

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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TWO LESSONS WE NEED TO LEARN

Philippians 4:6: ". . . in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

This passage sets out the two lessons which it is vital for us as Christians to learn — (1) prayer and supplication and (2) thanksgiving. Very few of us have looked upon prayer and thanks as being necessary requirements in our lives as Christians.

(1) Prayer and Supplication

Concordances are a valuable aid to Bible study. What help Cruden's, Young's and Strong's Concordances have given and what time they have saved in Bible research are immeasurable. A safe guide to the importance of a subject in scripture is the number of times it is mentioned. Thus, I find in Young's "Analytical Concordance" some 350 references to Prayer, Pray, Praying, and an additional 60 references to supplication—over 400 times the subjects are mentioned. Thus it can be said that prayer is one of the outstanding subjects in the Bible.

Compared with its Bible importance how little we make of prayer. In our individual lives we spend very little time in prayer: perhaps a few hasty words on rising or going to bed, even if those. We don't speak much to God, do we? And as for "fervent, effectual prayer," as for "wrestling with God in prayer," as for setting aside time for prayer, as for "spending much time in secret with Jesus alone," these are almost unknown exercises among us, if we were to confess the truth. To most people prayer is regarded as a safeguard to fall back upon in time of need. We resort to it only when we can't do anything else, when all other things seem to have failed. If a person needs praying for it is looked upon almost as a bad sign, spiritually or physically. I know of a case where a sick person was very much upset when his vicar visited him in hospital and asked if he would like a prayer said for him. A lady friend of the patient's said to me, "Just imagine asking a man so ill if he wanted a prayer said for him!" It would seem that the joke is not far-fetched which tells how a patient in hospital, when asked if a prayer might be said for him, asked in alarm, "Oh, I'm not so bad, am I?"

Nor in our meetings and our service for God does prayer take nearly as large a place as it should. For instance, we arrange our missions, special efforts, etc., with all the human skill and ingenuity we can, and adopt what we consider the "best methods." Yet how little time we devote to prayer in itself; how rarely do we place aside a whole meeting for prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. How many congregations hold a "prayer meeting" as such? And when the "prayers of the church" are asked for how few are ready to engage. If any meeting is ill-attended it is the prayer meeting. If any meeting can be cancelled or abandoned it is the prayer meeting. "Make the prayers

short and snappy, brethren." Yet we will spend ten times as long speaking to each other after meetings as we have spoken to God in prayer. I remember being present at the Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Wigan in 1929 when a letter of greeting was read from Sis. Mary Bannister, then a missionary in Nyasaland, in which she said, "I hope at this Conference much time will be devoted to prayer. Remember, we can do more in speaking to God for an hour than in ten times as long spent in speaking to one another."

Individual prayer changes our individual lives, transforms. By speaking and listening to God we become more like Him. Prayers of the church change the life of the church. We theorise too much about prayer: its psychology (whatever that may be !); whether prayer changes things; how does God answer prayer and how do we know these answers? We read nothing of such matters in the scriptures. What we do read is that those holy men of God, Jesus Himself and His apostles simply prayed and gave thanks to God, without doubting or being deterred. The outcome of their prayers was left with God.

(2) Thanksgiving

In this passage in Philippians thanksgiving is linked with prayer:—"by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving . . ." Here is an added reminder to us that prayer is not only asking God for things (supplication) but giving of thanks to Him.

Thanksgiving, thanks, being thankful are referred to about 150 times in the Bible—sufficient indication of the importance of the subject to Christians. Without looking at the number of times the theme occurs in secular literature, by writers great and small, these scripture references should be studied and followed by those who claim to be men and women of the Bible.

Consider how much complaining we hear and make, yet how little thankfulness is expressed. Almost everyone looks upon it as his or her prerogative to be unthankful, denying that we have anything to be thankful for. Even if we have to manufacture causes of unthankfulness we will do that rather than appear thankful. We stress so many things we lack rather than the many things we have. This has become even a political issue: if one is content he is looked upon as a "reactionary," one who accepts the *status quo* when he should be engaged in agitating for change, even violent change. To be content is regarded almost as a crime. Yet it remains true, as the hymn says:

"Count your blessings; Name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

As I write we have just emerged from an electrical power-cut on the fourth day of the "work to rule" of the power-station men. Two or three of these cuts in a day try our patience: they disrupt our arrangements, thwart our hopes and plans, interfere with our preparation of meals, our amusements, and in other ways annoy us. Yet we can look forward an hour or two and know that the services will be renewed and that this state of darkness and primitive living will soon pass. What of those who never knew any different circumstances: who had no means of cooking by touch of a switch, of illuminating the house by the same means, who could hardly afford to keep a fire going to do their cooking or warm the water? It is hardly possible to imagine ourselves under their circumstances. Yet one thing is sure: they did not complain or show unthankfulness to nearly the same extent as ourselves. They accepted their hardships and learned to endure them.

"Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me." One would imagine such words could be written by a person who, though he had at times experienced poverty, lack of food, cold and want in other forms, now was writing as free from those hardships and in comfortable circumstances. It might be justifiable to say, if that were the case, "Yes, it's alright for him to say that, but he's not fixed as I am: he's not undergoing the lack of necessities that I am. Let him talk when he knows what he's talking about." But nothing

of the kind ! This is the Apostle Paul, writing in his letter to the Philippians, from a cold, dark, dank Roman prison, lonely, denied of the help and comfort of his brethren, suffering from gross injustice, old and ailing and anxious whether he would ever again breathe fresh air, meet his beloved ones, be able again to take part in the greatest of all services—the preaching of the gospel of his beloved Master, Jesus Christ. He is in these surroundings simply for preaching that good news: he is a lover of men, not an enemy of mankind. His only crime is that he seeks to do good to men. Yet his Master permits him to suffer in this way.

But no word of complaint is uttered by Paul. Instead he continually thanks God for what he is and where he is, knowing that in these things he can best glorify his Master. Rather than complaint and unthankfulness, joy and glowing thanksgiving are his theme. He praises God and is thankful, content.

And shall not we give thanks ?

“ Shall hymns of grateful love, From heaven’s high arches ring . . .
And shall not we take up the strain, And send the echo back again ? ”

· EDITOR

CHRIST’S BODY, THE CHURCH : I

R. K. Francis

II: THE BODY AND ITS HEAD

THE Church is a true body with a clear, visible, well-defined outline as well as with a differentiation of its parts, and an organic bond between them. In the description of the Church as Christ’s body, we have something more than merely a metaphor; it is not a case of analogy only. The Church stands to the Lord Christ in the same relation as a man’s body stands to his personal self: the connection is as close and vital as in the case of the natural body. Hence the true and full *preaching of CHRIST* must include the preaching of the Church of Christ, unless the figure in Eph. 4:15, 16 is altogether fanciful. This body is the representative power among men of the only true and rightful Sovereign of heaven and earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords; Who sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high, where He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. When the last enemy, Death, shall have been destroyed, then will He deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

Not Many Bodies, But One

The Church has no personal life apart from Christ; it is His own life which animates her, and which forms the bond between her various members. As the power, wisdom, and goodness of God are seen in the organization of the human frame, so are they manifest in the constitution of the Church. And by God’s appointment this Church is one and not many. Though the New Testament often speaks of “the churches,” yet the word is never used of different *sects* or *denominations* of Christians: the New Testament applies the term to congregations of the same body in different places. The churches of the New Testament are often described by their geographical position, never by any particular doctrines which they held, nor any form of government or discipline which they preferred.

The Church—Christ’s body—is always represented as God’s building, never as founded by man, or a body of men: you cannot, therefore, confound it with man-made institutions. Christ’s body must be distinguished from that society which has greater faith in the visible headship of the Greek Patriarch, than in Christ: and from Rome which exhibits her Pope as the vicar of Christ. She must not be confounded with that church whose nominal head is the sovereign of these realms. The Church is Christ’s body, and so distinctly such that it is “ONE BODY”—not two nor two hundred. With Paul, in Eph. 4:5, 6, the “one body” is a fundamental principle—as fundamental as the

"one Spirit," the "one Lord," or the "one God and Father of all"; he mentions all these in the same breath—the oneness of the Church is to him as certain and as essential as the oneness of the God-head. The Christian body then is one, and its characteristics are all stated in the apostolic writings: but it is not an invisible body (for it is the essence of a body to be visible and tangible): it consists of living men and women united together in the bonds of the Gospel. Their conduct and character show what they are. The unbelieving world of to-day needs to see this one body, animated by the one Spirit, gladdened by the one hope, submissive to the one Lord, defending the one faith, practising the one baptism, worshipping the one God and Father, and then shall the knowledge of the Lord soon cover the earth as the waters overflow the channels of the deep.

