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# "CHRIST IS ALL"

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*A brief summary of a series of  
Bible Readings held in  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, April 1959*

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**THE CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT**  
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## PREFACE

In April 1959 a series of Bible Readings were held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and a record of them was made.

The reader now has before him a condensed summary of that record, as the fruit of considerable labour in transcribing it, and then editing it, as is ever necessary with the spoken word in meetings where discussion takes place.

These meetings began, so to speak, at the top, and worked down to truth that lies at the base of our holy faith. They were felt to be of profit at the time, being accompanied by a number of meetings for prayer and intercession.

This record in print is now sent forth with the desire and prayer that it may bring profit to all who read.

F. B. Hole.

G. Davison.





## CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL

Colossians 1: 12-22; 2: 6 19.

The Scriptures read lead up to what we have in verses ten and eleven of Chapter 3; "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." Or as the New Translation puts it, "Christ is everything, and in all." It is a remarkable fact that of the seven churches, to whom the Lord sent letters as recorded in Revelation 2 and 3, only the first and the last had epistles addressed to them. One to the Ephesian church, where declension first began in the loss of first love, and this epistle to the Colossians which was especially to be read in the assembly of Laodicea. The all-knowing and all-seeing eye of God ensured that there was ministered to the Laodiceans the very thing which, had it been absorbed, would have prevented them falling into the state in which they were. Here, Christ is everything and in everybody. In Laodicea He is nothing and in nobody; He is outside of the door. We are living in a Laodicean state, so far as nominal Christian circles are concerned. We need to build ourselves up in that which will fortify us against the prevailing spirit of Christendom in this age.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians we read they were enriched in every way—a contrast with what has been quoted in Revelation. There will never be a time when the saints are so enriched that they do not need Christ.

It is worth noting that the word "all" occurs a number of times in this epistle. Time after time it occurs in the first chapter. "Filled with the knowledge of His will in **all** wisdom," verse 9. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto **all** pleasing," verse 10, etc., The word occurs 32 times in this epistle.

Not only were the Laodiceans satisfied in and with themselves without Christ, but there was also a usurpation of the rights of Christ. It seems to suggest a democracy which was set in opposition to the all-prevailing supremacy

of this blessed One, who is everything and in all. It was not only what they said, but their underlying state was contradictory to the supreme rights of Christ.

The most dangerous state of all is that of self-satisfaction. We find everything in Christ. In chapter one the main point is the absolute supremacy of Christ in creation. He is the firstborn of all creation, holding in subjection all its ranks in virtue of being the Creator. Looking at verse 16 in the New Translation, three prepositions are used. Literally it is, "in Him," "For in Him were all things created." Then towards the end of the verse, "all things were created by Him and for Him." J. N. D. gives a note on those three prepositions, the first expresses the characteristic power; creation was "in Him." It infers His complete and absolute Deity. He was also the active instrument and the end to which all moves.

It has been pointed out that whenever One of the Divine Persons is singled out as being the Creator it is always the Son. Sometimes the name of God is used where it may be triunity, but when One Person is selected it is always the Son.

We have the Lord's own words, "the times or the seasons, which the Father put in His own power." (Acts 1: 7). Now purpose is always the Father's, just as carrying things into effect in the creature is always the work of the Holy Spirit. Each Divine Person has His own particular sphere, and we are permitted to know that.

Similarly that may be in the verses we read; in verse 12, the work of the Father; in verse 13 the work of the Spirit quickening us; and in verse 14 the Son redeeming us.

Clearly in the first chapter of Colossians, it is the supreme place of the Lord Jesus Christ which is brought before us, and the fact that having wrought redemption He is going ultimately to bring everything in the heavens and on the earth into accord with the heart of God. He has done it already for us, since we already are reconciled.

Would all things created "in Him" be the display of His power, and all things created "for Him" be the display of His glory? Well, it is quite evident from Revelation 4 that there is to be a meed of praise from creation. Not only is He said to be the end in view but He is also the beginning. Putting those two together we have a complete

picture of the supremacy of Christ.

The beginning is said of Him as Head of the body, for He is the beginning of this new order of creation which is established in Him in resurrection. When the Lord uttered those words in John 12, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit," it seems we may see here the law of creation applied to a grain of wheat, which we find stated in Genesis 1, it brings forth "after his kind." It is ten times stated in Genesis 1, "after his kind," the complete denial of evolution, since it is never "after another kind." The Lord Jesus went into death that there might be a harvest "after His kind."

We have that same thought in this chapter, the greatness of Christ and the moral correspondence of those associated with Him. That brings us to chapter 2 where we have the circumcision, cutting off without hands. Not the outward ritualistic thing but an inward spiritual thing.

Referring to the reference to Genesis 1, Adam came last in that creation but here, Christ comes first. Everything now in this new order takes character from Christ. So in this passage in chapter 2; it is "in the circumcision of the Christ." That is an immensely important principle which I hope all will lay hold of. In the first creation God formed it, then put man there; but in new creation He starts with the Man, Christ, and everything is fashioned after that blessed Man, and that is why our Lord is spoken of as "the Last Adam."

Now circumcision is a reference to His death and burial, and resurrection. He was cut off, and we are to remember that our position and state is in correspondence with that. We are circumcised in a spiritual sense in the "putting off the body of the flesh" (as it ought to read,) in the circumcision of Christ. Everyone of us was governed by the flesh in his unconverted days. Our natural desires dominated us and that was our life. Now the Christian position and state means that the old is put off effectually as before God in the death of Christ, so that in resurrection we are risen with Him as we read in Chapter 3; The apostle is bringing to bear upon them that the old life of flesh is put off. We are dead and risen with Christ; we are introduced into a new order of things. That is why

we are exhorted to hold the Head.

It is the main point of the epistle. In the second chapter, verse 8, we are warned to beware, for men will divert you. They will take you away as a spoil. They will lead you away after other things. It is what we should call to-day, Modernism; assuming that the things of God are subservient to the human mind. Modern inventions are leading to that. When they started to build the tower of Babel, God said, "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Genesis 11: 6) Man is a wonderful creature and we need to be on our guard lest we are infected by this spirit; it is all empty as the word "vain" really means.

In relation to verse 18, if we have been brought into a sphere in which He must have the first place in all things, then there is no room for any of these things. Do we not need to be engaged with the positive blessedness of Christ and of all those things which are centred in Him. Then these things will not have any place with us. God works on the principle of displacement, by giving us something better. If we give Christ His rightful place in our hearts, all else falls into its rightful place.

It may help to note verses 17 and 18 of chapter 1; "And He is before all . . . And He is the Head of the body." If we have the positive side of truth before us, as presented in Christ, all else will fall into its right place. Merely attempting to cut off this and that will make us legal. The Revised Version gives a helpful rendering of the verse at the end of chapter 2, regarding these legal prohibitions; "not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." It is the realisation in our hearts of the positive thing which is in Christ, which makes these legal prohibitions valueless.

Referring again to circumcision, we learn that we pass out of the sphere where these things had their place. We are said to be circumcised and buried as to the one, and risen and quickened as to the other. Have we not to realise that, if we are to move in this new circle in power? Yes, and along with that the warning as to, "not holding the Head." We hold fast the Head. Everyone of us is put into contact with Christ, who is the Head of the body, and the object of the adversary is to drive a wedge in between the individual saint and the One who is the Head.

To begin with it was this human wisdom and learning. Further down in verse 16 it was Jewish things, meats and drinks, and days, and so forth. Then you get in verse 18 what we might call a mystical ritualism. All these things divert from Christ and if we want an example of this last we see it in Roman Catholicism. Jesus is far distant; with Mary, and Peter, and saint this and saint the other, and so on from the Pope down to the parish priest, in between, calling for unintelligent obedience. Speaking to a Roman Catholic years ago he said he was a Catholic having married a Catholic wife. It was all so easy, the priest doing everything for him and if he was damned the priest would be to blame. I told him the priest would not bear the damnation for him. That was his attitude—the priest and an easy life. The Lord Jesus in the far distance.

Is it not important to see that while abstractly we have passed completely out of that scene, our exercise to-day should be to see that we pass **practically** out of it? Yes, though it is not here a position we have to attain to but a position into which God has put us. We have to recognise that. I have been helped by taking note of the prepositions. We are “in” Christ; we are “with” Christ; we are “of” Christ and we draw “from” Christ. God has put us into these things and I ask myself, Am I answering to it?

Would it help to distinguish between the Headship of Christ in Ephesians 1 and 4, by contrasting it with Colossians, Head to the Church and Head of the body? Along with that we might point out that in Ephesians it is more our position as in Christ, while in Colossians it is more, Christ in us.

Our blessed Lord is Head over all things. The word there is used with a slightly different force from when it is used as the Head of the body. Head of the body is a divine truth conveyed to us in symbols we can understand. For us the head dominates the body, rules the body; everything for our bodies proceeds from the head. So here with Christ; it is an organic unity and Christ is the Head, but He is rather the Chief or Commander of all creation. There are these two thoughts connected with the Head. In the more intimate way He is the Head of the body and to that body we belong. So we read in verse 19, nourishment is ministered and increase is granted and all proceeds from

the Head. I do think if we realised that nourishment and growth, is dependent upon the maintenance of spiritual contact with Christ, we would be "holding fast the Head," as Mr. Darby renders it. Do not allow anyone to divert you from Him. What havoc has been made in Christendom by clericalism, where everything is vested in one man, and everybody else sits and listens to an eloquent preacher. That kind of thing can come very easily into our little gatherings.

Is not the Headship of Christ presented in three ways? Administratively, He is Head over all things. Organically, He is Head of the body and racially, He is head of a new race. Here it is organic. Seven different things are said of the Headship of Christ and it would seem that all are summed up here when He is spoken of as "the Head."

If we are moved by these tremendous truths and instructions, we shall be preserved from the Laodicean spirit. We shall see the all-sufficiency of Christ. In verses 8, 9 and 10, of chapter 2; the word "vain" is simply, "empty," in contrast to "full." Let no man "spoil you through philosophy and empty deceit, after the tradition of men." "For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are filled full in Him." The full Christian is the one who finds all his sufficiency in Christ. In business some of us have to handle all manner of things, but we must see to it that our minds are not dominated by them. The world only has these things, but we have something which is vested in Christ and the heart is filled with Him. This affords us a happy deliverance and a sufficiency.

Could not the last statement of verse 8 become a very simple test to each one of us? "Not according to Christ." That is the simple test. How often we hear the question, Ought I to do this? Can I go in for that? Is there any wrong in this? The simple test in everything is, Is it according to Christ? The elements of the world will shortly wonder after the beast, or those who are dominated by these elements; while the Christian should wonder after Christ; He is the Head.

Is this completeness in verse 10 positional? Is this true of every saint of God? Well, do you not think with all these statements there are two sides? On God's side yes, but it is for us to enter into the power and reality of them. We

must keep the two things clear. The old way of expressing these two sides was to speak of them as objective and subjective; that is, what is true of me in Christ and what may be wrought truthfully in me by the power of the Spirit. We must first view every truth as it is in the mind of God, for in the mind of God this "filled full" is true of every Christian, but whether it is true in experience and practice is another matter.

It may help at this point to indicate why "bodily" is added in verse 9, as an addition to the statement in chapter 1. I see that associated with that here is the fact that He is Head of "all principality and power." That is not said in the first chapter, which is looking back to the past, and as you will know the better translation is "for in Him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell" that is it was pleasing to the Godhead. We see that in the Gospel of John. "The Father which dwelleth in Me He doeth the works." The Father was in the Son and the Spirit was in Him. In rejecting Him, the Godhead in fulness was rejected. In the second chapter it carries our thoughts to what He is now, "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." It is to emphasise the fact that in His glorified body the fulness of the Godhead is found. Added to that we read, we are filled full in Him. The ideal Christian state is seen in the man whose soul is full of Christ.

This must refer to Him in Manhood. Is this not a triumph for God that such an One is Head of every principality and power? God has secured this in a Man. Here is a Man who can bring into display every thought of God for His glory, and He can sustain all that stands in association with Him in His Headship.

All this calls us back to what we call the practical bearing of these truths, and that is what we must notice, because the Apostle Paul never stops with expounding truths doctrinally or in the abstract. He always proceeds to apply it to the state of the saints to whom he writes. We must not expound truth, without coming to the exhortations based upon it. So we are exhorted to "walk in Him." Our walk is our activities in answer to the word. In doing so we will be delivered from these dangers, we will be delivered from the taint of the modernistic or the Judaistic

or the kind of mystical ritualistic thing which captures multitudes.

