

# EARLY STEPS

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*In The Christian Life*

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By FREDK. A. TATFORD

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BY

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## PREFACE

**D**URING recent years, there has been a plethora of pamphlets and leaflets written for the instruction of the young convert in the early steps of the Christian life. The simplicity which has characterized most of these admirable productions has, however, been accompanied by extreme brevity, and many thinking young Christians have felt a need for a somewhat fuller statement of "things that matter." The following pages have accordingly been penned with this need in view, and the booklet is sent forth with the prayer that, in some small measure, God may graciously use this feeble effort to meet the need.

It should perhaps be added that the substance of the following pages have been given, from time to time, in the form of addresses, whilst much of the matter has appeared in *Light and Liberty* and *The Harvester*.

FREDK. A. TATFORD

# CONTENTS

	Page
The New Birth and Eternal Life .....	5
The Two Natures .....	12
Baptism .....	14
The Lord's Supper .....	20
Prayer .....	27
Bible Study .....	33
Giving .....	36
The Church .....	38
Spiritual Gifts .....	43
Church Government .....	48
Responsibilities and Relationships .....	50
The Sisters' Sphere .....	54

# EARLY STEPS

## IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE NEW BIRTH AND ETERNAL LIFE

THE fall of Adam not only wrought his own ruin, but invoked divine judgment upon every member of his race, for sin became the natural precursor of death. Through the sin of the first man, all men are constituted sinners, and physical death therefore is necessarily the lot of all. All, as one writer has said, "are inherently sinful, their bodies are mortal, their world is moribund." Not only, however, is man naturally a dying creature but, "having the understanding darkened," he is "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18), and "is dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Devoid of spiritual life, he is in a state of spiritual death, is blind to divine realities, and is incapable of obeying or of pleasing God.

In such a condition, access to God is obviously impossible, and before man can stand before Him, the barrier of sin and death must either be removed or surmounted. As Falconer says, "To have real fellowship with God and delight in Him, we must somehow, while still on earth, be set down on the other side of sin and death." Sin is intolerable to

the Thrice-holy, and death has no place in the presence of the Source of life. Spiritually dead, man is thus in need, first and foremost, of life—and that life, one which is capable of God-consciousness. The need of man has, however, been fully met by God Himself in the person of His Son, and the Scriptures clearly teach that this life is obtainable by a personal faith in the Son of God (see *e. g.*, John 3:36; 5:24; 6:40; etc.).

“Life in its fullest sense,” writes Bishop Walsham How, “— uncreated life, life which can quicken others and make them live—this belongs in the eternal nature of things to God alone.” He is the eternal source from which all life, whether natural or spiritual, is derived, and He is also the inexhaustible fountain whereby it is sustained. Apart from Him nothing can come into being, and independently of Him nothing can continue to exist. It is that divine life—the eternal life which has ever been in and with the Father—which has now been manifested to men in the person of the Son of God (I John 1:2). “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the expression of the divine life, but He is actually the Life itself. Life is now obtainable only from Him, and apart from Him it is impossible to possess it (I John 4:9, 14; 5:11, 12, 20; Rom. 5:21; 6:23; Titus 1:2-3, etc.). He who was the Life came down from heaven in order that that life might be imparted to humanity, and it is by the communication or giving of Himself alone that humanity secures the life which surmounts sin and death. Professor Beyschlag has aptly written, “His

person is the true means of salvation, the living and life-giving bread which has come down from heaven to the world. Only by eating this bread, that is, by receiving into ourselves this personal life, and assimilating it like food and drink, do we become partakers of the true life that overcomes death." "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life," declared our Lord. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in Him" (John 6:54-56). Appropriation of Christ is the *open sesame* to eternal life.

Even in the Old Testament days, human enjoyment of everlasting life was viewed as a possibility, for it was presented as the final blessing in Psalm 133:3, and as the hope of resurrection in Dan. 12:2. In the past, however, eternal life was clearly viewed as connected with the millennial reign of Messiah and the manifestation of the kingdom of God upon earth. From our Lord's reply to the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:17, moreover, it is evident that life might have been attained by the keeping of the commandments, had that been possible. In striking contrast to all this, however, the glorious fact remains that in Christ the blessing is now already available for all who will exercise faith.

Since the life of God has nothing in common with the physical life, it is only natural that its impartation to man should be by way of a new or second birth, and this was the amazing truth conveyed to Nicodemus in John 3. The natural man can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God, and to be in a fit condition to be a participant of the kingdom, he must be born from above. Reformation is valueless;



what is required is an inward and fundamental transformation, and this is effected by a definite creative act of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit acting upon the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. The gospel presents eternal life in Christ as the free gift of God to all who will accept by faith. Where there is a reception by faith, there is an immediate transition from a state of spiritual death into a state of spiritual life. The seed implanted by the Holy Spirit becomes the germ of a new life and, by His power, the soul is born anew.

The act of believing in Christ is followed inevitably by the new birth and the possession of the new life, and it is impossible for a believer not to be also a possessor of eternal life. Faith and life are inseparable. The mystery of the new birth is one which passes human understanding and can be accepted only by faith. The regenerating operations of the Spirit differ in every case and, as Dräseke says, "the physiognomies of the new birth are as diversified as those of the natural man." Indeed the Holy Spirit's activities are declared to be as incomprehensible as the vagaries of the wind.

The new life imparted at the second birth is the divine life itself—God's own breath, which animates and empowers its possessor. The eternal life of God, which was (and is) in Christ, becomes the possession of the one who believes on Christ. He becomes, as a result, a partaker of the divine nature and is a new creation in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 5:17). It is not merely that a fragment of the life is de-

tached and given to the believer but that, in some mysterious manner, he is personally brought into and made a partaker of the unending circle of eternal life. The Christian is therefore inseparable from Christ, and many are the figures used in the New Testament to depict the indestructible and indivisible bond existing between the believer and his Lord. He is a member of the mystical body of which Christ is the head (I Cor. 12:12-13); he is part of the same living organism and pulsates with the same divine life. He is a branch of the living vine of which Christ is the root and main stem, and the same vital sap flows through both (John 15:1-10). He is bound up in the same bundle of life. Well might the apostle Paul exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35). It is impossible for any celestial, terrestrial or infernal thing to sever the vital cord of union which exists between the born-again soul and the One Who is the Source and Sustainer of his life.

Since the life enjoyed is the very life of God, it naturally follows that its possessor can never perish; his life is co-terminous with that of God and he has the certainty of a glorious future life even beyond the present temporal existence (John 10:28; John 3:15-16; Titus 3:7, etc.). As has often been pointed out, the word *aionios* used to describe the eternal life in the believer is identical with the word used to describe the being, throne and glory of God Himself, so that his life, salvation and future destiny are as secure and established as the throne and Person of the Almighty God.

The life begotten in the believer by God, however,

as another has written, "is at first an incipient, immature life, which, like that of newborn children, needs further development and suitable nourishment." As in the natural world, so in the spiritual, life gradually develops from a germ into the full vigor and growth of manhood. In Christianity, there are little children, young men, and fathers (I John 2:12, *et seq.*), and the last stage is only attained after passing through the preceding stages. Eternal life, however, not only originates in God but is also sustained by Him, and the newborn one finds his spiritual food and life in Him. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," declared the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:63), and it is by feeding upon the living Word of God (as ministered by the Holy Spirit in and through the written Word) that the believer is nourished and sustained in the new life (I Peter 2:2). Lack of food in the natural life results in debility and stunted growth, and the same principle holds good in the spiritual life.