It being proved that Christ has established a Church, that it has some organization becomes self-evident. She can be seen and heard, and every man can, if he will, distinguish her worship and ordinances from the cults of other religions. Unfortunately the witness of the Church has been splintered by sectarianism, but that error should not, and need not, and will not be permanent. As the prophetic word foretold, the Church of Christ has been overridden by the apostasy, and the work of to-day is to rescue the Church from the dominion of sects. As Protestants we must understand our position. Having triumphed over the Papacy, we must now triumph over ourselves; having redeemed Christianity from the apostate, we must now redeem it from the partisan. Christ's society on earth is an organized community, united in common interests, in harmonious concert, and conservative of its own integrity and prosperity. A Church realizing unity and efficiency, having power through the combined effect of faithfulness and grace. A Church abounding in work. For the Messiah's body, like the body of a man, can only be in a healthful and prosperous state when all the members of that body are actively performing their parts.

Not a Human but a Divine Head

Concerning the Headship of this body, the divine records show that what the head is to the human body, Christ is to the Church. He who exalted the Saviour and put all things under His feet, "gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1:22, 23. It is common enough for Christians to regard the life of Christ on earth from the time of Herod the Great to the time of Pontius Pilate as a reality; and for them to dwell upon the various incidents thereof with feelings of intense interest. Also to dilate with reasonable joy and enthusiasm upon His second coming. But why are these *topics* more common generally among His disciples, than what *He* is now? How often do the assembled worshippers realize the *present* power and blessing of Him who no longer needs to offer sacrifice, but stands ready to bless? It is a sad fact that the present power of the Head of the Church is lost sight of in matters ecclesiastical. But the Headship of the Church of Christ is in Christ, purely, really, now and for ever. He has not, nor will He ever abdicate His throne, nor delegate His functions, otherwise than as His written word directs. The decisions of General Councils, the Canons of "the Church," or the Decretals of Popes avail not against this Headship. Convocations sit in vain; Assemblies of "Divines" and Conferences may attempt great things, but after all what remains,—the wood, hay, straw, and stubble of their inventions are soon burned up when they come in contact with the focussed light of heaven. How many of these great gatherings has time seen! Mountains in labour were they; and lo! little mice came forth! Let it be ours to regard the Headship of Christ as a glorious reality.

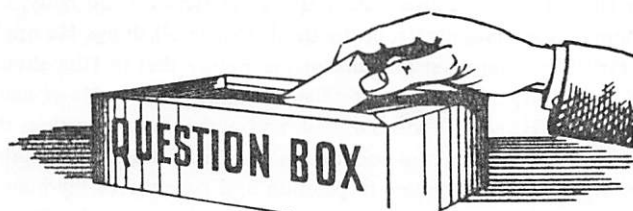
Head of His *body*, not *bodies*, as apologists for sectarianism would have us believe. The glorified Head of the Church of God owns but one Church. He is the *One* Lord of the *One* body, which body has but One Head. A church with a head other than this One Lord, or claiming dual headship is of the apostasy. The Church authorized from Heaven has One Head, everliving and unchangeable—"The image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto Him; and He is

before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell." (Col. 1:15-19). By virtue of this indwelling fulness He is made pre-eminent over all, so that, as Head, His wisdom, will, and authority may govern the body in all things, and so that instant, constant submission to Him is the one invariable duty of every member of His Church. Supreme in position and power over the human body, is placed the head—the seat of intelligence, will, and authority. So is it with the Church. For instruction and for government, as well as for the bestowal and sustenance of life, spiritual and eternal, Christ is the sole Head of the Church. Christ the Head of the body and His obedient followers, severally, members thereof: but though many members they are but one body. There can be no spiritual monstrosity which results in this body having two heads, or which makes the Lord Head of more than one body. God's will supreme was the principle of the first creation. God's will restored in Christ Jesus to supremacy is the principle of the new creation; and the Church exists to exemplify the working of this principle. Concerning the congregation of ancient Israel it was said, "Whatsoever thing I commanded you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Not the very smallest allowance was made then for either addition or diminution in the case of the Divine laws and institutions. Nor is it otherwise under the New Covenant. There is a similar and equivalent rule for the Church of Christ—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (the consummation of the age)." (Matt. 28:20). To-day needs this revelation of the Christ upon His throne in the Church, lovingly requiring absolute submission to Himself, and to His methods and institutions.