How many genuine Christians have their testimony spoiled by giving heed to these things, which are but the product of the human intellect and are tainted with Modernism. All these things divert the simple saint from his Lord. There is no doubt as to what God wrought in His great mercy about one hundred and thirty years ago when saints got into touch, living touch, with Christ and His word; they recognised the presence of the Holy Spirit, gave Him His place and were governed by what the Scriptures indicated as to Christian life and gathering, waiting for the coming of the Lord.

In this list of dangers which you have pointed out I have in mind another, mentioned to me in a letter some days ago. It said we may have been more concerned about ministry than the Head. I can see the danger of being attached to a certain brother, and his line of truth, right though that may be. We need to get to what is behind the ministry, that which comes down from the living Head in heaven.

Do you think that walking "in Him" is tantamount to holding the Head? It certainly would be the fruit of holding the Head. How often we hear the statement, "O give me Samuel's ear," but why not ask for Samuel's hands and his feet? He did not only have an ear; he served God and walked in the ways of God. This is a practical application of our spiritual circumcision. In chapter 3; note the mortifying of verse 5; the putting off of verse 8 in view of the putting on of verse 10.

Both baptism and circumcision have the significance of death. Circumcision is connected with the death of Christ but baptism is connected with His burial. Not only are we prepared to accept His death for us, we accept removal from the sphere in which we once walked.

I am sure that while we have sat under good ministry we have failed to walk in obedience to it. That is why we are emphasizing this word "walk." It was ever the intention of God that we should walk under the direction of the Head. Says the apostle James, "faith without works is dead." I may talk about being among brethren and all their teaching and be as worldly as a man not converted. Then though I may protest that I have faith, Scripture says it is dead.



Could you give a simple definition of what it really means to "hold the Head"? Maintain contact with Christ. On our side surely it must begin with the word which reveals Him to us, and then prayer and communion. If we were more attentive, and our hearts more saturated with what the Scriptures say concerning Him, and spend more time in His holy presence as well as attending meetings, our hearts would have been more devoted. Young Christian! maintain contact with your Lord. Do not neglect reading of the word and helpful ministry and then on your knees, in His presence, pray that truth into your souls, you will then be enabled to hold the Head.

Two things seem necessary if we are to hold the Head. First we must know Him, and secondly we must know where He is. Where can we get to know Him but by the Scriptures, and where can we get to know where He is apart from the ministry of the Spirit shed forth from where He is? We need both, if we are to hold fast the Head. If we hold the Head it will not only mean being maintained as a believer here, but it will involve being maintained in the Christian company where Christ is predominant.

The link which binds the saints together is found in Him. He is the hub of the wheel, so to speak, or taking a natural illustration, if one has a cerebral haemorrhage, this part of the body goes wrong or that part is out of function, for it has lost contact with the head. The head really governs every part of our bodies.

Stephen would be a good example of holding the Head. So let us see to it that in all we do in our movements here, that Christ and His glory is the object before us. Holding the Head means, we bring Him into every circumstance and seek His guidance for every step. In doing so, we will keep free from all the dangers, and the things which would divert us from Him, and so in His power will be walking here well pleasing to our God.

## THE CHURCH : THE BODY AND THE HOUSE

Ephesians 1: 15-23; 2: 10-22; 3: 1-16.

The two aspects of the church we are about to consider come out clearly in this epistle. We have mention of the body at the end of chapter 1., and the fact that God still has a house, a dwelling place, is particularly mentioned at the end of chapter 2. Now it is no new thought that God should have a house. When Israel was redeemed out of Egypt one of the main thoughts presented was that God brought His people out that he might dwell among them. We all know how that found expression in both Tabernacle and Temple, and yet broke down and failed in its practical expression and working. The thought of the church as the body of Christ is, however, something entirely new. It could not be revealed until Christ Himself had appeared. It will be helpful if we consider what God is doing to-day in the church under both of those aspects; keeping well in mind the practical effects of both; how all works out concerning every one of us.

What is the church ? The word church which we use is, in the original Greek the word **ecclesia**. It simply means the called out company. God is calling out a people not merely from the Jews, in whom He particularly wrought in past times, but also from the Gentiles. God has always been calling out. We may go back to the tower of Babel where, according to the Darby translation, the men of that day were saying, "Come on!" twice, saying as it were, Let us all club together and do in unison what we cannot do as individuals. The next chapter records that God said to Abraham "Get Out !" The world is always saying Come on! seeking to enlist us in its various schemes, but God is always on the line of calling out.

I have regarded the church as a comprehensive thought. We know that the church is the body but it is also the house, and the wife and the bride. Would these be all different ways in which it is described? Yes, they are all found in the New Testament. So the church is the company of the called out ones. There are Scriptures which view

it in its completeness. "Christ loved the church," there we think of the whole body called out between Pentecost and the Rapture. But now we are going to consider the church in its present character. It is important to see that Scripture does speak of local assemblies, while it does also speak of the church as an existing whole, which I am afraid a good many Christians do not see. Some concentrate on the local assembly as though there were nothing between a large number of local churches and the church in its totality that is going to be presented to Christ when He comes. We must not overlook the fact that to-day the church exists in its oneness.

We do not get the local aspect here, but rather in its universal aspect. Years ago, we heard the illustration, that the church is like a regiment. This regiment may have on its banners Waterloo and Balaclava, etc., but there would not be a man there then, who was at Waterloo or Balaclava. The regiment had existed by others being added while some had been subtracted, so the regiment remained. Now the church is like that, for some have been removed but others have been added as we read in Acts, "the Lord added to the church such as should be saved." It began with the calling out from the midst of Israel, as we read in Acts 2, but it was extended to the Gentiles, as we see in Acts 10. We distinguish between what is local, and the whole church on earth. The assembly exists, when it is not actually gathered in assembly.

There are then three aspects of it. When gathered together locally, as true of a single company, as in 1 Corinthians. Then as the aggregate of all believers on earth at any given moment; then the aggregate of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. This last, as we said, quoting from chapter 5, "Christ loved the church." No doubt the major portion of the assembly at Ephesus would be Gentiles as Paul states in chapter 2. He shews how God had called out from the Gentiles. They had formerly been in the flesh the uncircumcision, without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world, but God had now called them and brought them into the church.

If we have in the epistle the body of Christ, in what aspect is Christ presented here? He is the One Who is

exalted; the One in Whom we stand. When it speaks of the saints being raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places, it is not **with** Christ Jesus but **in** Christ Jesus. So may we not rightly state that while we discussed in our former reading in Colossians the Deity of our Lord Jesus we have rather presented here His Manhood? It must be His Manhood if He is to have a body. Yes that is quite clearly taught here.

Is the church the house of God to-day? Yes. You may remember when our Lord first cleansed the temple He said, "Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise." He acknowledges the temple as being what it was constructed to be, the house of God—"My Father's house." Then, just before He suffered He said to them, "Your house is left to you desolate." It was disowned, no longer acknowledged as such. In the providence of God another forty years rolled on ere it was destroyed utterly, but Ezekiel had seen the glory depart prophetically. God had a house and He has one today, but we may consider the body first, and then come back to the house.

In the end of chapter 1 and again in chapter 4: 16 we have the body mentioned. So we read, "From Whom the whole body fitly joined together" and so forth. Thus it makes increase. The purpose of God centres in Christ as a Man glorified. The wonderful thing is, in order to bring this purpose to fruition He forms a vessel to share with that glorified Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, in all that God has purposed. While that looks on to a future day for its display, that same vessel today continues the life of Christ on earth. God is continuing Christ in the members of His body.

You mean that a man expresses in His body what He is. The church is in that sense a continuation of Christ in this world. In the actual body of Christ He was crucified, man cast Him out, but now He has a body which cannot be dealt with in that way. We may not realise that, and not act in keeping with what we really are, but it is true, that which is of Christ is to be manifested in His saints. It is a matter of light and love. The apostle Paul was a great example of what is before us. If we think about the apostle we are sure to find something in him as the pattern saint, which will describe these various things to us.

Very well, we find the non-atoning sufferings of Christ were being duplicated in him, and the love of Christ was flowing out through him. So he himself could say, It is not I who lives but Christ who is living in me. He was a very striking example.

When the apostle writes to the Corinthians, "Ye are body of Christ," 1 Cor. 12 : 27, do we have a company there representing Christ the Head? Yes, indeed; you are quoting, according to Mr. Darby's version where the definite article "the" is omitted. Not that they were **the** body of Christ, but that they were of body character, "Ye are body of Christ."

We may just point out that the Headship of Christ is not the point mentioned in 1 Cor. 12. In view of the importance of the body, it may help to point out that the one body is presented in Romans 12, for the accomplishment of the will of God. In 1 Cor. 12 the body there is for the display of spiritual manifestations. It is mentioned in both Ephesians and Colossians for the display of Christ. In support of that we notice in Romans 12, where the body is for the accomplishment of the will of God, it is God Who gives the gifts. In 1 Cor. 12 in view of spiritual manifestations, the Spirit gives the gifts, while in Eph. 4, it is Christ Who gives the gifts. It does seem that the aspect of continuance of the life of Christ is mostly seen in Colossians, while here in Ephesians it is more our links with a glorified Man.

Would it help to point out who it was who first mentioned the truth of the body after our Lord was glorified? We are thinking of Saul of Tarsus, and what the Lord said at his conversion "Why, persecutest thou Me?" That disclosed the fact of the body; something very blessed to the heart of Christ. Our Lord was first to make mention of the church in Matthew 16 but He could not open out the truth of it, till He had died and was risen and glorified.

It was no mystery that Gentiles should be brought into blessing, but this new thing is that both Jews and Gentiles should be one body. That is the mystery. One has been interested on that line to notice how in this epistle Paul puts the Gentiles before the Jews. He does mention the historical fact that the Jews were first in that body, but when speaking of it in relation to the mystery he puts the Gentile first, so far as I have checked. I believe the apostle

when in the prison had arrived at the full truth of this mystery and in writing to Gentiles was now putting them before the Jews. It had long been in his heart, "to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." But that does not appear in this epistle. His true ministry to the Gentiles seems to be shining out here.

The church came into being on the day of Pentecost. By one Spirit all were baptised into one body. It is a work of God and we shall get help in considering what the apostle says about this in the middle of chapter 2. If you notice, four times the word **one** occurs. "He is our peace." There was always this terrible antagonism between Jew and Gentile and there are no doubt certain fundamental differences. In a meeting where there were both Jews and Gentiles a good deal of grace would be necessary. The fact is we are all on a new basis. How has the Lord made both one, breaking down the middle wall of partition between us? He has abolished that which was the great controversial matter between the two to make "in Himself of twain one new man."

Now, the word "make" is the same word as in verse 10 rendered, "created." New creation occurs twice in this second chapter; we have been brought into a new life with its new nature as the fruit of a Divine work. So as the fruit of this new creation work in verse 15, it is to create "in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Not that Jews have assimilated Gentiles or that the Gentiles have assimilated the Jews, but God has something entirely new, and on that new creation basis they are all one. So he goes on to speak of the Gentiles who were afar off and the Jews who were dispensationally nigh, that both as believers have access by one Spirit unto the Father. The new creation work is crowned by the fact that we have one Spirit and in this way are brought to the Father. That means the Christian revelation.

It says in verse 15 he has abolished that which caused the enmity and in verse 16 having slain it. He has done it by putting us both out. We do not have a Jewish Church nor do we have a Gentile church nor have we a church, Jewish—Gentile, with a hyphen between. It is important to see that the church is not the continuation of anything at all, which had formerly come to light in this world. It

is quite a new formation. Mr. Darby renders it, "that He might form the two in Himself into one new man." Only He could do it and only in Himself could it be done.

In reference to Romans 12, the statement is "we are one body in Christ." Not, as you say, the continuation of any other thing. Is it not one of the great sins of Christendom that they have Judaised the church; and we need to see it is something entirely new. The descent of the Holy Spirit welded this company into an entirely new formation. Yet we were not there then, so how do we come into this wonderful organism?

The apostle wrote to the Corinthians that "by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body," yet they were not there when it took place at Pentecost. We are brought into the good of the baptism by the reception of the Spirit. So everyone, who believes the gospel and is sealed by the Spirit, is brought into that which began at Pentecost.

If we as Christians are walking according to this truth there will be something of Him seen in all the members of His body. We have to remember that unity does not mean uniformity. What we have in the body is unity but in variety as 1 Corinthians 12 teaches. Just as in nature variety is seen, so it is in His body: unity in diversity.