Whilst eternal life is now the free gift of God, its bestowal upon man is possible only by reason of the death of Christ. As Professor Kahnis somewhat quaintly puts it: "Christ is the life. Therefore Christ must die, in order that the principle of life, released from His person, to which it is attached, may develop its energies around." Before life could become the possession of man, it was necessary for the Lord of life to bow His head in death. But now, through the finished work of Calvary, life is offered freely to the spiritually dead on the sole condition of faith in the crucified Savior.

All the righteous claims of God upon man, have been fully met, sin's penalty of death has been completely paid, and provision has been made for the deliverance of the guilty sinner from the bondage of spiritual death. A just and sound basis has been laid, whereby God can remain just and yet bestow life upon those who once were dead. The simplicity of the gospel renders it clear and plain to the most ignorant or illiterate. That man might be delivered from death and brought into life, the Life itself became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and through His sacrificial death at Calvary, all who exercise faith in Him as Savior become the recipients of eternal life and are immediately translated from death into life.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not merely an individual Person, but He is also generic and "His eternal life is unfolded in all His members till the organism of redeemed humanity is complete." Gradually, through faith in Him, member after member is being added to that living organism, and the day of its completion is rapidly approaching. In the book of life, the names of the saved have been written from the foundation of the world (Rev. 17:8), and the Christian rejoices in the divine foreknowledge, which viewed him as in the circle of life long before his physical birth.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TWO NATURES

**W**HEN Christ is accepted as Savior, the Holy Spirit not only delivers from the old thralldom but brings the individual into a new life altogether. By the new birth (John 3:3, 5), he becomes a child of God (I John 3:1) and a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). His citizenship is now heavenly and not earthly; and all his joys and delights are found in a celestial sphere.

Nevertheless, the newborn saint early becomes aware that he is still in the body and, whilst he is a new creation, and is in possession of a new nature, he is not yet entirely freed from the old Adamic nature. It is not long before the young Christian finds the two natures constantly at war with each other, and—to his horror—discovers himself frequently doing what he does not desire to do, and refraining from following the dictates of the new life (Rom. 7:15-17). Well might William Kelly say, “to find oneself weighed down by a constant inward dead weight of evil, to prove experimentally that one is a slave to sin, effort only making it manifest, is a distress as grave as it is unexpected . . . The hated evil continually gains the day, and the good that is acknowledged and valued slips through undone.” “I do try to be good,” said a child, “but something always stops me.”

Since the individual's attempt to live the new

life by his own ability is unavailing, is deliverance from this state of wretchedness to be found at all? Victory over the flesh and the desires of the Adamic nature is to be found alone in the person of Christ (Rom. 7:25). Christ alone could save from the penalty of sin, and He alone can deliver from its power. Abandoned to the control of his Lord, the Christian realizes that it is not he who sins, but his fleshly nature: the true self serves the law of God.

If victory over the old nature is to be a practical experience, the believer must regard the old nature as dead—crucified with Christ—and realize that he now lives in the power of the life of Christ. At Calvary, not only was the question of sins dealt with, but also the inherent evil of the flesh. When Christ died, the Christian died in Him. Sin has no longer dominion over the dead man, and can therefore have no effect upon the believer. A young convert was invited by erstwhile friends to participate in a somewhat questionable pleasure. "I'm afraid I cannot," he replied, "*since I died a week ago.*" Trespasses are the acts of the sinful nature. As the deeds of the body are constantly mortified, so the power of sin and the sinful nature is gradually diminished.

One writer has somewhat aptly presented the Christian's position in a parable of a dead man. Over the grave of the deceased, his acquaintances discussed pleasures and ambitions, and his foes reviled and cursed him, but the pleasures awakened no response in his bosom and the curses fell upon deaf ears. He was dead, and therefore insensible

to what was said or presented to his dead body. So, the child of God is dead to the world, with its attractions, allurements and ambitions, it glories or its jeers. He is insensible to the natural things and is alive only to the spiritual.

Soon the old life will be for ever past. At the return of our Lord, the mortal body will be transformed into the immortal, sin will be forever put away, and the new life will dominate the being.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BAPTISM

THE relations of God with His earthly people Israel were characterized by a multitude of ordinances and ceremonies, which served as a continual reminder to the people of their separation from the nations of the world and of their allegiance to Jehovah Himself. In the divine dealings with the church, however, the countless rites of an earlier economy have been superseded by the two simple ordinances of Christianity, *viz.*, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

To the Jews, with their continual bathings and ablutions, baptism was a familiar figure, and was the apt expression of a complete *volte face*, or change of mind. By baptism, the Jew signified that he regarded his original purpose or attitude as a dead thing, of which he had repented, and that henceforth he purposed to adopt an entirely different

course. The Talmud, indeed, declares that baptism is necessary before an individual can be admitted into covenant with God, and when a proselyte is thus admitted by way of baptism he is considered to be a new-born infant. Former relatives and friends have no longer any relation to him, and theoretically cannot inherit his property.

The ancient custom (which is still common in some eastern countries, and reference to which is still preserved in idiom in our own country) of washing the hands, as a sign that a matter was disposed of or a question ended, presents an idea analogous to that of the spiritual ordinance.

The first Scriptural record of baptism is found in the history of Israel. After the exodus from Egypt, the people passed through the Red Sea, the waters rising up as a wall on either side and the cloud covering them above. They were completely enveloped, and therefore typically baptized. Egypt and its power were dead to them, and as they came up on the other side, it was into a new life of liberty and freedom.

Baptism ever involves repentance—a change of mind or of allegiance. The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses (*i. e.*, unto the leadership of Moses) in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10:2). The Jews of John the Baptist's day were baptized unto John's leadership and teaching of repentance (Matt. 3:11). During our Lord's lifetime, He was presented as Messiah to His own people and His disciples baptized Jews unto the teaching and leadership of the Messiah (John 4:1-2). He did not



baptize personally, and John declared that He would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost (John 1:33). After His resurrection, Christ was presented as Savior to the whole world, and the disciples were commissioned to proclaim the gospel universally and to baptize the converts in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19-20)—a virtual acknowledgment of the sovereign authority of the triune God.

It is clear from the New Testament that the candidate for baptism must be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, those who gladly *received* Peter's word were baptized (Acts 2:41). At Philip's preaching in Samaria, those who *believed* were baptized (Acts 8:12). Lydia and the Philippian jailer *believed* and were baptized (Acts 16:15, 33). Conversion was followed immediately by baptism.

The sole qualification for baptism is faith in the finished work of Christ and a personal acceptance of Him as Savior. Baptism is not, of course, a proof of conversion: Simon the sorcerer was baptized, but it is extremely doubtful whether he was ever born again (Acts 8:13). On the other hand, baptism is not essential to salvation, since the thief converted on the cross was never baptized. However, it is clearly the divine will that belief and salvation should be followed by baptism.

The baptism of any but true believers is without a vestige of Scriptural support. The baptism of infants seems to have been introduced with the mistaken idea that the ordinance introduces into a

special position of privilege or favor—an idea entirely foreign to the teaching of the New Testament, which plainly declares that there is no difference but that all have sinned and have failed to attain the divine standard of righteousness.