"All Authority"

That He is Head of the Church is a fact above all exaltation. We have no higher idea of government than the imperial, and there is no loftier conception possible of imperial rule than the Divine. Such is the rule of the Lord Christ. It overrules every other existing power; for the government is upon His shoulders, and His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of Peace. The Divine royalty, government, or administration being thus vested in Him, it is to be observed that God has now no commands for men but through Christ. "This is my Son, the Beloved in whom I delight; *hear ye Him.*" Yet we are to remember "the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your Apostles" (2 Peter 3:2); and also that of them, and to them, the Lord said, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). The abiding authority of the Apostles is recognised in the New Testament and accepted. But this lends no colour to what the church of Rome calls "Apostolical Constitutions"; for certain it is that these hierarchical regulations did not come from Peter and his companions. Nor does it countenance the ecclesiastical myth of apostolic succession. The reign of grace as the Divine imperality, claims an implicit submission to Christ. And while this grace appeals to the understanding of man as the faculty which God Himself has implanted for the discerning of good and evil, yet it does not subordinate its decisions to the determinations of human reason. Under much of the teaching of the present the positive enactments of the Lord Jesus are held to carry no more sanction than do those of a past and powerless dynasty. They are slighted as much in professedly Christian churches as they are in Jewish synagogues, or infidel clubs. These things ought not so to be. The laws of the Lord and Saviour are absolute.

(To be continued)



Conducted by
James Gardiner

“The New Testament does not have much to say about the limit, if any, of the extent of the authority of church elders, or of what can be done in the event of elders failing to carry out their duties in the prescribed manner. What, if anything, can a church do in such circumstances?”

It has been said that no church is complete without elders (and deacons), and no doubt this is true. A church can, however, and very often has to, function without elders. It certainly would *function better* with duly qualified elders. Sometimes, in a haste to have elders, a church appoints men not fully qualified and does so to its cost. It is my belief that a church is infinitely better off managing without elders than with men who are not qualified in accordance with *all* the qualifications laid down in the New Testament. Selecting and ordaining elders is a most grave and important matter. With the best of intentions men are often elected elders on the basis that, whereas they do not have *all* the qualifications, they have *most* of them; and often dire results follow to the church. Elders and church members together must appreciate the extent of the mandate of authority given to elders in the scriptures. Elders must refrain from overstepping that margin and members must happily submit themselves to that same extent.

Work of Elders

“Elder” implies spiritual maturity, and while spurning nonage certainly does not include dotage. The qualifications set out in 1 Tim. chap. 3 and Titus chap. 1 are intended to see that an elder is properly suited and equipped for the duties he is to undertake. Briefly these duties are to exercise spiritual oversight of the church members of a particular congregation and include:—

- To feed (or pastor) the flock (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28);
- To watch over, guard, the flock (Acts 20:31);
- To rule and exercise authority (1 Tim. 5:17; Rom. 12:8);
- To account for the souls of the members (Heb. 13:17);
- To rebuke and convict the gainsayers (Titus 1:9-13).

The fact that there are so many churches without elders must surely be a reflection upon us all as church members, since most of the qualifications for elders are merely attributes that most of the Lord’s disciples should have. David King in his “Memoirs” says: “Then as to the qualifications—we believe them reasonable and attainable. Many men in the churches have them not, because they do not sufficiently yield themselves to the requirements of their high and holy calling: that they have them not is to their shame and may prove to their eternal loss.”

The duty of each church member is to be subject to the elders and to respect them (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17), and not to hear an accusation against an elder except at the mouth of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

Disqualification of Elders

Each member of the church (including elders, deacons and evangelists) is a frail creature of dust and subject to the frailties of the flesh. It may be that after some time an elder, who was qualified at his appointment, *becomes disqualified* by circumstances

outside his control, or becomes disqualified by his own actions. In the former case (*i.e.* circumstances outside his control) he could become disqualified by physical ill health. The nature of his ill health could render him incapable of carrying out his duties, such as a nervous breakdown or serious physical incapacity confining him to bed. He could hardly be expected to rule; guard the flock; feed the flock and convict the gainsayer if in a mental home, or confined to bed with polio or some other serious physical incapacity. Another case of disqualification by circumstances outside his control would be where a church has two elders, and one dies. In the New Testament we are confronted with the fact that elders are always spoken of in plurality, and a church being ruled by one man, one elder, is not envisaged. It appears that this would be just as improper as it would be for a group of elders in a church to elect one of their number as "head elder" or "chief elder"—a thing which was done in the early years of the church and which was conducive to the rise of the Roman Church with its Papacy. I can certainly find no sanction or precedent for a congregation being ruled by *one elder*, and would welcome news of it. In such cases the remaining elder would 'stand down' as such and the congregation would revert to being a church without elders (and there are many) until a plurality of elders were again available.