There may be an endeavour to ensure uniformity by laying down certain rules based on the letter of the word, and making everyone toe the line; but true unity depends upon the working of the Spirit. We read in Acts 2, that the Holy Spirit did not only rest upon each one but He filled all the house where they were sitting. It would suggest not only the sealing of individuals but that He was working in a sphere where all were together. Now that brings us on to the thought of the house. I know of course there it was the actual house in which they were sitting, but it does suggest the house of God character.

Does privilege belong to the body and responsibility to the house? Privilege belongs to all that God has brought us into and with it a corresponding responsibility. Peter tells us that judgment is to begin with the house but we do not get any thought of judgment connected with the body. That means that the house can be viewed from an external viewpoint as a sphere of profession. This you do not find with the body.

Say more about the privilege which is ours. We are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and we are told God had this in view for us before the foundation of the world. We are to be before Him holy and without blame in love in the dignity of sons and accepted in the Beloved. It is all according to God's own thought. "According to," is a characteristic phrase, "according to the good pleasure of His will;" verse 5. "According to the riches of His grace;" verse 7. "According to His good pleasure;" verse 9, etc. The epistle to the Romans views us more on the ground of our responsibility, but here we are looking at what God has designed in eternity according to His own thoughts, above all questions concerning ourselves. As saints we are brought into this favoured place.

Then the apostle prays that the saints may have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," so that we may know, "what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Then the exaltation of Christ is spoken of; that He is now the Head over all things and in Lordship everything is under His feet; but, He is Head to the church, which brings in a much more intimate thought. This word "fulness" in verse 23, can be rendered the "complement;" what Eve was to Adam, the church is going to be to Christ. The one is the shadow; here we have the substance. He is going to give the fullest expression of all that He is in the saints, who are His body.

Is this the body being formed in view of the world to come? "The fulness of Him that filleth all in all." We do not seem to hear much about the body when we come to that day; it is more the wife and the bride. Men have tried to put this world in order, but have failed because of that one incurable thing—sin. Christ will deal with that eventually and order all things according to the pleasure and rights of God. The world to come is mentioned in verse 21 and Christ is said to be above all.

In Colossians the body has a Head in heaven and in Ephesians the Head has a body down here. The truth of the body is given to us during the period of the absence of Christ from this world, to display His life during the period of His absence, yet it seems the body has a part to play in



the world to come. It would be difficult to find any Scripture which gives to the assembly a more dignified touch than this. The One Who has been given to be Head over all things is that to the assembly His body, the fulness of Him Who filleth all in all. It is thus the assembly is His complement.

The word complement indicates, that which makes something complete, and Christ the mystic Man is incomplete without this body. We get a hint of that in Genesis when God said, "It is not good that man should be alone." That looks on to the day of glory, when the church will be united to Christ as we have in Rev. 19 & 21.

Paul prays to the Father of glory, and this vessel will be capacitated to contain that glory so far as revelation is concerned. The Father of glory views Him as the Source of it, the God of glory is the One Who has the disposal of it. The Lord of glory is the One Who administers it, and the Spirit of glory is the One Who makes it good in our hearts.

It is worth considering what our brother has said, that when we do get to revelation and display it does not say it is His body which displays Him but "the bride, the Lamb's wife." It is of course the same company under whatever name it may appear according to the place in which it is found.

Immediately we come to the thought of display, having left the doctrine and come to the application of these things, we can see how it is that what was displayed in perfection in Christ is to come into display in the body which is found here. In chapter 4; verse 16 we read that the body is "fitly joined together." When it is the house it is the building "fitly framed together." Then the apostle begins to inculcate things, the putting off of the old man which expresses the old life of flesh and sin, our fallen state, and the putting on of the new man as the fruit of new creation. The fact is we can live two lives; as Galatians 6, puts it, either sowing to the Spirit or sowing to the flesh. It is like a sower with two baskets, one with good seed and the other with darnel. Which are we going to sow? Keep on dipping your hand into the right basket.

Why do we older people, when we hear of someone contemplating marriage, say to them, "Now whatever you

do, do not marry an unconverted person." We know that believers have two natures and we can live according to the flesh and we can live according to the Spirit, but the unconverted partner can only live according to the flesh, and cannot live according to the Spirit. The result is the unconverted person is bound to drag the other down. So we read in chapter 5 verse 1 "Be ye followers of God as dear children." Christ in His life here perfectly revealed God and now we are called to imitate Him as dear children. Though we cannot do it as perfectly as He did, this is the wonderful ideal which is set before us, for we are members of His body. We share His life; we can, as taught of God and guided by the Spirit, display His character.

It is interesting to point out that of the five writers of the epistles Paul is the only one who speaks of the Lord being Man, the others never call Him a Man. And further Paul is the only one who speaks of the new man as though, as you say, it has in view the reproduction through us of the features of the Second Man.

Before leaving the truth of the body would you say a word about the end of chapter 1? Is that something which is coming out to-day or does it look on to the day of display?

It is true that Christ is that now, "Head over all things" but it has not yet come into display. The Headship of Christ is referred to in seven distinctive ways. In Psalm 18: verse 43, He is said to be "Head of the heathen." In Psalm 118: verse 22, He is "the Head of the corner," for this is quoted in Acts 4: verse 11 and applied to Christ by Peter. Then in 1 Corinthians 11: verse 3, He is the "Head of every man." In Colossians 1: verse 18, He is the "Head of the body." In Ephesians 5: verse 23, He is "Head of the Church." Again in Colossians 2: verse 10, He is the "Head of all principality and power," and here we have the seventh one, "Head over all things." I gather that when He is called "the Head" in Colossians 2: verse 19, it embraces them all. In these last verses we have the formation of the vessel through which it will all be displayed. Yet, I have been interested in the fact our brother has just pointed out that when it does come into display that vessel is called, "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

It may be because Christ will then be visible Himself.

At present He is not visible, so the body is here to represent Him. When He is manifested in His glory, though the Church is still His body, it seems to recede in that character and another character, speaking of love and favour, seems to come more to light. It seems in the preposition used, "Head . . . to" that the thought of husband and wife underlies it. Already there is something being displayed but it is to those heavenly beings of understanding and penetration, the unfallen angels, and they see the "all-various wisdom of God." (New Trans.) They see it in the church to-day.

Is the house of God ever said to be the Father's house in any of the epistles? In that passage in John 14 it is a much larger thought, "in My Father's house," for there are many abodes there. The Lord there is looking on to what will be established in the coming age. Here it is the house of God composed this time of living material which can no longer be burned down as of old. It can of course be outwardly corrupted and that is why in 2 Timothy 2 the apostle used the figure of the "great house." In that we have both vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour. Speaking here however to these Gentiles who had once been strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, he reminds them that they are now part of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Then it is *in Christ*—"in Whom"—all the building is fitly framed together, whatever the component parts were, and it is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. This views it as the building to be completed when the church story is finished. Then we have a present application in the last verse, "In Whom—[in Christ]—ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." It is by the Spirit indwelling the house by which God has taken possession of it. This is an additional thought to the Spirit indwelling an individual. Each individual believer is indwelt by the Spirit and consequently as a living stone is part of this house where God dwells by His Spirit.

What is the difference between the house and the temple? While there is a difference in the use of the words they both refer to the same thing. Both the tabernacle and the temple are figures for us to describe the house of God.

The tabernacle has more in view our going in to God such as verse 18, but in the temple it is more the display of God. That is why in 1 Corinthians it is the "temple" which is used of them, because they were left in Corinth to display God. The temple is the shrine of the Divine Light. The tabernacle also carries the thought of drawing near to worship, as clearly used in Hebrews 10.

Is this building, as mentioned in verse 22, a present thing? Yes, it is the habitation of God and we must ever remember we are always in the house. It is not a building of stone from the quarry but as we know, a building composed of believers, living stones. We hope to have a reading on our behaviour in relation to it, but let us remember we are always in the house.

Would it not be more correct to say we are always the house? Yes it would. So we have these two great thoughts of the assembly in this epistle, it is the body of Christ for the display of Christ and the house of God in which He dwells to-day by His Spirit. We need to see to it then that we do manifest the features of Christ to-day and conduct ourselves in such fashion that we give a true display of God in testimony, as being those among whom He is dwelling by His Spirit.

## THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS ORDER

1 Corinthians 12: 1-14; 13: 1-3; 14: 26-40.

There are three chapters in the New Testament which speak of gifts. Romans 12, Ephesians 4; and this chapter we have read, 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts in Romans come down to what we may consider are small details in connection with service to the saints or in the gospel. In Ephesians they really are men, apostles are gifts; prophets are gifts and so are teachers and evangelists, and they are given from the exalted Man, Christ, Who has gone up on high. They manifest His victory according to Psalm 68: verse 18, in the bestowal of the gifts. Here it is the Spirit indwelling the church and operating in "spiritual manifestations," according to the New Translation. It is thus the Spirit of God manifests His presence and power in a variety of ways, and we are given to see that, though there is *great diversity, there were not a number of different spirits*. Why did the apostle write thus? Because in the heathen world there were oracles such as the oracle of Delphi. There were many manifestations proceeding from different demonic spirits. In the assembly of God there is only one Spirit and one Lord administering. The one Spirit is the energy producing the gifts, giving manifestations, however varied they may be.

It may be as well to remind ourselves in the opening remarks that we do not have here the whole assembly before us as in Ephesians but a representation of that in any local company whenever and wherever convened.

The particular difficulty which the apostle was trying to remedy in this epistle was that of disorder in the things of God. That is why we heard in the last verse we did read, "Let all things be done decently and in order." chapter 14 verse 40. That of course raises the question at once, Yes, but whose order? The fact is that all order, even that which may appear most orderly in the things of God, if it is not Divine order, is disorder. So every activity in every local company ought to bear the distinctive mark of the Holy Spirit.

It has been said against us, that we are a democratic sort of people where any one can get up and talk. The answer is, No, no one can get up and talk except the Lord may direct and the Spirit energises. Again it may be said of us, you make so many mistakes; you do not do it nicely; and my answer is, Yes, I am prepared to admit that. We seek to do what is the Divine order, and though we may do it very feebly, it is much better to do what is Divine than to do what is not, even though it may be done in first class style.

It seems from verse 3 that the Holy Spirit puts us under the Lordship of Christ. He goes on to say that though there are diversities of manifestations it is the same Holy Spirit, just as there are differences of administrations, but it is the same Lord. There are manifestations, administrations and operations but they are all under the hand of God. If there is a spiritual manifestation according to verse 4, and it is under the control of the Lord according to verse 5, and something of God comes into effect according to verse 6, we can expect to see that which the apostle alludes to in chapter 14: verse 25, a man falling down and worshipping God and saying, "God is indeed amongst you." (New Trans.)

Are all these gifts in operation to-day? I think it would be right to say that certain of them, bearing a miraculous character, have ceased. The working of miracles and gifts of healing for instance though there have been cases of healing here and there; but not these great campaigns which appear to do a lot for the moment but a few weeks afterwards much, if not all, does not stand. In the first days of Christianity, miracles were abundant; but so it happened at the opening of each new departure in the ways of God.

Yes, miraculous displays have never been constant. They would not seem miracles, if they were constant. They would appear just the usual thing. We see them displayed when God intervened in Egypt. Again with Elijah and Elisha when God was giving a last appeal to the nation before the captivity. When our Lord appeared we see the most wonderful display of all. At the inauguration of the church, God gave adequate witness that He was working there.

Would that bring us to the fact that the greatest miracles today are moral? When a local company is functioning rightly with all its variety, yet all controlled by the same Holy Spirit, that is a miracle. Yes, and when persons are converted, something of a permanent character is accomplished; it is miraculous. One has known persons brightly converted of whom we might have said, "the very last person I would have expected to be converted." We do not see the working of miracles to-day, such as divers kinds of tongues, but those needed to keep the assembly in function still abide. A brother once described the beginning of the church as a ship being launched with an array of flags to call attention to the ship; but afterwards, the flags were taken down, and engines put into the ship to propel it through the waves. Flags are no use for that. We still have, thank God, the power to propel the ship.

Would not these gifts be seen more in evidence and helping the saints if attention was paid to these instructions in chapters 13-14, and obedience to them was observed? It would. In prayer our brother called attention to the words of our Lord concerning the Spirit, "He shall glorify me." This seems to be the bearing of 12: 3. No derogatory statement concerning our Lord will be uttered by one who is speaking in the power of the Spirit of God. Again, no man speaking by another spirit will say Lord to Jesus. Gifts are not given to call attention to the speaker, nor to the assembly, but to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. That ought to test every one of us.