It is sometimes argued that authority for infant or household baptism is virtually accorded in the references to Lydia and the Philippian jailer, since the household of each possibly included young children. The fallacy of this argument is fairly obvious. The jailer was saved by belief on the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel was preached to “*all* that were in his house.” All heard, all believed, all were baptized, and all “rejoiced, believing in God.” On physical and psychological grounds, it is clear that young children were not included as hearing, believing, rejoicing, etc. The case of Lydia is equally as clear. Lydia was a seller of purple: she was a woman with a trade or profession and must therefore have been either a widow or a spinster. In addition, she was over 200 miles from her native city of Thyatira, and it is therefore extremely improbable that she would have encumbered herself with children on the long and arduous journey to Philippi. Moreover, after their baptism, the household are described as “brethren” (Acts 16:40), *i. e.*, regenerate beings.

There is little doubt as to the correct method of baptism. The Greek word in the original is *baptizo*, meaning *dip* or *immerse*. Faced with the existing practice of sprinkling, the translators of the New Testament hesitated to render the word literally,

and compromised by transliterating and rendering as *baptize* and *baptism*. All leading commentators and patristic writings are agreed that the original practice of the early church was baptism by immersion, and this is borne out by the baptistries excavated from time to time. John the Baptist "was baptizing at Aenon, near to Salim," runs the Word of God, "because there was *much water* there." Obviously, "much water" would not have been required had sprinkling or pouring been the mode of baptism adopted. Again, it is recorded that Philip and the eunuch "*went down both into the water.*" In Rom. 6., the Apostle Paul declares that "we are buried . . . by baptism." The only way of burying is plainly by completely covering or submerging. (The sprinkling of a few grains of dust would hardly be sufficient). The typical significance is completely lost if any method other than total immersion is employed.

The fact that it is the Lord's desire for His own to be baptized presents a sufficient reason in itself for the observance of the ceremony. In view of His matchless love, His slightest desire becomes a binding command. But there are many reasons for obedience.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit baptized believers into the body of the Christ, and at the moment of conversion, the Christian is divinely brought into the same position; and baptism by water is simply the outward sign of what has actually happened spiritually.

Immediately Peter saw the Gentile Cornelius and

his friends baptized of the Holy Ghost (in a manner applicable only to the transitional period of the book of Acts), he said, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?" (Acts 10:47). The Lord Jesus Christ baptizes not with water, but with the Holy Ghost.

Baptism is a practical testimony to onlookers—the world, the church and the angels—that the individual has taken Christ as Savior. It is a public confession of faith. Whilst it does not save, it is the confession of salvation.

It is also the token of allegiance. Israel was baptized unto the leadership of Moses, the Jews unto that of John the Baptist. The Christian is baptized unto the Lordship of Christ. (In Acts, baptism was continually "*in the name of the Lord*"). Those, who once were the slaves of sin and Satan, are now dead to the old bondage and control, and now belong to Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord. A writer in *The Witness* aptly illustrates the position by reference to the practice of a Central African tribe. "When a chief dies," he writes, "all his wives are shut up till the funeral ceremonies are over. They are then taken to the lake and immersed in the water. Then they are considered dead to the old chief, and may be married again."

Baptism is also, as another has said, "a confession of the believer's identification with Christ in His burial and resurrection." In the sight of God, the believer has died, has been buried, and has been raised again with Christ, and baptism is the apt symbol of this. The old carnal nature, with its appetite

and lusts, has been crucified with Christ, and the believer is therefore dead to sin, and is responsible to *reckon* himself dead unto sin but alive unto God. The story is frequently told of the old sailor who left his pipes and tobacco pouch in the baptistry and who refused to own them later, claiming that "they belonged to the dead man who was buried there." Not only has the old life been put to death, but the Christian has entered into a new life—the very life of God—and it is now his responsibility to walk in newness of life. He is liberated from his former thralldom. Sin shall not have dominion over him, but he is to know the power of the new life.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

**I**T was an ancient practice among the Jews, after the death of a wife or a parent, to break bread and to drink wine in remembrance of the departed loved one. When Ezekiel suffered the bereavement of his wife, for example, he was commanded to "eat not the bread of men" (Ezek. 24:17) as a token of mourning, and in Jer. 16:7, again, the prophet declared that men should not "tear themselves" ("break bread" reads the margin of the Newberry Bible) for deceased parents, nor should men give to the bereaved "the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother" (see also Hosea 9:4).

The perpetuation of this ancient custom in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is therefore of singular and touching significance. It was the night of our Lord's betrayal and, as He gathered His own around Him, it was with the conscious knowledge that He was soon to be taken from them. Longing for their love and continued remembrance, but knowing how easily the human heart would forget, He assumed the place of a near relation and, taking up the old custom, converted it into a divine ordinance.

In the institution of this divine feast of remembrance, however, Christ imparted a far deeper significance to the symbols than was ever conveyed by the formal loaf and cup of the Jewish mourner. To the Jew, the elements were merely necessary adjuncts but, in the Christian ordinance, they become the expressive types of the body and blood of Christ. As the Lord Jesus divided the loaf among His disciples, He declared: "This is My body, which is given for you," and, as He poured out the cup, He said: "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). The words, of course, contain no thought of transubstantiation or consubstantiation, but are merely the plain statement of the spiritual significance of the appointed symbols.

The Roman Catholic church, in the doctrine of transubstantiation, teaches that, by consecration, the sacramental elements are actually converted into the physical body and blood of Christ, and that participation involves literally the eating of the flesh

and the drinking of the blood of Christ. The Lutheran Church, in the almost parallel doctrine of consubstantiation, teaches that, at consecration, in some mysterious way, the flesh and blood of Christ are brought into union with the bread and wine. The fallacy of both doctrines is obvious. When our Lord declared: "This is My body," He was actually present in the physical body, and it is quite clear that the disciples did not partake then of the natural flesh and blood. On the other hand, as Bishop How points out, "if it be said that Christ's body is now a spiritual body and that, therefore, what could not be then, can be now, this is to deny that the apostles at that time partook of the real sacrament."

The real explanation is to be found in the Lord's own discourse on the bread of life (John 6), where He definitely stated that, apart from eating His flesh and drinking His blood, life was impossible. (That the material flesh and blood are not indicated is made clear in John 6:63). In I Cor. 10:16 also, the apostle Paul explained that the cup and the loaf represented the communion of (or participation in) the blood and body of Christ. The question is one entirely of fellowship and identification with Christ. Spiritually—and only spiritually—the believer feeds upon Him, and the vitality and power of the spiritual life are entirely dependent upon that feeding.

The full beauty of the type is irretrievably lost when, as in the Roman Catholic Church, the cup is denied to the laity. Body and blood, bread and wine, were both bestowed and, in the denial of one, the other loses any significance it had.

It is evident from Acts 2:41-42 that the sole qualification for partaking of the Lord's Supper is a personal belief in Christ as Savior. Neither ignorance nor inexperience can be regarded as a barrier, and unless there is a disorderly walk or a heretical belief, it is the responsibility of every believer to avail himself of the opportunity of remembering his beloved Lord. Obviously no unbeliever can have any part in the feast; such an one has nothing either to remember or to mourn. But to the believer, the feast is ever the tangible reminder of a loved One who has gone.

In Jehovah's dealings with Israel, the seventh day of the week was set aside as the Sabbath, or hallowed day of rest. The characteristic day of Christianity, however, is the first day of the week. The resurrection of Christ occurred on the first day of the week; the descent of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of Pentecost took place on the first day of the week; and from the earliest days of the church's history, the first day has been set aside as the Lord's day. It was accordingly on the first day of the week that the disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7), and the apostolic practice has been continued to this day.

