. He did not receive from the assembly at Corinth because they were not in good state. This was to their shame and loss. But what has all this to do with a humanly ordained minister receiving a salary from a congregation? There is no such thing in the Word of God.

It is difficult for one to judge for another in the matter to which you refer. Each one must act before the Lord and be guided of Him as to the best method of working. As a rule, it is the best way to study Scripture apart from the idea of having to preach. It is not good always to be reading for others; one is in danger of falling into the mere business of sermon-making which is very withering to the soul. It is well to go to the Word on the principle set forth in John 7: 37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." We only speak of the principle, not the strict application of the passage. We should go ourselves to the fountain of Holy Scripture, not to draw for others, but to drink for ourselves. Then we shall be always full, always ready for the Master's use.

Far be it from us to encourage anyone in a random, haphazard way of speaking on Scripture. We believe such a habit to be ruinous to the soul of the speaker and worse than wearisome to the souls of the hearers. The apostle's advice to his son Timothy is important for us all, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4: 15-16). The "profiting" is sure to "appear" if the habit of meditation is diligently cultivated, but if one goes to a meeting with a sermon already prepared, it may not be the thing which the Lord would have spoken at all. No doubt, the Lord can and does guide His servants in study and preparation beforehand. He can fix their minds upon the right subject and teach the right method of handling it. He is so good that we can count on Him with fullest confidence in all things. But we have to watch against the habit of making ourselves up for an occasion on the one hand, and against idleness and indifference on the other. May the Lord bless you and help you in your work!

The special application of Ezekiel 34 is to the shepherds of Israel, though surely it conveys a solemn and needed lesson to all who undertake the work of a pastor in the midst of God's people.

In 1 Corinthians 13 the apostle sets forth the great motive spring of all true and effective ministry — love. In 1 Corinthians 12 you have the *ground* of ministry; in 1 Corinthians 13 the *motive spring*; and in 1 Corinthians 14 the *object*. First, membership in the body; secondly, love; thirdly, edification.

We cannot enter upon a detailed exposition of those portions.

## UNITY

All who believe in Christ as dead and risen are sealed by the Holy Spirit and form part of His body. The body is viewed as on the earth. "There is one body." This is as true now as when the apostle penned the epistle to the Ephesians. This body is indissoluble. Its unity cannot be broken. There is no such thing as "rending the body of Christ" or "cutting off limbs." These are expressions which are used without due attention to Scripture. We are bound to recognize as a great foundation truth the unity of the body.

We are not called to *form* a unity, but to *own* the unity which God the Holy Spirit has formed. It is as contrary to the truth to set about forming a unity as to set about working out righteousness for ourselves. God reveals His righteousness on the principle of faith; we believe and possess it. So also, God reveals His unity; we believe and walk in the light of it. Sadly, men refuse to submit to God's righteousness and go about to establish their own. In like manner men refuse God's unity and go about to form their own, but both man's righteousness and man's unity must pass away like the vapors of the morning, whereas the righteousness and the unity which are of God shall endure through everlasting ages.

We most fully agree with you in saying that our motto should ever be, "Truth first; unity if you can, but truth." *If unity is attained by the sacrifice of truth, it cannot be "the unity of the Spirit."* Many fall into the mistake of thinking that unity is something which they themselves have to set up, whereas the unity of the body is a grand reality, a substantial truth in the light of which we are called to walk and judge ourselves and all around us. We are no more competent to form that unity than we are to atone for our sins or to work out a righteousness for ourselves. It is God's work from first to last. He has revealed His righteousness; we receive it by faith. He has revealed His unity; we receive it by faith. As it would assuredly be a grave error for us to attempt to work out our own righteousness, so it is a grave error to attempt to work out our own unity. Christ is the center of God's unity; the Holy Spirit is the power, and truth the basis.

As to man's unity, you will find all manner of centers — a man, an ordinance, a doctrine, something short of Christ. This unity may be maintained by the energy of the human will and is often based upon tradition, expediency or reason. In a word, it is not Christ or the Spirit or the truth. It is not of God, and if we do not gather with God, we must scatter.