So we have in verse 7, "But to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit." (New Trans.) That is to say it is not given to exalt a brother but the Spirit works for the profit of all. That is why we have the love chapter where the assembly was in disorder. The assembly is the circle where the Lordship of Christ is owned and love prevails. He administrates there but it is in the power of the Spirit, Who manifests His power in a variety of ways but always for profit to all.

It was easy to locate the company to whom this letter was written but where can we find such a company to-day? We cannot to-day lay our hand on any local company and say, for instance, That is the church of God in Newcastle. There are saints who seek to carry out what is indicated

here, though the whole church consists of every member of the body of Christ. What the apostle is laying down as right conduct for this disorderly assembly in Corinth is valid for all. It is the only epistle which has a universal direction, to "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Not only is it said they were set apart in Christ Jesus but they called upon the Name of the Lord. He was their Lord and He is our Lord for we are all under the Lordship of Christ.

What we have here is not the proprietary right of any company but is the normal right of all in Christ, and should be the functioning of all Christians. We must hold it so. The queen of Sheba noted the order of the attendants of Solomon and we may have God's order for us in the chapter.

Whilst you have spoken of some manifestations which are not in evidence to-day, what manifestations are in evidence? I should say that which is indicated in chapter 14, because there what is spoken of is singing, and praying, and prophesying and opening up the word of God. There were men speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit in those early days, as Paul himself says towards the end of chapter 2. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." That is the passage one would go to to prove inspiration. But inspired utterances have now been committed to writing, and we have them in the New Testament. So in a secondary sense a brother may be able to speak to us in a prophetic way. Not merely foretelling but giving a word to us from the Lord. That is contemplated here.

Then do we not have these other things coming in, such as "the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge"? No doubt, and also faith. There have been some remarkable instances of faith which we may be able to recount, something which is not common to all of us; but there have been such.

There is in these chapters a "within" and a "without" and the apostle in chapter 14 draws that dividing line by asserting that tongues and healing and such like are a testimony to them which are without. Something new had been brought in which could not be found in Old



Testament Scriptures, the truth of the church associated with Christ in heaven, so external, miraculous, gifts were given to show that God was in that company. Now that has been established in testimony to those without, the gifts needed to carry on within remain while the gifts for without have disappeared.

In regard to the reference to chapter 1, where all who call on the name of the Lord are amenable to this instruction, we see how that works out as we go through this epistle. This chapter ought to govern all local companies of the saints and we further read, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (14: 37.) If we all call upon the name of the Lord, and have all this one set of instructions, that would give an outward expression of the local assembly.

That verse in chapter 14 is very important. These Corinthians appeared to be rather puffed up about their knowledge, perhaps because they were a very intelligent company, but he says to them, if you think you are a prophet or spiritual, you will display that by recognising and acknowledging, inspired utterances; that these things I am writing are not my opinion but are the commandments of the Lord. This is a chapter of which people have said, as to verse 34, Oh! that is just Paul, he must have been a woman-hater; yet it is the very chapter in which we have this verse, If "the commandments of the Lord," then we bow our heads and accept them for they are not optional; they are not things you may do if you like, they are **commandments** of the Lord. There is only one thing to do and that is, **obey them**.

Can you tell us in a few words what you mean by this Divine order and compared with which every other order is disorder? The order I am referring to is the order laid down in chapter 14. In chapter 12 we see the Lord as the administrator, the Spirit as the power, and God operating in all these activities. The one and the self same Spirit energising all, we have the normal state. Now in chapter 14 we have that working out in practice, and the apostle lays down certain rules. If these are attended to there will be edification. If the prophets were to speak then he

says, "two or three." Why? Because we are men and women and our powers are limited. I have been to meetings where we have had something beyond two or three, and we all got weary, for we are only capable of taking in a certain amount. Rather let us have the little, which leaves an impression, to edification.

We have the breaking of bread on what we call open meeting lines and also our fellowship meetings. Are these the meetings which are covered by this Divine order? If so, what happens when we have a lecture?

That is the servant exercising his own gift. Gift should be exercised by the individual but of course subject to the Lord. The evangelist may go off somewhere in the exercise of his own gift. The people at Samaria may have been astonished when Philip went off to the wilderness leaving behind an obvious work which was going on, but he went there as doing the will of God. That is individual service, not quite what we have here, which is instruction to govern our prayer meetings and breaking of bread and what we call an open meeting for the Spirit to use whomsoever He will.

In a lecture it is the servant acting for God towards men but here it is the assembly convened. Why do we only expect certain ones to take part when we come together? I take it that while it does say you may all prophesy one by one, that means all the prophets. A person may not be gifted to prophesy and it would be better if he did not attempt to do so. There is liberty for any one to give a word from the Lord, and it may be that at times one who rarely takes part may give that word. On the other hand those who are gifted to give a prophetic word must keep in exercise, and not fall back on well worn sermons. That would not be the word for the moment. Another thing I have found for myself, I have generally hit the mark when I have been **brief**. A lot of these round-about addresses leave us wondering just what the point is.

While it is right that a brother may be exercising his own gift at times, he is still subject to the same Spirit in what he has to say, otherwise it will only be an exhibition of the flesh. It is only when a brother has something to communicate from the Lord in the power of the Spirit that it is going to be of any help to the saints. There may be

a difference in a brother having something to say and having something to communicate. There may be a lot said, but nothing communicated.

In these days of great weakness and fewness of numbers very often little gatherings feel they cannot come together on assembly lines to have an open meeting. In my own local meeting such a thing is rare. That may be the result of weakness, but if we were all together this is what is laid down as to the order of a meeting. The prayer meeting and the breaking of bread are of course of the character of open meetings, as we use the term. However, though there may be much to criticise at times, let us stick to the Divine order. We are favoured here by having open meetings every month.

We have said of course that the breaking of bread and the prayer meeting are both open meetings. Prayer for instance is spoken of in this chapter. When Paul was at Troas they had the breaking of bread and Paul also exercised his gift preaching till midnight, or even the breaking of day. There did not appear to be any clashing. They had their breaking of bread on assembly lines as it was the last visit he paid to them; and as a servant of God he exercised his gift, but I do not think that Paul's preaching till midnight was an assembly meeting. He utilised the opportunity.

Did he not also put into practice the features of the thirteenth chapter? Would it be opportune at this moment to tell us the important reason as to why chapter 13 comes in between chapter 12, giving us what you have called the theory, and the practice of chapter 14?

The first word in chapter 14 is "Follow after love." That comes before speaking with tongues etc. for the object of it all is the edification of the saints. It is remarkable that this chapter 13 comes in this epistle, which deals with the confusions in the local assembly. There was the tendency to exalt gifted men into the place of leaders of parties. We might have said, Mention that when you get to the end. Some are talking wrongly about the resurrection; there is disorder in the Lord's supper. Mention these things first, No, if Christ is disowned and men are exalted into leaders of parties, everything else will be wrong. He considers this forming of parties the worst thing of all.

As I see love described for us in Scripture, it is marked by self-abnegation and sacrifice. How often gift is used to exalt the person who has it, and if we really absorb the chapter which speaks of love and knew what it is to drink into the spirit of self-abnegation and sacrifice, there would be no putting forward of one-self. There would be a simple communication of that which had been given.

What is meant by verse 26 in this 14th chapter? Does it infer that a brother may come to the meeting with the purpose of giving out a certain hymn or reading a certain portion? Whether they came determined to do it or they simply formed determination when they got there hardly matters. What was happening was, when they did have their meetings they were disorderly. It was not a case of every body being reluctant, long pauses, but the very reverse. They were falling over one another doing this, that, and the other, and he points out that they were astray from the control of the Spirit of God and that is why he says, "Let all things be done unto edifying."

Does this verse refer to function or to substance? Does it mean that each one was active in function or does it mean that each one had substance? If substance, it could be used to edification if done so in order. Does it infer they all had substance, and could be helpful if it were used aright? However much ability a man may have by the Spirit, he has no right to exercise that apart from the Lordship of Christ. If I come to a meeting determined I am going to speak whatever happens, I am completely ignoring the Lordship of Christ. We know how these things weary the saints. Some seem determined to seize every opportunity to speak to the saints whether they have substance or not. That is what seemed to be happening, and it kills the open meeting. It is time we had a word about this, and we need all to take it right home to ourselves.

It is a serious thing to be the mouthpiece of the Lord to His people and we need to be sure of two things. Have I really received a word from the Lord and secondly, Does He want me to pass it on now? When Mary came to the disciples she said she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things to her. If we came to an open meeting as having seen the Lord and knowing He has

spoken some things to us, what a wonderful time we should have. One translation of Proverbs 21: 28, is "He that speaketh as having heard speaketh in victory." Our Lord spoke as He had heard, His ears were opened morning by morning, and if we speak as having heard we will speak in victory.

We ought to come with something but wait upon the Lord to use what we have like the boy with the loaves and fishes. That is what we mean by moving under the Lordship of Christ.

What is meant by one receiving a revelation? I think that was apostolic for we do not get revelations to-day as the word of God is complete. Some claim to get fresh revelations to-day but the word of God is now complete and we must be subject to it.

We might make an application of that. It is a happy thing when some brother has given us a word and it is followed by someone who is stirred by that word and follows it in line. This does seem better than someone getting up and starting an entirely new line of things. If what is given here is carried out in the grace and power of the Spirit, the spirit of love which edifies, you do get a very remarkable meeting. We have all experienced this when we were assured someone had a message from the Lord and it was supplemented by a following word. Far better that than when there is a rushing in with much talk and little power.

Clericalism came in as the result of two things. One, that we naturally love to walk in pre-eminence. On the other hand there are a lot of people quite content to let one man do it all. A brother from the Congo told us of being stuck in the mud with his truck and ten natives offered to push him out. He said, All push together when I say, Push! However, at the first attempt nothing happened. On the second attempt he looked round quickly and found six of the ten had jumped on for a ride instead of pushing. That is what some like; a ride, instead of a push.

There are three things in the chapter which we need to heed. Taking them in the reverse order, they are these, "Let all things be done decently and in order." verse 40. That is perhaps the simplest. "Let all things be done to edifying" verse 26, that is perhaps more difficult. Then,

"Follow after love" verse 1 is perhaps the most difficult of all. These things are a great test to one in seeking to give a word to the saints.

Is a Bible reading an assembly meeting? That is rather a difficult thing to say. We meet together to discuss the word of God to seek to find out its power. It is very happy and helpful when we have meetings of this kind. While the order in chapter 14 is obviously for an open meeting, it does not exclude other kinds of gatherings.

Do not these instructions cover all our gatherings together? Would that verse in Isaiah help in relation to a Bible reading, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word"? Isaiah chapter 8 verse 20. It give us opportunity to test things. It is by reading the Scriptures as we are to-day that we find out what this order is. We must remember of course that in chapter 12 there are gifts which are not exercised in the assembly, gifts of healing for instance. Whatever the exercise of gift may be or whenever it is in exercise, all should be marked by Divine order.

A simple person coming in and being convinced, Would that be only at an open meeting? It is stated in connection with an open meeting but there have been times when people have come to meetings of all kinds, and have gone out tremendously impressed with the order, and conscious of some power they have not met before. If the Spirit of God is unhindered and saints are in right conditions, it may happen at any meeting, if God is amongst us. The fact that it is given in relation to an open meeting is very salutary for that is the one meeting where the flesh may take advantage.

If these are the only instructions which we have for controlling our gatherings, then these conditions ought to control us whenever we come together and for whatever purpose. Hence, no meeting should be outside of Divine order. What are you going to substitute for Divine order? If meetings are arranged apart from this order it will be either ritualism or clericalism.

Sometimes one has been asked to attend certain meetings which were not arranged according to this order and we have been told, This is not an assembly meeting, as though by saying that we can do anything which appeals to us.

We invariably answer, No, if the order is right, it is well to arrange the meetings according to these instructions.

Many of these things need prayerful consideration as to what is the most profitable thing to do. I remember being at a meeting where there had been a great stir and a crowd of people coming to the meetings who had not peace with God. The saints said, These people need a simple word to establish them and we were asked to give an address on Gospel lines. I saw nothing wrong with that arrangement. It was not an assembly meeting and had all kinds of folk present.

If the order of the open meeting be followed, the Spirit would know just what was needed and give words through the brothers to meet that need? It is much safer to leave it to the Spirit, and see to it that we are in a right condition to be used by Him. Whatever the weakness may be, substitutes for this order will not help things. Still, occasion must be left for a brother to give an address to believers or to preach the Gospel as the Lord may open the way.