The place of gathering, in the natural sense, has necessarily an earthly location, since the physical body is limited to earth. From a spiritual point of view, however, the gathering should be in the heavenlies around Christ Himself—transported from the scenes of earth by the Holy Spirit. Whilst we remember One who is absent, spiritually we find



ourselves in His presence. Moreover, He definitely declares of the gatherings of His people, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

The signification of the Lord's Supper is many-sided. First and foremost, it is a remembrance of Christ. This simple feast affords the Christian, week by week, the opportunity of recalling afresh all that he knows of Christ, of dwelling upon His work, His virtues and Himself, and of keeping green the memory of the One he loves.

It is also a proclamation of the Lord's death. The elements of bread and wine, symbolizing the body and blood as distinct and separate, present the picture of death. Moreover, the very basis of the feast is the death of Christ, and the Christian assembly around the emblems of death is a proclamation to the world, to angels, principalities and powers, of the fact that Christ has died. The feast is not a sacrifice, as Rome teaches, but the witness that the sacrifice has been made. The Roman doctrine involves a virtual putting to death of Christ afresh at every celebration—an idea obnoxious to every true believer.

In the Supper again is presented the hope of our Lord's return. As the apostle Paul points out, the bread and wine are taken only "till He come" (I Cor. 11:26). The Israelites, feasting upon the paschal lamb, ate with loins girded, shoes on the feet, and staff in hand, ready for the journey (Exod. 12:11), and the Christian, feeding upon Christ, waits in anticipation, for the summons to meet his Lord in the air.

The feast is also a practical demonstration of the unity of Christ and His members. The cup and loaf are representative of the communion of (or participation in) the blood and body of the Lord. The one loaf is a type of the absolute unity of Christ and all His people. "For we being many are one loaf and one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (I Cor. 10:17). Gathered around the table of remembrance, the Christian proves to the fullest extent the fact of fellowship and communion with Christ and with God.

As the Lord Jesus Christ explained, the cup is the representation of His "blood of the new testament" (or covenant). As another has said, "Every covenant was ratified, or made binding, by the shedding of blood," and in entering into the new covenant with His people, Christ ratified the covenant with His own blood.

The gathering around the table is the one opportunity for assembly and collective worship. Israel's worship was of a God who was morally distant, but Christian worship ascends through the Son to a Father who is seeking worshippers. It is important to have a right conception of worship. Worship is not praise: that is rather the lauding of God for His works and deeds. It is not thanksgiving, for thanksgiving is the expression of gratitude for a gift or favor. It is not synonymous with prayer, since prayer is a petition or supplication for something. (These may have a place in the gathering, but can hardly be termed worship.) Worship is a complete occupation with Christ in the attitude

of adoration, and is to be found in contemplation of His peerless Person, His infinite worth and perfection, His virtues and excellencies.

It is significant that the Holy Spirit has not laid down rules or regulations for the conduct of the gathering for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. If His divine leading is consciously realized and experienced, every detail will accord with the Spirit's mind and will redound to the glory of Christ. The gathering is obviously for the purpose of breaking bread, and that must be the primary object, whilst it should ever be appreciated that the liberty of the Spirit does not mean licence for the flesh.

The Supper is not to be partaken of lightly or carelessly. "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat," wrote the apostle Paul (I Cor.11:28), for one who partakes unworthily is "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27), and is bringing judgment upon himself (v. 29). In the Corinthian Church, because of this, even sickness and physical death had been used in divine chastisement. If there is an individual self-examination, the believer will find it necessary to confess sin, to heal any breach and to remove any difference ere partaking of the emblems of his Lord's death. As a result, there will also be no lack of reverence nor an indifferent or careless state of mind, but the lordship of Christ will be practically realized and manifested. A light estimation of such a sacred thing as the Supper can only invoke judgment. It is related that, in a country town, four men watched the observance of the Lord's Supper at a little hall

and then, at a neighboring inn, held a mock celebration of the feast. Within a few weeks three of the men concerned were under the sod, and the fourth had fled to Christ for salvation.

Let us ever realize the solemnity of the occasion and the holiness of Him in whose presence we assemble.

## CHAPTER V.

### PRAYER

**I**T is impossible not to be impressed by the manifest indifference of most Christians to the need and importance of prayer. Too frequently, the ministry of intercession is either completely ignored or else regarded as relatively unimportant. It is little wonder, therefore, that testimony is spiritless and blessing is small. "Prayer," it has been said, "is the greatest essential to holy living and effective ministry," and the unsanctified life and the fruitless service of so many undoubtedly have a direct relation to the universal lack of prayer. "The diver needs wind (air) or he dies," said a simple South Sea Islander. "Give us wind, or we die. Give us prayer."

Prayer has been described as the expression of weakness, the realization of felt need, and an appeal for help and succour. Cruden's definition is so admirable as to justify quoting *in extenso*. "Prayer," he says, "is an offering up of our desires to God for things lawful and needful, with a humble

confidence to obtain them alone through the mediation of Christ . . . It is either mental or vocal, ejaculatory or occasional, either private or public, for ourselves or others; for the procuring of good things, or removing or preventing of things evil . . . God is the only object of prayer . . . so we are to pray fervently (Col. 4:12), sincerely (Psa. 17:1), constantly (Col. 4:2), with faith (Jas. 5:15), and not without repentance (Psa. 66:18; Jas. 3:6-7), and by the help of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26). Prayer signifies appeal, interpellation, intercession."

The first reference to prayer in the Scriptures is in Gen. 4:26: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (although it is perhaps doubtful whether even this particular verse refers to the subject). Prior to the fall, there was no need for prayer, since God held personal converse with man in Eden. After the fall, however, communion with God became possible only through prayer and by way of sacrifice.

In the Old Testament, prayer was ever upon the basis of a divine covenant or a distinct revelation of the divine character or attributes (see *e. g.*, Abraham's prayer in Gen. 18, David's in II Sam. 7, and Daniel's in Dan. 9). In the New Testament, however, revelation is complete, and an unconditional covenant has now been made upon the basis of Calvary. Through the new birth, man is brought into the family of God, given the spirit of adoption, and taught to own God as Father. It is this relationship with God which now forms the basis of prayer. As one has said "Christ's law of prayer may be thus summarized: He grounds prayer upon relationship,

and reveals God as freely charging Himself with all the responsibilities, as His heart glows with all the affections of a Father to all who believe on Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:25-32; 7:9-11). Prayer, therefore, is a child's petition to an all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful Father-God." When this is realized practically, prayer becomes of all things the most reasonable. It is but natural that the Father should care for His child, and it is as perfectly natural for the child to make the Father the recipient of its confidences, the bearer of its trials and cares, and the sharer of its joys and sorrows. True rest and calm are to be found alone in this simple, childlike faith and trust.

The believer's relationship to the Father is the result of union and identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the name of Christ is, therefore, the intercessor's plea before God. Whilst prayer is made to the Father, it is ever in the name of the Son (John 14:13, etc.), and we have the blessed promise, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it."

This privilege of prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ does not, however, give liberty to ask for anything and everything. As has been said, "We cannot cause a prayer to be in Christ's name by merely adding at the end of it the words 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.' We interpret best the phrase 'in the name of Christ,' if we think of an ambassador speaking 'in the name' of his sovereign. We mean in each case that the representative who speaks in the name of another expresses not his own plans and wishes, but the mind of the greater

persons or body whom he represents. He prays in Christ's name who has learned to make Christ's mind his own." Intercession in His name is with the object that His purpose might be realized and fulfilled, not that we might have something to consume upon our own lusts. All prayer must be subject to the will of God, but if indited by the Holy Spirit, it cannot fail to be in accordance with the divine mind and will.