## PERSONAL CONDUCT BEFITTING THE HOUSE

1 Timothy 3: 14-16; 4: 1-16.

We have had before us two aspects of the assembly, the body and the house. Now we have our thoughts directed to this second aspect of things, and that in a very practical way. We have to recognise that we are in the present house of God, and that instantly imposes upon us Christians a standard and a character of life and behaviour which is entirely distinct from the world. We belong, we are of, the Divine house, the Divine household, and hence our behaviour is to be in keeping with this. That is the main theme of our talk together this evening. A prince is after all a very human person, and it may be that at times he would like to act like ordinary persons, but he has to conduct himself according to his station in life as belonging to the royal house. So we have to remember we are of the household of God, and the whole character of Christian life is lifted to a plane entirely above that which is common in the world.

The apostle then was writing to Timothy and telling him, particularly in the closing verses of chapter 3, the behaviour which was becoming to the house of God. He shews us the godliness which is really incumbent upon us as Christians, whether young or old, and he refers us to that which is the secret, the mystery, of the godliness which is to mark us.

There always has been a secret to form behaviour. What was the secret of the remarkable life of Abraham? It is Stephen in his address who discloses it to us. "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham." That put an impress at once upon the whole character of the life of Abraham. He deviated from it here and there, and as we look round we may say, who has not deviated from the standard? Yet this conduct was imposed by his knowledge of God; and for us to-day this mystery is found in the last verse of this chapter, "And without controversy;" that is, beyond all dispute, the secret spring of the conduct which is to be characteristic of us Christians is a very great



one, and it is expounded to us.

We ought to be thankful that the practical bearing of this "house" has been the subject of inspired writings, so we are not left to conjecture about it at all. It may be of interest to note that this epistle is also sent to Ephesus as the apostle says, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus." In Ephesians we have the life of the Christian above, and here we have the life of the Christian in the world, making true what we have read in Ephesians.

Ezekiel was referred to, laying emphasis upon the law of the house which is "most holy." That needs to be maintained amongst the saints. There is that around which may tend to affright or divert us but, in spite of it, we must maintain what is due to God.

This is a very individual matter, "how one ought to conduct oneself." (New Trans.). That is very searching and individual. Would you say a word on the fact that the house of God is said to be the assembly of the living God and the pillar and base of the truth?

A pillar seems to be used in two ways in Scripture not only as a **support**, since the ancients inscribed their **records** upon pillars. The first time we have mention of a pillar is when Jacob set up a pillar of record. The church is not the authoritative teacher, but it is the thought of God that what is taught by individuals should be inscribed upon the saints. We, every one, ought to be true in character to that which we are as of the house of God. So the truth is there before the church; and we may say the truth is the word of God. The oracle was inside the temple, but the pillars were outside.

Then it is the saints; the pillar upon which the truth is inscribed. People may say, "Give us an example of this?" Very well, look at that man brought out of all his sin, truth is now inscribed upon him and he gives practical expression to what the grace of God can do. That was particularly the case with the apostle Paul. He was called to be a pattern to those who should afterwards believe to life everlasting. We can at all times see these truths exemplified in the apostle Paul.

Paul spoke of James and Cephas and John as pillars. They were men who were outstandingly known to be representatives of Christianity. Early in Acts we read of

Peter and John going into the temple and Peter says, "Look on us." These men were living expressions of what they were teaching and of that which could meet the need of this man who was there.

We may notice in the review which the apostle gave of his own ministry as recorded in Acts 20, speaking to the elders from Ephesus, twice he speaks of having shewed them, "But have shewed you, and have taught you" verse 20 and later again he says, "I have shewed you." verse 35. An old servant of the Lord once told me of a rather argumentative brother to whom he said one day, "If you had some very important truth which you wanted the saints to apprehend, what would you do about it?" "Oh!" he said, "I should press it upon them; but what would you do?" He replied, "I would seek grace to perform it before them." A very good answer.

That illustrates, what you are referring to as the inscribing. We have seen the reference to the oracle here—"the mystery of piety"—as committed to the house, but if we have that as life in our souls, why not manifest it in our lives? That would be the "pillar," as you say.

It is part of the reward to the overcomer in Philadelphia to be an inscribed pillar. A little strength and not denying His Name; but look at the result! A pillar is witness and while this is individual we all need to maintain this witness.

Not only do we read that the assembly is the pillar, it is also the base of the truth. It is very searching, for we may expound the truth, we may preach the truth, but it certainly will not have much effect if we are not exemplifying the truth in the character of our lives. That is what we all want as Christians. I know in the New Translation we have "piety" for "godliness" but I must confess that I am rather fond of that word "godliness." It infers that the Divine character is stamped upon us. The first epistle is the epistle of godliness, enforcing upon Timothy what should characterise the saints.

He begins first of all with prayer at the beginning of chapter 2. Well, we are having prayer meetings first of all. We are exhorted to be given to supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, because we are of the house and we are in touch with God. This poor world cannot do that but the saints can, and so we begin. Then,

we walk in the light of a Saviour God and maintain personal holiness. If we ask, What is the fact that demands it? We have to answer that we are of the house of God. What is the truth that **produces** it? The great revelation which is brought before us in verse 16 of chapter 2. What are the things which promote it? Those we have in chapter 4. Whether young or old there are things which we have to see to, which will come before us presently.

Let us note the fact that it is the house of the **living** God. We have to face what professed Christianity has become in the hands of men, represented by Sardis, "a name that thou livest and art dead." In contrast to that we have here, "the church of the **living** God." That involves that we do not come to a set service or a set of rules, but that we express **livingly** in this world that which is of God. The apostle says to the Corinthians, "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." That would be it.

You paraphrased this word "mystery" as the "hidden source." We can see a contrast between this and what we read of in 2 Thessalonians 2. There we read of a mystery of lawlessness. We are told that the hidden spring of that is, the working of Satan. We can track it to its hidden source, and the hidden source of godliness, in contrast to that, is a Person, the living God.

We have little conception of what it meant to step out of Judaism into Christianity. When Peter wrote to Jewish believers he told them they had been brought out of darkness into His marvellous light. That darkness was not heathenism for they were high class, educated Jews, with the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, yet that was darkness in comparison with the wonderful light which shone in Christ. To think of God as they did in clouds, and darkness, and tempest, and the devouring fire, would be very awe-inspiring and also to see the cloud on the tabernacle and on the temple, but what is that compared with God manifested in Christ? The Lord said Himself, that His words and His works were the Father's words and works so we know God now as manifested in Him, and in such fashion, that in very deed we can understand.

There were certain appearances of God in Old Testament times but nothing like this came out, just a few

communications but no revelation of God as we have it to-day. This revelation which came to light in the incarnation and life of our Lord has become in the house the source of true godliness. Little wonder it says it is "great." And it is remarkable that this wonderful revelation is given to us in relation to our behaviour in the house of God.

The testimony committed to the house in any day should characterise the house. One outstanding feature of Christianity is we are not exhorted to do anything unless it is shown in perfection in Christ. He was the One Who in Manhood was ever pleasing to God. He has fully revealed to us the One Who dwells in that house. How could we comport ourselves in relation to the mind and heart of the One Who dwells in the house unless we knew Him? He has been manifested to us in this wonderful way in the incarnation. So those words in Matthew 13 show how favoured we are. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Thus in the incarnation God has been revealed to us. Though He was rejected by men He was justified in the Spirit and those who had their eyes open by the Spirit saw this, and particularly when the Spirit was given. He was seen of angels for they never before saw God as He was seen when Christ was here in holy flesh, for while He was a Man of another order He was truly a Man. God was manifested and angels saw God as they had never seen Him before. Then He has been preached among the Gentiles, faith has laid hold on Him not merely in Judaistic circles but in the world. Then the One Who entered into Manhood in that way has been received up into glory. It has been said, God has come down and Man has gone up; a wonderful story.

That is the truth which forms the basis of the Divine testimony to-day and is the doctrine which gives character to the saints to-day as composing that house. So all that is presented in our Lord objectively is to have an answer in us subjectively.

Immediately we have the real spring and fountain-head of Christian piety or godliness, and the order of life which befits the saint who is of the house of God, so as to be a credit to the house; we have the activity of the enemy. The Spirit does not hide from us that particularly in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving their attention to many false things, which we need not dwell upon now. The enemy is out to counterfeit the truth. He does not waste time beating the air, but as soon as there is something of God we get the activity of the enemy. We are warned against it, and we need the warnings in these days.

We are told that in the latter times there would be departure which of course is under the cover of a ceremonial sanctity, forbidding this and that, to lead astray from true godliness. So we may say that verse 16 is the living Centre of the truth and all circles round that Centre. In the next chapter the enemy is seeking to introduce extraneous matters and we are warned against them. If we desire to understand the truth of that circle we must see what the Centre is—all that is in Christ in Manhood.

Hence the way we will be preserved from these untruths is by **knowing** the truth. "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ." (4; 6.). Remember the adversary is very subtle, seeking to counteract the truth in these evil ways, so he urges Timothy to be "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." It has ever been taught that the way to detect what is **false** is by being thoroughly grounded in what is **true**.

The New Translation renders for "attained" "fully followed up." We hear things, but do we fully follow them up? Like Caleb and Joshua of the Old Testament who wholly followed the Lord, Timothy is the only person in the New Testament who is said to fully follow and he is the only man in the New Testament who is called a "man of God." The characteristic of a man of God is that he has fully followed the teaching, and if we desire to be men of God we must follow the truth which has been ministered. We must remember that, wherever we are, we are always part of the house and the reputation of that house rests upon me.

How can it be said of a saint that he might "depart from" or "apostatise" from the faith? Such is not said of a true saint, but he is warning them here of what would happen in the whole system which bears that name. Many would succumb to these false things taught within its bounds, but not the saints. Yet in view of the coming dangers Timothy is exhorted to build himself up in the truth, and others would be built up through him. Knowing the truth would lead him to refuse the spurious things mentioned in verse 7. While he admits that bodily exercise does profit for a little, godliness is profitable unto all things. That means spiritual exercise.

We have to face the word of God and allow it to judge us, and command us, and alter our ways of thinking, and our ways of behaviour, and that means spiritual exercise. In Psalm 119 we read, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet into thy testimonies." (v. 59.). The tendency may be to twist the testimonies to suit our feet. One of our Congo brethren once got a few natives to plant some trees, and set a line for them to keep the trees straight. When he came back they had planted the trees along the line, though they were all over the place, for they had pulled the line to the trees, instead of the trees to the line. That is just what many do to-day with the word of God.

Let us remember that though we cannot apostatise, we can be defiled by the apostasy. The only guarantee that any one of us will escape these snares is by being established in the truth. What we are needing to-day is a quiet, reverent, exercised conscience in reading the word of God, and meditating upon it.

We all know what is involved in taking bodily exercise but what is involved in this exercise unto godliness? It is something which takes place in your mind instead of your muscles. It is a mental exercise and it is something very searching and affecting for it may demand my dropping something which is a hindrance, and in every way developing me in godliness. There are two things in verse 16 which may have this in view. First, "Take heed unto **thyself** and unto the **doctrine**." We have to see that these two are related in us.

While it involves that certain conduct becomes me as being of the house of God, it also means immense spiritual

liberty and not bondage. Sometimes we are apt to think that if we pursue a certain line of conduct which we know to be right, it is going to involve us in bondage, but does not this conduct open up the liberty of the house? If we have light as the result of faith and seek in obedience to follow that light it does lead to spiritual liberty. We ought to be at home in the house of God, and so in the liberty of it.

People who find Christianity hard work do so because their hearts are not in it. Speaking to a young couple a few days ago who had once broken bread in a meeting, the young man was plaguing me with almost infidel questions. He asked me, "But do you not find it difficult living the Christian life?" I replied, "No, I find it very easy and very happy." "Yes," he replied, "I suppose you do, if you put your whole heart into it." Not only is there liberty in the house, the Psalmist would remind us that there is fatness in that house and there we can be satisfied.

Does the term "man of God" apply to every believer? No. It has been pointed out that Timothy is the only person in the New Testament who is so called. We do have the term in an abstract way, "That the man of God may be perfect." (2 Tim. 3; 17.). It is open for all of us to attain to. A man of God always comes to light in times of departure from God. It is then that a call for them is needed.

Another important verse in this connection is verse 12. "Let no man despise thy youth." Not that he was to be uppish or contentious but as a young man to be characterised by these things which follow. He was to be an example to the believers so that they could see it in him, in his words, his manner of life, love, and the spirit which characterised him; in faith and purity. Then with a view to advancement in these things, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." All these are exceedingly practical things.

The bearing of that verse is that he was not to give any occasion for them to despise his youth. If he was such, how could they despise him?

We may refer again to the term "the man of God," and remind ourselves that there is no reason why every believer should not be a man of God. This as you point out is by

the study of the Scriptures. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . . That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is not quite "a man of God" but "the man of God." There ought to be men of God and all has been provided which will form men of God.

Would it be opportune to ask why God has built this house? Would one of the reasons be that God would have all to know that He is a Saviour God? He would have all to come to the truth. It would. It is through this house that God comes near to men, and presents to them His salvation.

Should not God be known in the house, then known through the house as a Saviour God. There are two sides to this as you say. God is approached in the house and displayed through the house. Hence the necessity of prayer in the opening of chapter 2. If I have the privilege of approaching God on the one hand in regard to all His interests, then I come out, characterised by the conduct befitting the house, and can represent to men what God is. We must see to it that we do not give a false impression of the Owner of the house.

We heard before of within and without and we need both. God is to be known and served in His house, so that testimony may be borne to Him by those who dwell there. The prime object of building the house is that God may dwell in it. On the first day the house was formed we read, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people." (Acts 2; 47.). They made a good impression that day.

Let us remember that our subject is not the liberty and service of the house but our **conduct** in it. I think we ought to say more about this. I am sure we are all aware as to what our liberties are in the house of God but I feel I, as well as all of us, need correction as to our conduct in relation to it.

I may say, "Well, I am not a Timothy." The apostle says to him "Neglect not the gift that is in thee." I do not think I have Timothy's gift. Maybe, but the principles which were to mark Timothy are just the same for me. Should anyone ask, What is this godliness which is being enforced which has promise of both the life which now



is and that which is to come? It means we are characterised by word, life, love, spirit, faith, purity, that is the very nature and character of God Himself and is the life which characterises this house.

Then he was to be in exercise about the gift God had given him, he was not to neglect that. Moreover, he was to meditate upon these things. Let them fill your thoughts and heart, dwell upon them, give yourself wholly to them. If I am doing that, I will not be spending much time upon other things. There is so much to distract us, but if we give such attention to these things we will not have time for others. Giving heed is the thing which will produce godliness, and then we will take heed to ourselves and to the teaching. So doing you will save yourself from the many pitfalls and dangers that threaten the Christian and you will also save those who hear you. Our lives and our spirits are to be governed by God and His things. What opportunities there are to-day for reading, and Timothy was to read, exhort and teach.

We need to beware of haphazardness in these things. There is a word rendered in the verse we are alluding to, "continue in them." (v 16.). We read in Acts 2, "they continued steadfastly" and here towards the end we are exhorted to "continue," for in spite of all the breakdown we are to go on. May I exhort our younger people to give themselves wholeheartedly to these things, and allow them the chief place in their lives.

If we want to be in practical deliverance, this is the way to it. If we neglect the humble study of the word of God and neglect to get on our knees in His presence we miss the mark. There is a verse like that in Hosea, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." (ch. 6; 3.).

Would a word on verse 10 be of help? "we both labour and suffer reproach." Well, having his faith in the living God who is the Preserver (as the word should be) of all men, he went on with his service. I suppose only as one is thoroughly established in the truth of God will one be prepared to labour and suffer reproach. I am afraid many have a very flimsy hold upon the truth of God and the slightest opposition leads them to slacken in, or even give up, their service for God.

"Buy the truth and sell it not" says Proverbs 23; 23.

If I buy a thing it costs me something, and I will not easily give it up. The thing which ennobled the men in the book of Daniel was, they knew their God.

If we do comport ourselves as we ought we are bound to come in for suffering. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3; 12.). Nevertheless, let us see to it that we are marked by true godliness, whatever the attitude of this world may be.

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS EMANCIPATING POWER

Romans 6: 1-6, 22-23; 7: 18-25; 8: 1-4.

In looking into these chapters where the delivering power of the Gospel is brought before us, it may be well to bear in mind that sin has wrought havoc in mankind in more ways than one. When God began to work in our souls we probably had in mind that our sins had brought us into condemnation. Sin had brought us into a guilty and condemned state before God. Now the Gospel brings in justification. We cannot in English say, "rightification" we have to say, "justification," set right and cleared from every charge which could be levelled against us. The first thing we realised was freedom from the condemnation our sins deserved.

But we have learned that sin not only wrought condemnation, it also wrought alienation. My heart was thereby estranged from God. We get that word in the first chapter of Colossians, "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." (1; 21.). Why did Adam and Eve hide behind the trees in the garden? They feared God, a cloud had come in between their souls and God. They were alienated from the life of God. That was true of us all. Now God has brought in reconciliation and that is the Gospel answer to alienation.

A third thing is, sin had enslaved us, as the Lord said, in John 8: 34, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." One cannot sin without being enslaved and brought under its power. That is what we have in mind to-day, emancipation from the power of sin. That is what is dealt with in chapter 7. I used to hear elder brethren saying, Has he got out of the seventh of Romans? In this easy going age we ought to ask, Has he or she got into the seventh of Romans yet? Have they been sufficiently keen, trying to answer to the Gospel, in holiness of life, that they have been plunged into this experience by the enslaving power of sin, and have thus gained the knowledge of the emancipating power revealed, so as to say, "I thank God through Jesus

Christ our Lord."

The beginning of chapter 8 shews the Lord as the controlling power, and "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The apostle did not mean that he never failed, for as James says, "In many things we offend all," but he was free from the slavery of the sin that dominated his old life.

A question has been handed in, will you please explain what you mean by emancipation? Well, I suppose in the abolition of slavery we may have a picture of this. Their bonds were broken and they were free to move as they desired, and in like manner the power of sin has been broken over our souls. That is what we want to know in power and in proper Christian experience. Romans 7 is not Christian experience, but a very wholesome experience for every Christian.

Are we going to begin in chapter 6 or chapter 7? We began our reading with chapter 6. I have found it helpful to notice the position in these chapters of the word "now." That is in contrast to all which preceded. In chapter 3 verse 21, "But **now** the righteousness of God . . . is manifested." Then in chapter 5 verse 9 "being **now** justified by His blood." In chapter 5 again, verse 11, "we have **now** received the reconciliation." Here again in chapter 6 verse 22, "But **now** being made free from sin:" free that is, from its controlling power.

Would there be some point in noticing that this is associated with the resurrection of Christ? It is through the process of passing through death, professedly in baptism, conjointly as the word means, we are free from the one and associated with Him in liberty in resurrection.

The chapter opens with the words, "What shall we say then?" In other words, What is going to be our response to the amazing grace of God manifested towards us, bringing us into this justification and this reconciliation. What is to be our answer? It is a question of the response of the soul. The obvious answer is, If I have been blessed in this way, I am going to walk in newness of life. We will not do that till we know that the old life, "our old man" has been crucified with Him. Judicially, it has been condemned and ended and should be so for us.

Are there three thoughts which are outstanding in this

chapter? We are to **know** certain things, then we are to **reckon** accordingly, then we are to **yield** ourselves to God. We reckon in accordance with what God has done, and then we become servants to God as we yield our members and bear fruit for God.

Yes, these three great verbs epitomise this section. We are in the happy position of being able to yield ourselves to God. Mr. Darby in his Version has an instructive footnote to verse 13. The word "yield" is in two different tenses. The first is in the tense which signifies the continuous present; the second an accomplished fact. It could thus read, Neither yield at any time your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but have yourselves yielded to God as an accomplished fact, as those that are alive from the dead. We should look back to an hour when we did say, "My Lord I am absolutely Thine, I am yielded to Thee." Our little service for our Lord would then spring from that act of surrender. Have we all experienced a moment when we absolutely yielded ourselves? We may be deflected from it in practice, but having once committed ourselves it is done for good. We are yielded men to God. It is an attitude of mind and heart.

It is the same word rendered in chapter 12 : 1, as "present." That follows the experience of these chapters, six, seven and eight and it leads to complete surrender in chapter twelve. It all springs from this teaching here. If we pick out this word "yield," everything has to spring from it.

We do that because we know what God has done. Our old man may be a difficult expression to understand, it is "our," not "the." He speaks here for Christians. If we could personify all that we were as children of Adam, what an awful creature that would be. Sin in man expresses itself in different ways. The barbaric savage; the ruthless tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar, all express it in some way. Running through the history of fallen man, what an awful display there has been of sin. If we could roll all those fearful characteristics into one man, we would have that which displays "our old man." We may thank God it has been judged and crucified. If we could see it personified like that we should indeed be glad of what has taken place.

We have the word "know" three times in this chapter,

verses, 3, 6 and 16. In the first we learn **from** God; in the second we reckon **with** God; and in the third we yield **to** God.

Our old man would give us corporately our old Adam connection. Yes, and so God has crucified it. It is the only thing He could do with it. We have to begin with God and what He has done; experience must flow out of that. This knowing is something which we acquire by taking note of the previous part of the epistle. It is not something which springs from inward feelings but from what we know God has done.

Only as we realise what God has done, can we move on in the emancipating power of the Gospel, since our reckoning must be according to that which God has accomplished. We have to look at the cross of Christ and realize what was accomplished there. It is the judgment on man. We read in I Corinthians 1 and 2, that when the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory they crucified themselves in the sight of heaven. It is on record that a tourist, looking at some masterpieces of painting, said to the curator, "I do not think much of them." The curator replied, "Sir, these pictures are not on their trial; it is the tourists who are on trial." The man was only showing he was artistically a fool. He was condemning himself. In the sight of heaven, man was judged when he crucified the Lord of glory.

While noting how often we are said to know; How do we know? We are taught by the Spirit of God and learn these facts of the Gospel. What we know is that Christ has died unto sin and now lives to God, verse 10. We reckon from that, we are dead to sin and now we live to God. verse 11. What we know of Him has a practical application to our state and living.

Would we acquire this knowledge by meditating over the truth of the cross? There would be no emancipation were it not for the transaction of the cross. Reckoning and yielding would be futile if we did not know what had happened at the cross. Mere natural intelligence would not carry us into this. We do not take in all the various effects of the cross of Christ at the beginning of our spiritual history, but learn these things step by step. We have to believe this in spite of contradictory feelings inside.

We have to reckon ourselves dead with Christ, no matter what we feel.

Could persons have this experience without knowing the terms? Paul would know these things before he wrote of them. We know from the outset that something had taken place in our souls. We need the teaching to give us this power. We are still in bodies of flesh and sin is ever knocking at our doors from without and finding an answer from the flesh within. It is because of that we have to realize the condemnation which has been expressed in the cross, and reckon according to that.

We know that this epistle was written to saints. It is not by receiving this epistle that we get these things but it does show us how we can live in the good of them. I was rather puzzled by that word **emancipation**. Could we not use the old fashioned word **deliverance**? It is the word I have heard all my life.

It is the right word for we have it in chapter 7. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me." He had been struggling with sin in the flesh within and he cries out for a deliverer. He is no longer saying, How shall I deliver myself? No, he is looking outside for a deliverer. So with all of us, who have been through this experience, and it is a good thing to know. I never had settled peace with God until I reached this point. I was trying to be what I ought to be, well knowing what I ought to be as a Christian. Sometimes a few good days feeling all right, then a flop, and thinking I was all wrong. I never had peace till I found that deliverance lies in the attraction of an outside Deliverer, an Object in heaven. Then I had deliverance by the Spirit of His life, dwelling within.

You would be glad to see us all through this chapter? It is sometimes likened to a dark tunnel, but we want to be through the tunnel into the daylight.

It is worth noting that it does not say, **What** shall deliver me but **Who** shall deliver me? This is the most intense form of deliverance in the Scriptures. We are said to be delivered from the wrath to come in Thessalonians, and from this present evil world in Galatians, but this is deliverance from ourselves. It involves looking to a Person, "**Who** shall deliver me."

If I were to be asked, What is the secret of Christian

deliverance? I should say two things. First, finding in the Lord Jesus Christ an attractive and absorbing and commanding Object, who has mastered my life; and second, experiencing the power of the Spirit within. I would say to young folks, you have received the Holy Spirit; to speak in a figure; He has come on board your little ship, but He has not come on board as a passenger; He has come on board as the **Captain**. The Spirit of God dwells within to assert His mighty influence in concert with Christ on high. If Christ is the commanding Object of our lives we would be enjoying deliverance.

I have noticed how often in these chapters the Spirit gives our Lord His full title of "Jesus Christ our Lord," as though whatever we have received through Him, subjection to Him as Lord leads to deliverance.