The real purpose of prayer is often lost sight of because of the selfishness and egotism of the one who prays. "I never get answers to my prayers," declared a youth, but questioning soon elicited the fact that the burden of his petition was for a new motorcycle for his own pleasure. The object is not to bend the purposes of God to one's own desires and ends, but rather that God may be able to effect His purposes in and through the one who prays. Again we quote: "The object of prayer is not to persuade God to alter His mind; it is rather to liberate the hand of God to do, through us, that which He wills to do, to give us the blessings which He wills to give, but cannot do, cannot give, until our hearts are ready to desire, and our minds to receive, and our wills to correspond." "Intercession," writes another, "is not imposing my desires, my claims, my views, my will upon God—but in its highest form is the perfect co-operation with God that His will may be done."

How little we know of the practice of prayer! Activity and service abound, but real power is often lacking, since prayer is neglected. The absence of real spirituality and true blessing may be traced

to disuse of the ministry of intercession. To the child of God, prayer and communion are the breath of life, without which he must waste and die.

There is need also to be reminded of our Lord's lesson upon importunity in supplication (Luke 18: 1-8), and of the apostle's enjoinder to "*continue* in prayer, and *watch* in the same" (Col. 4:2). Patience and earnestness are vital if we are to continue unwearied until the answer is received. Dr. A. T. Pierson tells of George Müller praying for 62 years for the conversion of two men.

That God does answer prayer is the constant experience of His children. At times, the petition is foolish or selfish, and the answer may be a definite refusal (the consciousness of this being brought home by the Holy Spirit). The request may sometimes be ill-timed or premature, and the reply may be long delayed (it is, of course, sometimes delayed as a test of faith). At other times, the request may be dismissed, but a vastly superior blessing given than that which was sought. Never does a cry rise from a child of God without the Father hearing and answering (whether affirmatively or negatively) in some way and at some time, and, whatever the reply, there is the knowledge that His will is best. That our ears may not be attuned to hear the reply may be due to a variety of reasons, but Dr. Rowland V. Bingham (former chairman of the Canadian "Keswick") has pointedly summarized the reasons under four headings, viz., (1) unconfessed sin, (2) selfish motives, (3) marital or domestic troubles, and (4) unfaithful stewardship.

The need for faith scarcely needs emphasis, but

PRAYER



heart examination would frequently show that we never expect to receive a reply to some petitions. If faith does not believe in the possibility of receiving what is sought, is there any wonder that we do not see or hear the divine answer? One felt ashamed in face of the simple faith of a little five-year-old, who, one day, came running into the room with the plaintive cry, "Daddy, why doesn't it stop raining? I've asked God to stop it three times!"

Whilst many realize the necessity for prayer, few comprehend its potency or effects. An Elijah, in fellowship with God, could pray for unnatural miracles and receive the reply. A George Müller could feed and clothe thousands simply through prayer. What results might be effected even today through the prayers of God's people! Tennyson aptly wrote:

" . . . More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy  
voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.

For what are men better than sheep or goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves and those who call them  
friend.

For so the whole round earth is every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Says Dr. Thos. Payne, "In launching an ironclad, the pressure of a baby's finger is not infrequently all that is required to put into operation the ponderous machinery by which the iron leviathan glides evenly and majestically on to the ocean wave." So, the feeblest prayer of faith is sufficient to bring into operation the power of an omnipotent God.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BIBLE STUDY

**T**HE maintenance of physical health and strength is largely dependent upon food and nourishment. Deprived of food, or given too little food, the body languishes and pines away. The same principle is applicable in the spiritual realm. The new life, imparted by the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion, must be sustained by spiritual food or suffered to pine away. The spiritual anaemia and the dwarfed spiritual stature of so many Christians may be traced unquestionably to lack of spiritual nourishment.

The food of the new life is, of course, Christ Himself, as ministered by the Holy Spirit in and through the Word of God. It is only by constant feeding upon the Word that the inner life is nourished and sustained. It is not sufficient to read an occasional portion of the Bible and then promptly to forget all that has been read. A prayerful and meditative study is absolutely essential.

Methods of scriptural study necessarily vary with the appetite and capacity of the individual concerned. What will satisfy a young convert will never feed the patriarchal elder. In the first instance, many will discover sufficient in a single verse to meet the needs of the day and to provide food for meditation. It will not be long, however, before a need is felt for a more extensive knowledge than can be acquired by this method.

Frequently, it is found that the biographical mode

of study proves the most helpful. The characters depicted in the Scriptures are presented with all their faults and failings, as well as their spiritual victories and successes. Every phase of life and condition of man is portrayed, and guidance as to conduct and walk may be gleaned from this source. The works of Dr. F. B. Meyer and Dr. Alexander Whyte will prove an invaluable aid in this. The typological method of study is somewhat parallel. A large part of the Bible is taken up with significant types such as the tabernacle, temple, offerings, festivals, etc., all of which are full of spiritual instruction to the student. Prof. Fairbairn's *Typology of the Old Testament*, and Ada R. Habershon's *Study of the Types*, will both prove of practical assistance in this direction.

The topical method is one of cardinal importance and is one of the most fruitful modes. Probably greater industry and patience are, however, required; but results will repay the time and energy expended. A knowledge of the chief doctrines of the Bible and of its teaching upon various vital subjects is obtainable only by concentrated study. Dr. R. A. Torrey's book *What the Bible Teaches*, and a good analytical concordance such as Young's, Strong's or Wigram's are essential helps.

Of all methods, probably the study of books is the more natural. Since the Word was written in books, a comprehensive grasp of its teaching may most easily be obtained by acquiring a knowledge of the contents of each of its constituent books. The Biblical student is strongly advised to make an attempt to secure a working knowledge of each book

as a basis for future study. One of the most suitable practical aids in this direction is *The Outlined Bible*, by Robert Lee.

A real assistance in Biblical study is a cheap notebook in which to jot down what has been gleaned, so that the memory may be quickly and easily refreshed on returning to the same passage or line of truth.

Whilst the ultimate aim is not merely an acquisition of intellectual knowledge, but a personal acquaintance with the One of whom the Bible speaks, the greater the knowledge of the written Word, the greater the possibilities of appreciation of the living Word. Indeed, the purpose of the Scriptures is to reveal Christ, and it is the realization of this which will lead to study and meditation.

#### NOTE

The basis of a good library may be laid by the acquisition of the following books. Whilst not exhaustive, the list shows books which would be of some value to the Bible student.

**Bibles**—Newberry, Scofield and Grant's "Numerical."

**Dictionary**—Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible" (1863 edition).

**General**—

"How we got our Bible," by Paterson Smyth.

"The Divine Unity of the Scripture," by Saphir.

"The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament," by Bernard.

"What the Bible teaches," by Torrey.

"The Outlined Bible," by Lee.

"Knowing the Scriptures," by Pierson.

**Inspiration**—"Theopneustia," by Gaussen.

**Christ**—"Divinity of our Lord," by Liddon.

**Books**—

"Notes on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy," by C. H. M.

"Prophecy of Malachi," by Campbell Morgan.  
 "Epistle to the Romans," by Moule.  
 "Epistle to the Galatians," by Lightfoot.  
 "Epistle to the Ephesians," by Moule.  
 "Epistle to the Colossians," by Lightfoot.  
 "Exposition of the Revelation," by Scott.  
 Kelly's Lectures on various books.  
 Campbell Morgan's Expositions.  
 Prophecy—"The Coming Prince," by Anderson.  
 "Prophecy's Last Word," by Tatford.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GIVING

IT is recorded of the Macedonians that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" and then unto His servants (II Cor. 8:5). If there has been a complete surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, there will inevitably be a consecration not only of heart but also of resources. The beasts of the field and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His, yet He deigns to accept the gifts of His people.

Under the Mosaic law, the male firstlings of herd and flock were sanctified to Jehovah (Deut. 15:19), but, in addition, a tithe (called *Terumoth*) of all produce, herds and flocks was exacted for the maintenance of the Levites (Lev. 27:30-32), who, in turn, paid a tithe of this towards the maintenance of the high priest. A second tithe was used for festival purposes at Jerusalem by the individual (Deut. 12:5-18). Every third year, a third tithe (possibly a variation of the second tithe) was set apart to be eaten with the Levites, the strangers and the poor (Deut. 14:28-29). After the tithing

of the third year, the Israelite then made an exculpatory declaration that he had fulfilled God's commandments. (Deut. 26:12-14).

For the Israelite, the gift was proportionate to the income. The same principle is applicable to Christian giving. "Upon the first day of the week," wrote the apostle Paul, "let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him*" (I Cor. 16:2; see also II Cor. 8:12-15). The Holy Spirit clearly anticipates the setting aside of a definite fraction of the income for the Lord. What that fraction is to be must presumably be decided by the individual in the fear of the Lord, but it is plain that systematic and regular giving is the divine order. Casual and spasmodic giving can never be more than a haphazard thing, and is unworthy of a child of God.

"The basis of Christ's teaching about money," says Dr. A. T. Pierson, "is the fundamental conception of stewardship (Luke 12:42; 16:1-8). Man is not an owner, but a trustee, managing another's goods and estates, God being the one original and inalienable owner of all." Stewards are required "to employ God's gifts with fidelity and sagacity—fidelity, so that God's entrustments be not perverted to self-indulgence; sagacity, so that they can be converted into as large gains as possible."

It has been well said that, "in contrast with the law, which imposed giving as a divine requirement, Christian giving is voluntary, and a test of sincerity and love." When the measure of God's wonderful love in "His unspeakable gift" is realized, a re-

sponsive love flowing back to Him will lead to devotion of resources as well as of heart.

Whilst it is a responsibility to give, the gift is only acceptable if from a willing heart—"God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:6-15). Where, however, the gift originates out of love to Him and is given willingly, a heavenly recompense becomes the portion of the giver (Luke 6:38). Indeed, it has been said that "God is an economist. He entrusts larger gifts to those who use the smaller well. Perhaps one reason of our poverty is that we are so far slaves of parsimony." Yet the giver is not to look for recompense (Luke 6:35), but to give freely, knowing that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

(Note—It should, of course, never be overlooked that the Christian is responsible to "provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). Provision must be made for dependents, as well as for debts and liabilities).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHURCH

**I**N the construction of a system of theology by uninspired men, it was inevitable that many scriptural terms and phrases should acquire a meaning entirely foreign to them, and the word "church" is one which has suffered in this way. Apart from Biblical teaching, the meaning now commonly conveyed by the word is an ecclesiastical building or a religious system. Nothing, however, could be

further from the true definition. The church is not a humanly-constructed building but one divinely built, composed—not of bricks and mortar but—of living stones; it is not a lifeless organization, but a living organism.

The word *ekklesia*, which is translated “church,” was used of any gathering or assembly, and is applied in Acts 19 to the riotous crowd at Ephesus. Derived from the Greek words *ek* (out of) and *kalein* (to call), its plain significance was a called-out people, and when used in connection with divine things, it refers to those called out by God during the present dispensation.

The word is first used in its technical sense in Matt. 16: 18, when, upon Peter’s acclamation of Him as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” our Lord declared, “Upon this rock (*petra*) I will build My church.” (That the foundation is Christ Himself, and not Peter, is clear from I Cor. 3: 11; I Pet. 2: 4-6; Acts 4: 11-12, etc. Moreover, in I Cor. 10: 4, the term “rock”—*petra*—is applied to Christ by the apostle.) The use of the future tense in Matt. 16: 18, obviously indicates that the church was not then in existence, but that its advent was still future.

Until the death of Christ, individuals were saved by faith through the exercise by God of divine sovereignty, but those individuals remained separate and distinct entities. After the sacrifice of Calvary, however, everything was completely changed. Christ ascended to the Father’s right hand, and the Holy Spirit was sent down to gather out a company to the name of Christ. Hitherto, the divine purposes had been centered in Israel, and the Gentiles had



been blessed only through Israel, but now all distinctions were banished. The middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down, and both Jew and Gentile were baptized into one body. In Eph. 3 and Col. I Paul explains that this was a mystery hidden in previous dispensations and only revealed after the resurrection of Christ. The Old Testament prophets foretold the ultimate blessing of the Gentiles through Israel, but they never contemplated that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with Israel, the revelation of this glorious reality being held back until after the death of Christ.

The birth of the church occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), when the Holy Spirit descended and—to change the metaphor—baptized all believers into the one body of the Christ. The church is composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ during the age from that day until the rapture of I Thess. 4.

One of the chief features of the divine “ekklesia” is its spiritual unity. It is not merely a company of saved sinners, but a body of believers formed into one body, and the whole linked to the living Head in heaven. The unity is not, as one has said, “a similarity of sentiment, but the oneness of members of the body of Christ, established by the Holy Ghost.”

The ecclesiastical systems of man all find their head in a human being. The head of the Roman Catholic church is an elected Pope; the head of the Anglican church is the reigning monarch; the heads of the sects and denominations are presidents

and chairmen; but the Head of the true church is Christ Himself, and Scripture recognizes no other.

Whilst Christ is the Head from the viewpoint of rule and authority, He is also the Head of the mystic body, and the church is continually referred to in the epistles as that body of which He is the Head. Every true Christian is a member of that body and has a function to perform therein. No member is exactly similar to another, but each is absolutely essential to the whole. The life of the body is drawn from the Head, which also, as in the natural body, directs every thought and action. The injury or suffering of any member is felt and appreciated by the Head and is shared by Him and by every other member. The Head is in heaven, and although many of the members are physically upon earth, the body is also positionally in heaven, and is soon to be there in actual fact.

The church is described as the temple of God—"an holy temple . . . an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22). In past ages, God had dwelling-places upon earth in the form of the tabernacle and the temple. During the life of Christ, the fulness of the Godhead abode in a Man. During this present age, the living God actually dwells in the temple of His church—a living building into which believing ones have been built as living stones.

The church is also viewed as a household—"the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10) — presenting to our minds the picture of a great family, living in unity and love, and having God as its Father. In no other age has there been this family relationship.

The sweetest and most intimate relationship, however, is to be found in the thought of the spiritual bride. Adam was incomplete in his loneliness till God presented him with a partner taken from his own side while he slept. Christ also went through the deep sleep of death, and God has presented to Him a partner from His own side—flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it," declares the apostle (Eph. 5:25). All the love of the heart of Christ is centered upon the bride He has won for Himself. The church is the object of His affection and, in a coming day, is to be united to Him in marriage (Rev. 19) and manifested to the world with Him.

The church is the fulness or complement of Christ (Eph. 1:23), and is the manifestation to the world of Christ Himself. Through the church also, God has chosen to make known His "manifold wisdom" to "the principalities and powers in the heavenlies" (Eph. 3:10-11). Not only is that divinely-formed body to present Christ to the world but to every created being. The purposes of God, the glories of His beloved Son, and the ultimate blessing of man are alike manifested in the spiritual "ekklesia."