At the beginning of chapter 7 the apostle uses a figure as writing to those who know the law and he points out that a woman whose husband is dead is free to marry another. We discover of course that it is not that the law has died but that we have died from under the law that we may be to Another; to Him Who is raised from the dead. That is a figure which causes us to think of love as contrasted with law. It brings in what he says; serving in "newness of spirit." We have "newness of life" chapter 6 verse 4 and "newness of spirit" chapter 7 verse 6. We are linked with Christ and it induces another spirit entirely. A woman may step in to a family where the mother has died and do her best to serve them as the housekeeper; but if the widower loves and marries her, she comes back to the same duties but with quite a new spirit, and love becomes the motive of her service, not wages.

So in chapter 6 verse 14 we read, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." There is the new motive, with a new relationship. Grace produces what the law could not.

Reading down these verses in chapter 7, we notice that the apostle drops into the singular. He gives it as a personal experience. So we have it, I! I!! I!!! but he has to reach the point that, "For I know in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." That could not be said by an unconverted person for he is nothing but flesh and there is



no inward differentiation, for there is no inward man with him to delight in the law of God. Here is a person who is born of God and is able to distinguish between the flesh and the inward man. It is no good looking for good in the flesh for there is none there.

Would this produce a bad conscience? It would but it is very valuable knowledge. He does not say I believe, but I know, it was experimental knowledge. It is a good thing to pass through this experience to learn what the flesh really is. It may not have been through doing something wrong, but by being conscious of the defilement which sin brings.

We may suggest that it works thus. Here I am at the beginning of my pathway; thank God, I am converted. I am going to live a holy life. Some time afterwards I may sustain a shock having found out it was not all as easy as I thought. I find all kinds of things in myself; I have to learn what I am in myself. We learn more of the depravity of our fallen nature after conversion than ever we knew before. No one seeks for deliverance until he has learned this.

First this man is **disappointed** with himself, he cannot do the good he would. Then he is **disgusted** with himself, he finds no good in himself at all, and last of all he is in **despair**, "O wretched man that I am!" That would give me to appreciate more what is written in chapter 8: 3, that God has "condemned sin in the flesh." It leads to association with Christ where He is.

Will you say more about the inward man? Does it mean that through this experience I learn that there is something in me which was not there before? I have an inward man who delights in what is of God. Along with that I find something which brings despair and here I am between the two.

Power is not resident in what we speak of as the new nature. There is the old which is absolutely corrupt, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (chapter 8: 8). It does not say do not, but "cannot." Then we have a new nature called here the inward man but power is not inherent in the new nature, but in the Spirit of God. As we have often said, No **good** in the old, and no **power** in the new itself. The power which will carry you in

triumph over the urge of the flesh, the old nature, lies in Christ and in the Spirit.

This is the experience of a man who has an inner man, and the turning point in chapter 7 is when he discovers that it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me. Were it not for the inner man there would not be anything for the Spirit to work upon. We need to recognise that the only way we can be set free is by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; yet unless there was the desire, there would be nothing at all for the Spirit to operate upon. Flesh can only obey the law of sin, but that which obeys the law of the Spirit of life is the new work in the soul.

So I may find out that I have this evil tendency in my soul. When I come to the meetings, for instance, my heart warms to the things which are there, and I also become conscious that I have this inner man and delight in good. It does help to be able to distinguish myself, from both of these, while seeking to come under the power of the good.

The apostle ends up by speaking of "Jesus Christ our Lord." I have long enjoyed the thought that he leaves the singular now for the plural, "**our** Lord." It may be that as the fruit of this experience we are more prone to enjoy together in fellowship all that is available for us in this circle of grace and deliverance to which we belong.

Why do you say this is not Christian experience? Because for that we may turn to Philippians 3 where again the apostle speaks a good deal about himself. There we see a man who is dominated by the Christ. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is in mighty operation, lifting him clean out of the former life in which he lived, and setting him to pursue his way to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; Yet while I said this is not Christian experience, I think I did say it is the experience of many Christians. Some people talk about their sanctifying doubts, as though some kind of doubt would help to whip themselves into a holy state. This is an experience through which we all need to pass, learning certain lessons and the secret of deliverance, so that we are clear in a double sense in the presence of God.

"There is therefore **now** no condemnation." An offender may be fined at court and someone clears him by paying

the fine yet he is the same offender, and he may soon be back again. In chapter 5: 18, we read of "Justification of life," which means we not only have our sins forgiven but that we are transferred from the old Adam life to the life of Christ. That is a life against which no charge can be ever laid. We stand before God now in a new life and nature. If we paraphrase the opening verses of chapter 8, we might read, "because" in place of "for." **Because** the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is now operating in me, it has made me free from the old dominating force of sin and death. Then again in verse 3, **because** God has acted by sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and, as a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh. There is no condemnation now, **because** the condemnation has taken place. To use an old phrase, "We stand where the fire has been."

When you get through chapter 7 into chapter 8 does it mean that you have got past reckoning and yielding? No, it means you are now in the good of them. Two brothers once contended about chapter 7. One said, I have never been in it; and the other said, I will never be out of it till the Lord takes me home. Were both of them wrong? Yes. This is an experience which we go **through**, and we ought to learn the lesson once for all, and then emerge from it.

Is this gift of the Spirit given when we are through this experience? We hardly say that. The Spirit may lead souls into this very experience to teach them a needed lesson. It is clear in Ephesians 1: 13, that when we believed the gospel of our salvation we were sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

You said a little earlier that it is by the Spirit working in our souls that we learn these things. I have long thought that the Spirit of God, introduced in chapter 5, is in our souls to exercise us about these things, and if we go on through this experience we come into the full liberty of the Spirit in chapter 8.

Would anyone not sealed by the Spirit be able to touch these exercises at all? We have to observe that the Spirit is not once mentioned in chapter 7, but I am sure that anyone, who has not passed experimentally through chapters 6 and 7, will not know what it is to be "in Spirit."

That is the full thought of deliverance. It is not the doctrine of it but the experience of it that is here.

Are you suggesting that these verses in the beginning of chapter 8 are the result of the experience of these previous chapters? Not verse 1 but verses 2 and 4 are. I have connected verse 1 with chapter 5; verse 2 with chapter 6; verse 3 with chapter 7 and verse 4 with chapter 8. That was pointed out when Romans 5 was referred to. That is the answer we have here, "no condemnation." That is altogether as the fruit of what Christ has done, and while the apostle says "them" in verse 1, he says "me" in verse 2. That is the result of experience.

Yes, and verse 4 shows how triumphantly this solves the difficulty. In chapter 7 the apostle is giving us a bit of experience. We may say, You know Paul you are in this miserable state of bondage; you know what is right, you want to do it but you are swept away by the impulses of the flesh within, and the result is the very law itself is a terror to you. What is the effect of entering into this blessedness? coming under the power of the law of the Spirit of life? Well, we know that God has condemned sin in the flesh, and the believer, now under the domination of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is walking, not after the flesh but after the Spirit. In effect, what the law so righteously required is fulfilled in us by walking after the Spirit. That means you are in true deliverance when you walk after the Spirit.

It does mean deliverance from the slavery and domination of sin. We may fail under some strong gust of temptation and be unhappy as a consequence, communion with God broken, leading to repentance.

What then is the position of such an one? He has been walking according to flesh and not according to Spirit. Self-judgment and confession is the remedy. Mr. Darby was once asked if a man got out of chapter 7 could he get back there again? He replied No, but he may get into something worse—even a course of backsliding.

Is the righteousness of the law the habit or standard? The Christian has a higher standard than ever the law could be. We are not under the law but under Christ and the standard set in Christ is vastly higher than that set by law .

It is a remarkable thing that we who are not under law fulfil it when we walk according to Spirit. While the standard of this new life is higher we do fulfil the requirements of the law when that life is coming out in us practically.

Does it mean that a believer should seek to keep the ten commandments as his standard? No but rather that he should walk in the power of this new Spiritual life, and all will come right; but it will involve the character of Christ being seen and we may say the lesser will be accomplished in this, which is much greater.

## THE LORD'S SERVANT AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE APOSTLE PAUL

Galatians 1: 6-12; 1Corinthians 9: 12-23; Philippians 1: 27.

The apostle Paul had a very special place in the going forth of the Gospel message and to him was particularly committed the Gospel to go forth into the Gentile world. He was the apostle of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. We do know that when God so miraculously converted him, as we see in the first chapter of his epistle to Timothy, He did it that in him first there might be set forth the whole longsuffering as a pattern to those who should believe unto life everlasting. Therefore we recognize that the apostle Paul was specially called, not only to do a very marvellous service himself, but to do it in a way that should be put on record so that he is a pattern for us. We know more of the service of the apostle in detail than of all the other apostles put together. Why? Because God called him to be a pattern saint and a pattern servant.

We ought all to feel what a dire moment we have reached in connection with the Gospel testimony, and we are going to spend a little time seeing that which marked him. The first thing that comes to light in the Scripture we read in Galatians is that he got his Gospel message directly from the Lord. In that he stands very distinct and he assures us of the supreme importance of the Gospel message by this twice repeated solemn statement of a curse against those who in any way pervert the Gospel. I may remark that if you were to read this in the New Translation, he says, "I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from Him that called you in Christ's grace, to a different Gospel, which is not another one."

The devil knew that his prime move was to pervert the message. Suppose someone tipped some poison into that flask, what damage it may do to someone. Yet what would we think of a man who shot a whole cartload of cyanide of potassium into the waterworks? That is the figure to describe this perverting the Gospel; perverting the very source of that which is for spiritual life and bless-

ing. A master stroke of the enemy, attempting to pervert the life-giving message at the very source. We have to recognize that the purity of the Gospel is of the first importance.

Why was this subject left for our last reading? We were exercised to begin at the top and work down through the house and the body to that which lies at the foundation. It is true that in our experience we begin at the bottom and work upwards to the top, but sometimes it is healthy to start at the top and work down to the bottom. Here we have that which underlies everything. Let us not in any way belittle the importance of the Gospel. Its purity must be maintained and its service diligently carried out.

Why are you pressing the perversion rather than the opposition? Those who are out to pervert the gospel are far more dangerous than those who oppose it; that is particularly the work of the adversary.

The apostle Paul was unique in that he received his Gospel directly from the Lord, but where do we get it from? We get it from the divinely given record in the Scriptures. When I am led to preach from the words of our Lord as given us in Luke 24, I preface my remarks by saying, I am going to give you the authentic gospel as coming from the lips of the One Who first pronounced it. The preaching of repentance and remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem and going out to all nations.

It was obviously the infusion of Judaism which was corrupting the gospel. What dangers may we meet in that way to-day? Had you something further in your mind?

No doubt there has been great perversion through Judaism which I think we see in its highest expression in Roman Catholicism. There you have all the elements introduced until the true Gospel is largely smothered. To-day it is more that which we contemplated in Colossians 2, philosophy and vain deceit. We are living in an age which has reached an extraordinary climax in invention and skill, and the tendency with many is to think that human reason is the great authority which ought to settle everything. We are content to take it from the word of God recorded in the Holy Writings.

One of the greatest perversions may be having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: yet the

perversion mentioned here would constitute a very serious opposition to the true Gospel.

It is remarkable that the apostle does not say in Galatians, I am going to give you the salient features of the Gospel, but he does incidentally set before us the hall-marks of the genuine Gospel. A hall-mark does not make the article silver but it officially guarantees that it is so. What are the hall-marks? "The grace of Christ" in verse 6; the Gospel calls into the grace of Christ, and not the law. The Gospel deals with "our sins," not with social questions. It does not say He gave himself for our difficulties or our inequalities etc., but "Who gave Himself for our sins" verse 4. This goes to the root. Moreover it delivers from this present evil world according to His will. Further, as he says in verse 10 which in the New Translation reads, "For do I now seek to satisfy men or God? or do I seek to please men?" No, it is not going to please men. That is what was happening in the days of 2 Timothy. Men preaching to people who have "itching ears."

Again he says, "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not **after man.**" It does not bear a human hall-mark. The Gospel is not of a character which would cause people to say, How reasonable, just what I think it should be. Why does it so antagonise people? It is the only message which begins by telling man he is a lost creature, a fallen sinner, on his road to the wrath of God. No one likes to hear that. Buddhism or Mohammedanism does not tell you that, and that is why people do not like the Gospel. It takes man down, not a peg or two, but every peg to the bottom.

Was their mistake in that they had accepted grace to save them and then tried keeping the law to promote sanctity? Yes, they tried to make the Gentile submit to circumcision and all that kind of thing as a symbol of their submission to the law of Moses.

The introduction of any human product will corrupt the Gospel. The Gospel is the setting forth of the mind of God, and sets it forth from the top for the Gospel is of God. It cuts man's mind out altogether, and to introduce anything of the mind of man into it is corruption and antagonistic to God. It was the complete negation of the



cross of Christ.