## CHAPTER IX.

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**T**HE church of God," says one writer, "consists of all believers and finds its expression in the churches of the saints," and it is undoubtedly the fact that the local church or assembly is the outward expression of the divine idea of the church. It is there that the headship of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit are recognized; it is there that the Head of the church manifests Himself by the Spirit, and in consequence, it is there that liberty is to be found for the exercise of spiritual gifts.

In many religious systems, it is a common supposition that spiritual gifts are bestowed by means of some form of human ordination and that, unless one is in "holy orders" or has passed certain examinations, he cannot be qualified. Nothing could be further from the truth. The gifts to the church are bestowed by a risen Christ in heaven, and are mediated by the Holy Spirit. The ordination is not human but divine. The laying on of hands in the New Testament was not to confer a gift, but rather to indicate approval of, and fellowship with, those possessing a gift. Hands were laid upon Philip when he was assigned to the secular work of "serving tables," but certainly not to bestow the gift when he commenced his evangelistic work.

It is important to realize that the spiritual gifts are not mere talents or abilities. It is common to allude to the abilities of an artist or musician as a gift, but gifts of this character are not in view in I Cor. 12, or Eph. 4. The gifts to the church are

not natural abilities but manifestations of the Spirit. The former are bestowed by the Creator upon His creatures irrespective of their spiritual condition, but the latter are conferred by the risen Christ exclusively upon believers in Himself.

It was an ancient custom for conquerors riding in public triumph to distribute largess to the applauding crowds around them. When Christ had defeated all His foes, He returned in triumph to the glory and distributed gifts unto men (Eph. 4:8). The dispensation or division of the gifts was left to the Holy Spirit, and it is He who directs their use. No true believer is without a gift—"the manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man*," and the Holy Spirit divides "*to every man*" (I Cor. 12:7, 11). Using the analogy of the human body, the apostle Paul makes it clear that no member of the body of Christ is either useless or purposeless—that each has a function to perform and that each is vitally essential to every other member. The body is fitly framed together and nourished by that which every joint supplies. All Christians have some gift and all are therefore responsible to discover before God what that gift is and to use it for the benefit of the body and for the glory of God. The folly of assuming that, in a company, one person alone (*e. g.*, a paid minister) is in possession of all gifts and that all ministry, teaching and preaching must therefore be in the hands of that one, is clear to all except the most prejudiced.

Whilst the gifts are exercised in the local assembly, they are given to the church *as a whole* and their exercise is therefore not limited to one place but

is for the benefit, under the leading of the Spirit, of the whole church.

The sole object of the gifts is stated in I Cor. 14 to be the edification of the church, but in Eph. 4:11, a threefold purpose is given, viz., (1) the perfecting of the saints, (2) the work of the ministry, and (3) the edifying of the body of Christ. The gifts are not for human glorification, but for the building up of others.

The manifestations of the Spirit are stated in I Cor. 12:8-10 to be: (1) the word of wisdom, (2) the word of knowledge, (3) faith, (4) gifts of healing, (5) working of miracles, (6) prophecy, (7) discerning of spirits, (8) tongues, and (9) the interpretation of tongues. In verse 28, the gifts are said to be: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) teachers, (4) miracles, (5) gifts of healing, (6) helps, (7) governments, and (8) tongues. The only gifts named in Eph. 4:11, are: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) pastors, and (5) teachers. The omission of certain of the gifts in the Ephesian list is accounted for by the purpose stated —“the perfecting of the saints.” Miracles and tongues, for example, do not perfect saints, but may, when misused, prove a hindrance and snare to the saints.

It is clear that not all the gifts are in existence today. In Eph. 2:20, the apostle speaks of the church as being “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” The apostles and prophets revealed the truth of God before the completion of the written Word, but now the full canon of Scripture has been given, and these foundation gifts are no longer necessary. The temporary character of

the gifts of prophecy and of tongues is also indicated by I Cor. 13:8. Miracles, gifts of healing and tongues were clearly sign-gifts, bestowed, not for the edification of the body, but rather for the convincing of the unbeliever. They were a proof of the divine origin and support of the new teaching. At the commencement of every dispensation, God gave temporary sign-gifts which ceased almost immediately, and it would appear that the yet future age will also be ushered in by signs and wonders.

The gift of the apostle was, of course, bestowed upon a limited few, and has never been bestowed on or transmitted to any other. These men, chosen and sent forth by Christ, were the virtual founders of the church and, when this work was done, both they and the gift were withdrawn.

The prophets of the church era were not prophets in the same sense as the seers of the Old Testament. They were rather, as has often been said, *forthtellers* than *foretellers*, and were men to whom God revealed His divine truth that they might unfold it to others. Before the existence of the written Word, the need of this gift was obvious.

The gift of the evangelist is clearly one which is still in existence. The meaning of the word is one who announces good tidings—not necessarily the well-known preacher, but also the humblest and most modest worker, whether tract distributor, Sunday school teacher, or sick visitor, who has a love for souls.

The pastor is the spiritual shepherd and feeder of the flock, who exercises a fatherly care and interest for all the people of God. He tends the lambs, com-

forts the sorrowing, cheers the discouraged, and binds up the broken heart. One of the greatest needs of today is the God-sent pastor.

The work of the teacher or instructor is evident. It is not, of course, the presentation of well-prepared lectures which is in view so much as the careful instruction (not necessarily from the public platform, but also in private and at home) of the children of God.

The significance of miracles and gifts of healing is again obvious, but the meaning of "helps" is perhaps not so clear. The word is used only once in the Bible, and conveys the thought of helping and supporting. Does not this cover much of the unseen and unnoticed ministry in the church—the helping hand, the gentle smile, the kindly word, the tender thought—a gift exercised under the Lordship of Christ.

The gift of governments implies, not merely ability to rule, but also to steer or pilot. Difficulties and obstacles continually confront the saints of God, and the gift of governments is still divinely used to avoid disaster and to safeguard those in danger.

It is significant that tongues appear as the last and least important in the lists of gifts. The undue prominence given to this gift, not only in the early church but even today, might have been corrected by an appreciation of this fact. It has been suggested that the "glossolalia," or gift of tongues, was "a wild, unintelligible, inarticulate succession of sounds," but the first occurrence of the gift (Acts 2:4, 11) indicates that it was nothing more than speaking in other languages. The gift was not to



be exercised unless an interpreter was present (I Cor. 14:28). As one of the sign-gifts, speaking with tongues has clearly passed away.

"The word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" both appear to have been among the foundation gifts, and the cessation of the latter is foretold in I Cor. 13:8. Presumably both indicate a definite revelation from God before the completion of the written Word. The discerning or judging of spirits was probably a gift also bestowed solely upon the early church.

Many of the gifts have passed away, but there still remain evangelists, pastors, teachers, helps and governments, and the possessors of these gifts are responsible to exercise them in and for the church. The apostolic lists are obviously broad headings only and cover a considerable number of sub-divisions of gifts, but all spiritual gifts fall necessarily within these main categories.

## CHAPTER X.

### CHURCH GOVERNMENT

**T**HE total absence of an episcopal hierarchy among those, who seek to manifest in practice the divine idea of the church, has sometimes led to the erroneous supposition that the result is a kind of spiritual communism, in which there is absolute equality and where rule is non-existent. Nothing could be farther from the truth than the suggestion that there is no rule or government in a Scriptural church.

The Scriptures speak of two definite types of men in this connection, viz., (1) elders and (2) deacons.