The apostle comes to that in chapter 2 and in the singular says, "I am crucified with Christ." verse 20. Once we find out what the Gospel of God really is, we have to be absolutely intolerant of any alteration or diminution of it. Some may take different views as to methods in preaching the Gospel, but of the Gospel itself we must stand four-square, that it is inflexible, and brooks of no alteration. The message preached is far more important than just how it is preached. Along with that we must hold to what the Gospel can do, as we have read, delivering us from this present evil world.

There has been much talk in religious circles about what they call a social gospel. No doubt when the Gospel is preached in power, and effects people rightly, it has a good social effect. About two hundred years ago by the preaching of the Gospel, a state of things was created socially in this country, which preserved it from a revolution. Yet that is not the prime end of the gospel; it is not sent to improve world conditions, though if received on a substantial scale, it will have an effect in that direction. We learn here it is settling the question of our sins, it is delivering us from the present evil world, or age, according to the will of God, and it is doing that of which the apostle spoke in Acts 15, calling out of the nations a people for His Name.

It is a wonderful fact that Paul is seeking to satisfy God. The Gospel is not only to meet the need of man but to satisfy the heart of God, and Paul preached it as the servant of Jesus Christ, and he himself was first secured by it.

God is achieving His end in His wonderful purpose of grace, and the Gospel is the means He is using to do it. Hence the great importance of the work of the evangelist, for if he failed there would not be the people to be pastored and taught. We must ever remember the great importance of the Gospel. I have heard it said, "The brethren are advanced and the Gospel is a kind of kindergarten work, leave the gospel preaching to those not so well advanced in the truth." It was held theoretically, but as soon as someone went out and **did** something, the cry was raised against it; that it is **not our work. It is our work.**

We are using the great Apostle Paul as the sample servant in this reading; and if anyone knew the truth of the mystery and the value of the assembly, it was he; yet who laboured more than he did in the Gospel? We have already had a reading on "holding the Head," and we are told that if we do so, there will be increase with increase of God. I am sure that includes increase by the Gospel and is one of the results of holding the Head.

Paul was altogether separated to the preaching of the Gospel, and for this cause was brought into this world as he says in verses 15, 16. To him the Gospel was a full time occupation for in view of the administration of the mystery, he went about seeking the material to form the assembly.

Do you think the Gospel in its full extent includes all the counsel of God? Rather it leads to that. In Acts 20, where Paul reviews his ministry, he speaks of three things. The first is the Gospel, the second is preaching the Kingdom unto the saints, and the third is declaring all the Counsel of God. In Romans 1 we read that the Gospel is made known for the **obedience of faith** among the nations, and at the end in chapter 16, he closes with an allusion to the mystery which also is made known for the **obedience of faith**. We ought to press that the Gospel, while it is all grace, demands obedience.

Where do we learn what the Gospel is? From the Scriptures. If anyone were to ask us for our authority for saying there is offered in the Gospel the forgiveness of sins, we would go to Acts 10: 43, or a similar passage.

That shows the value of the evangelist. Yes, in Acts 8 the word for evangelise occurs five times and that is the chapter which follows the martyrdom of Stephen. Philip went down to Samaria and when it says "preached" it is the word evangelised. We read of the saints being scattered and they went everywhere preaching and again that word means evangelising. You will find the word five times in the chapter. In that chapter we read of apostles, and there too we have a man who is distinctly spoken of as an evangelist, and others, humble saints who also evangelised. The tense of the word each time means, it is a continuing thing. Not something once done then forgotten, it says in a footnote in the New Translation, a continuing work.

I suppose we receive the Gospel in faith first of all, then begin to learn through the Scriptures what it is all about. It is important that those who go on with this work should be in living touch with God. The Lord said to the disciples "I will make you fishers of men." We need to search the Scriptures to learn what the Gospel is. Sometimes we have the discouraging spectacle of someone purporting to preach the glorious Gospel, and yet including in that preaching a lot of talk about science. Why bring in these things when we are charged to preach the Gospel whereby souls are saved?

That is why I said earlier that introducing anything which is the product of the mind of man is a corrupting influence. Paul said in the shipwreck, "God, whose I am." If we know what it is to be taken possession of fully by God, and the Gospel really attached us to the God, Whom we serve, it would be easy to preach it. If we are going to speak about God it becomes us to know Him, for it is God Who is making known His compassion in the Gospel. Paul tells us here that what he preached in the Gospel was Christ, "To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him" (verse 16.)

While evangelising seems to be in a public way it may be done also in a private and individual way. We have quoted Acts 8 concerning the people who went everywhere, we might almost say "gossipped" the word. They had a great theme, their hearts were full of it, and we need to take heed lest we are deficient in these matters. So evangelising includes living the Gospel, and talking of it, as well as preaching it.

I have noticed about six words used for the spreading of the Gospel and one, the one you have quoted in Acts 8 means, they talked the gospel. The words mean, to receive a message; to be sent with a message; to bring a message; to talk a message etc. but one would emphasise that each time it is a message.

The question may arise, Who should preach? Ephesians 4 would assure us that our evangelist is a gift. Paul said to Timothy however, "Do the work of an evangelist." (2 Timothy 4: 5). It may seem that where there is deficiency of evangelists, we can all do the work of an evangelist.

In our chapter here in Galatians 1 we read, that when

Paul was intercepted on the road to Damascus God revealed His Son "in" Him. Not merely to him. What is the difference? There is that which is subjective in our hearts which creates a condition in which these things can be revealed, not only to us, but in us. It is really spiritual illumination. What a great impression of the Son of God was made upon the apostle, "To reveal His Son in me." He could go forth and preach Him to the nations.

Three things marked him as recorded in these two verses. Separation, ordination and illumination, Divine ordination of course. While we cannot be apostles to-day I still think we need ordination to preach the gospel. We must be sent of God, and we must be illuminated in our souls or we are going to be very flat in what we want to say.

One of the exercises leading up to these meetings was the decreasing numbers and lack of fruit. How can we build things up? First I should say a great increase in the prayer meetings. We need to get down on our faces before God. We are all very busy and have many difficulties, but I am afraid there are all too many who do not realise the great importance of the prayer meeting. If we were impressed as we ought to be by the careless multitude we should all be on our faces before God and there would undoubtedly be an answer. It is two hundred years since Wesley was riding round on horseback and God was saving many souls. It is a hundred years since that great work in northern Ireland of which we read in the first volumes of "Things New and Old," edited by C.H.M. It all began with a few young men feeling oppressed and meeting in a little shed somewhere in County Antrim, where they got on their faces before God. Others asked, What are these young fellows doing? The answer was, They are praying, and others began to join them till the place was soon crowded out, and a few more weeks and people began to fall down and were converted. The power of God came in as the result of spiritual concern and prayer.

Is it the right motive in the Gospel just to extend our meetings? Well I should be very glad to see them extended. I am where I am by conviction, and I would not be where I am, had I not this conviction. Would not Acts 2 be of help there? As the result of the Gospel going out they were brought into the company, and continued in the doctrine

and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Is that not where we want to see people? Yet if souls are converted anywhere my heart rejoices.

Here is the verse I was looking for, it is in Galatians, 4: 12, "Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me." He is saying, Brethren I would like to see you as I am, in the liberty of the Gospel, in the place of favour, because after all I am as ye are;—that is positionally,—and would like to see you in it, practically and experimentally.

We know of course that people are not saved by coming into the meeting. We labour to get them right with God, with their sins forgiven and so into the Christian Company, but I want to see them in the meeting all the same. So I think do we all.

I share the difficulty which has been raised, but frankly, so far as I am concerned, I believe the Lord has given me a certain amount of peace on that subject in this way. We are in the gatherings to which we belong because we believe that, though humbly and in a broken way, they are trying to occupy the ground of the church of God, and Colossians 2, which we read, teaches me that if in an assembly way we are holding the Head, increase will result. I think it would be wrong to seek increase merely in our gatherings. On the other hand, surely it would be true, that, if we are seeking to stand upon assembly ground and we are holding the Head, one of the tests of reality is that there will be increase.

Does not increase mean in growth, more than in numbers? Yes, but I think numerical increase will be one of the elements.

Another matter is personal contact. I feel my inability in this way. If I had choice of gift and was asked, What would you desire? I should say, Lord, give me that remarkable ability that in a gracious, and godly, attractive way, I would be able to speak to anybody. I do have these opportunities at times but I do not initiate them. I covet to have that ability but I know I do not possess it.

"The Son of Man . . . gave to every man his work." (Mark 13: 34). If we were all doing the same thing we probably would not have Gospel meetings and open air meetings. It all works in. We are not all fitted for

individual talking, but we hope the brothers who are get on with it. To attempt to do it, when we are not qualified, will only spoil the effect. That would be the meaning of the verse in Philippians 1: 16, "Holding forth the word of life." There seem to be two motives for preaching in 2 Corinthians. "Knowing the terror of the Lord" (5: 11) and "For the love of the Christ constraineth us." (verse 14).

Do you favour open air preaching? I do, for we may get into touch with people in the open air who will not come into meeting rooms. You would not limit the preaching to the open air? No, and we do not forget the work of women in the spread of the gospel. With that in mind, turn over to Philippians, chapter 4. A remarkable word is used there in regard to the two women at the beginning of that chapter which is only used once again in all the New Testament. The word is one which we have imported into our English language. When we talk about athletics we mean physical exertion. It is used first in chapter 1 verse 27 and the word "striving together" really means, athleticising together in the faith of the gospel. Not striving and **contending** for the faith as we have in Jude, but really **doing** something. They may have been going from door to door speaking to souls. Then turning on to chapter 4 verse 3 "help those women which laboured (athleticised) with me in the Gospel." They set to work in that very valuable way, which sisters can. I remember a sister, who went from house to house finding out what the people were thinking and saying, and who passed on to the preacher, who was holding a Gospel campaign, all their difficulties and he dealt with them in his preaching with much blessing. She athleticised in the Gospel for weeks and was often responsible for the blessing of souls.

There is another interesting point to balance your verse and that is the word, conversation. This word conversation is the same word used at the end of chapter 3 verse 20. "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven." Now here it could be rendered, "Let your heavenly conduct be worthy of the Gospel," and ends by saying, "striving together for the faith of the Gospel." How can we strive together for the faith of the Gospel, if it is not producing in us heavenly character in our walk? I can see a balance in the two ends of the verse. I gather that these two women

must have been characteristically heavenly, and so moved together in the faith of the gospel.

Do you think, if we do not pray God will not work? God is sovereign and is not bound by our failures, but I do think He answers prayer, and where there is the earnest desire, and weeping over lost souls, and we pray to God about it, He will not fail to answer and to work.

Much that is in this verse may not be seen such as, "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." If that underlay our efforts, the inward work, it would give power to what is outward. Paul himself was in this wholeheartedly for he said, "Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel." (Romans 1 verse 9). If our spirit were behind all we were doing there would be more energy in this service.

Then we read in 1 Corinthians 9, of how the apostle did labour and what marked him in it. Paul may have come to an assembly and said to them, I am labouring among the Jews and so I am aiming at becoming a Jew. They may have replied, But Paul, you are a Jew. The fact is, he was so delivered from the Jewish position that he had to revert to what was Jewish. It was a remarkable witness as to how God had delivered him from all Jewish feelings which were natural to him. He was so essentially a Christian, as distinct from Judaism that now he had to become as a Jew. He tried to get down to where they were.

How far do you suggest that went with Paul? We know he seemed to have a lapse towards the end of Acts but he does not seem to refer to that here. It looks as though there he was persuaded to go a little too far. Knowing them, he would so conduct himself that he did not prejudice them. And here we have another saving clause, "to them that are under the law," he became as under the law, not being himself under law that he might gain them that are under the law. Then to the weak, which had the Gentiles in view, he adds, "as legitimately subject to Christ." (New Translation). That is very important.

Does it mean he went as far as he could in the circumstances without compromising his own conscience in it all? I think so, nor did he compromise any facet of the truth.

In regard to the verse where we are exhorted to stand

together in the faith of the Gospel, what are we to say to those who only come to support those with whom they agree in everything? We ought to extend the love of which we spoke yesterday in every case where the Gospel is being faithfully preached. Love would only lead us to rejoice in all faithful preaching and its result in blessing. But there maybe things connected with it which one could not conscientiously endorse, or do oneself.

In this connection Romans 14 must be studied. One may do with a good conscience what another may not. The Lord is the Master of each and to Him each one of us stands or falls.

And let us always remember we have each to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.