In New Testament days, when the church was young and there was no written Word to guide, elders were appointed by the apostles or their delegates (*e. g.*, Titus). There is no record in Scripture of appointment by anyone else, and there is thus no authority for appointment by any human being other than an apostle or an apostolic delegate. However, the church has now what she had not in apostolic days—the full Word of God—and the qualifications of an elder are now explicitly defined by the Holy Spirit in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. The Holy Spirit marks out the possessor of the required qualifications, and the local assembly recognizes and acknowledges him as an elder, or overseer.

Whilst a gift is a gift everywhere, an elder is such only in the particular church or assembly with which he is connected. It is important also to notice that the Scriptures always refer to the overseers of a local church in the plural. There is not a single instance of one overseer alone in a local church.

The elders are not only responsible to rule but also to “take care of the church of God” (I Tim. 3:5), caring for the needs of the saints, exercising a fatherly vigilance and interest, and even using necessary discipline. Having a sound knowledge of the truth, they are to be “apt to teach” and to “be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

The literal meaning of the word translated *deacon*

is ministrant or servant, and it is at once evident that the deacon has little, if any, connection with the government of the church. The qualifications required in a deacon are laid down in I Tim. 3: 8-13. Ability to teach is not a requirement, but what is essential is rather a scrupulous honesty and soberness. It would appear that diaconal work is not entirely the responsibility of brethren, for in Rom. 16: 1, the apostle Paul describes Phebe as "a deaconess (servant) of the church which is at Cenchrea."

The first appointment of deacons is recorded in Acts 6, and from this passage may be gleaned the fact that the work of deacons is connected rather with the secular relations of church life. The financial and business matters particularly appear to form part of the diaconal work in an assembly. It is surely significant that, even in these secular things, the servant of God must be above all question.

## CHAPTER XI

### RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

#### SANCTIFICATION

**T**HE blood of the paschal lamb separated Israel from Egypt and unto Jehovah. So also, the work of Calvary has cut off the believer from this world and shut him up to God Himself. In the person of Christ, he is viewed as completely separate or sanctified. In practical walk, however, he speedily discovers that sanctification has a relation to con-

dition as well as to position (the dual character of the doctrine is clearly outlined in Heb. 13:12-13).

In that wonderful prayer of our Lord in John 17, there came the explicit plea for the sanctification of His own *through the truth* (verse 17). Whilst sanctification has its origin above, it is realized only through the Word itself. As the Bible unfolds the will of God, so the individual becomes responsible to follow that will, and to sanctify (or separate) himself. The purpose for the Christian, as for the Israelite, is practical holiness—"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

#### CLEANSING

Realizing that the divine purpose for life is absolute holiness, many a child of God has been discouraged by the constant failure experienced. Moreover, if there is failure or sin, how is this to be removed?

The answer is beautifully presented in the Old Testament ordinance of the red heifer (Num. 19) and its New Testament counterpart in John 13. Immediately there has been conviction of sin and a consciousness of defilement, the Holy Spirit reminds the soul of the efficacy of Calvary, and affords that wonderful spiritual cleansing of the "washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). In that sacred laver, there is cleansing for every stain and purification for every contamination. When sin is confessed, He is ever ready to forgive (I John 1:9; 2:1).

#### ENDUEMENT

The Christian life can never be lived in human strength nor by fleshly endeavors. The child of

God, however, is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and his very body becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 3:16-17). That divine One seeks control of heart and life, and where submission and obedience are rendered, the needed power is to be found in Him.

Service will be unavailing if performed in carnal strength or ability; the power of the Holy Spirit alone will effect spiritual success. He equips, endues, directs and controls.

#### FELLOWSHIP

Since every believer is drawn into union with Christ, it necessarily follows that there is a responsibility toward all. There is a love and a fellowship which every member of Christ should be demonstrating toward every other member of that mystic body (Eph. 4:16; I John 1:7). The definite command of the Head is that we should love one another (I John 3:11). Comprehending the extent of His love, we should be willing to sacrifice all for those who belong to Him (I John 3:16-17). The kindly thought, the tender enquiry, the warm handshake and many another "little trifle" are practical demonstrations of fellowship.

#### WITNESS

Every soul who belongs to Christ becomes a servant of His, and is responsible to bear witness to His saving grace. That testimony may be by word of mouth or by life and work, but all are burdened with the charge to warn the guilty sinners around. Failure to fulfil the responsibility must be accounted for in a future day (Ezek. 3:18).

## TO SUM UP

The one, who has found Christ as Savior, at once discovers that he has incurred responsibilities not only to himself—but to those around him.

So far as *self* is concerned, he experiences constantly the assaults of the three great foes of spirituality—the world, the flesh and the devil. Only by the power of the indwelling Spirit and by a subjection to the will of Christ can there be victory over these mighty antagonists. The attractions and allurements of the world, the lusts and strivings of the flesh, and the subtle and insidious attacks of the devil, have proved the downfall of many a true believer. Where the heart is centered upon Christ, however, there will be a deaf ear and a blind eye to every appeal from a lower source.

In relations with *other Christians*, much counsel is given in the New Testament. The evidence of spirituality is seen in the love borne to other members of the body of Christ. The spiritually-minded believer will live at peace with his brethren, provoking only to love and good works. Constantly viewing others as the object of divine love, he will behold only the virtues and not the failings of others.

In his life *in the world*, the Christian is responsible to present Christ by his conduct and character. Life is frequently a more powerful witness than lip. Practical sanctification is a paramount need of the Christian life. On the other hand, there is the responsibility to serve the Lord as directed by Him.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, equipped through the Word of God, and directed by the Lord Himself, the spiritual servant can effect mighty victories and bring glory to the name of his Master. It is little that can be done in the brief span of life. God help us to live and work for Him!

## APPENDIX

### THE SISTERS' SPHERE

**D**IFFICULTY is often felt regarding the sphere of activity for the gentler sex, but the Scriptural teaching appears to be perfectly clear. The value of woman's ministry in its correct place is inestimable. The prayers of a mother or of a devoted life-partner, the private spiritual teaching of a Priscilla, the consecrated service of a Tabitha or a Phebe—all these are beyond the power of human beings to estimate. To their results, many a man can gladly and thankfully testify.

The Scriptures consistently regard the woman as the weaker vessel. Deborah was a judge, but Judges 6:8-9 shows that her position was unnatural and was in itself a disgrace to the cowardly and incompetent males who should have occupied it. The ministry of Noadiah again meets with condemnation (Neh. 6:14). It is significant that, although four prophetesses were at Caesarea, God sent Agabus down from Judea to prophesy to Paul (Acts 21:8-11).

I Tim. 2:8 definitely limits public prayer (in a

mixed gathering) to men (literally "males"), and verses 11 and 12 explicitly enjoin silence upon women at church gatherings, and forbid them to speak. I Cor. 14:34-35 is even plainer, whilst Eph. 4:8 states that the church gifts were given unto *men*. The Scriptures do not rule out private instruction, nor the taking of Sunday school classes, women's meetings, etc., but they do prohibit public teaching or prayer by a woman in the presence of men.

Tom Baird has aptly written: "In ancient days, no woman was appointed to the priesthood. They spun curtains for the tabernacle, but they gave no attendance at the altar. They had no place in the apostleship, although they ministered unto Christ of their personal substance. They were permitted to bear messages, but they were excluded from the ministry. The elder women could teach the younger, but they were not encouraged to address mixed audiences."

Lest men should glory in a fictitious superiority, the exact position is stated in Eph. 5:22-25 and it is indicated that the subordination of the woman to the man is but figurative of the subjection of the church to Christ.