As mentioned above, elders could also disqualify themselves by their own actions. It is true that the church members must respect and obey the elders—but what about elders whose actions and teachings do not command respect and whose instructions do not warrant obedience? "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour" (Heb. 5:17), but (laying aside the issue as to whether 'honour' means payment) what about elders who not only do not rule well, but *misrule*? And what about elders who neglect the flock: not only do not feed them but give false teaching? Or what about the elder who "lords it" over the congregation and creates all kinds of havoc? And what about the elder who is, or grows, antagonistic to his fellow-elder? Elders must not be "as Lord's over God's heritage," (or 'lord it' over the congregation) but must be 'an ensample' to the rest of the church (1 Peter 5:3). What of those who become *bad* examples to the congregation?

There is a feeling that elders are sacrosanct, and answerable to no-one, but is this so? Certainly they will be answerable to our Lord, but so shall we all. If, for instance, an elder gives what is obviously false teaching, is the congregation to sit in sufferance and silence? If an elder, by his "lording it" or by his patent incompetence, is bringing the church to ruin and division—is there nothing to be done about it? It is true that the churches have many good and competent elders and in the main the situations just outlined are extremely remote and uncommon; but they can, and do, occasionally occur. Elders are certainly appointed for 'all time,' but surely there is a proviso—and that proviso assumes that they will rule well and wisely and remain qualified. *All* members of the church are subject to the discipline of the church and that includes the elders. Timothy, an evangelist, was told (1 Tim. 5:19) not to hear an accusation against an elder *except* at the mouth of two or three witnesses, which certainly indicates that elders can be subject to accusation at times.

The Church Greater Than Its Elders

The questioner asks what the church can do in such circumstances. Whatever is done must be done in and within the particular congregation involved, for elders in another congregation could not be brought in to sort out the problems of some other congregation—this is because of the *strict autonomy* of each congregation. The bringing in of such elders from a different church is often advocated because the problem has been complicated by fleshly ties being involved (cousins and uncles all supporting one another!) and it is thought that *outside* help will at least be unbiased. Incidentally, any church member who would allow family ties to influence or stifle the Lord's work, or make them give anything but impartial decisions, is not worthy of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 10:37).

The appointment of elders is the subject of much controversy and there is no desire to raise more. But let us say that it is generally accepted that the congregation appoints

as elders those they consider to have the qualifications, and an evangelist ordains them. The idea is that an evangelist goes into new territory and establishes one, or more, congregations. He preaches and teaches, and ultimately the church finds that it has men capable of being elders. They select them, and the evangelist ordains them (as did Titus the evangelist, Titus 1:5), possibly by the laying on of hands. The evangelist can then leave the church in the hands of the elders and move on into new ground. If the congregation is subsequently left without elders, or elders become disqualified, the church could again search within its ranks for others with the required qualifications and have them ordained by the evangelist. In the matter of elders who had become disqualified, then, *if it was the decision of the church* that the elders were disqualified for some reason, the announcement could be made to the church in a very official way, in the presence of the ex-elder, and a statement made that the church would no longer be regarding him as an elder. This might even be done by the evangelist who ordained the elder (I recognise, too, that the subject of 'evangelists' has been one of wide discussion). In the case of the elder, for instance, who had been disqualified by reason of the death of the other elder, the above procedure could be followed. Such an elder, having the qualities required, would no doubt be quick to express a desire not to have sole rule of the church, and be keen to 'stand down' until a plurality of elders became available. This could be formally announced with little difficulty. In the case of elders who become disqualified by unrepented misconduct the same procedure could be followed and the elder relieved of his appointment. Some congregations, such as the one at Haddington, have not been planted by the labours of an evangelist (and so have not undergone the process outlined above). But in such churches the procedure in appointing and "dis-appointing" elders would be the same. The elder is not to be considered larger than the church, nor has the church to be held to ransom by elders who misrule.

Space has gone and no doubt much more could be said, but fortunately dealing with delinquent elders is such a rare possibility that most of us will never meet the problem in our whole lifetime.

(Questions please to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1971

7—2 Kings 5:9-27	Acts 5:1-16
14—1 Kings 22:5-28	Acts 5:17-42
21—1 Kings 8:12-30	Acts 6
28—Exodus 2:1-22	Acts 7:1-29

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE

APOSTLES

(Acts 5:13)

NO one else dared to join them because they were obviously chosen by the Holy Spirit for special honour. Signs and wonders were wrought by *their* hands. If, as later, others had miraculous gifts, they were originally the prerogative of the twelve. How natural and proper this was. Jesus had many, many followers. Some followed and then left. Others followed

and stayed, for their numbers before the day of Pentecost were 120, including His mother and His brethren to whom He had showed Himself after His passion, and there were the 500 (1 Cor. 15:6). These all had the special honour of seeing the risen Saviour, but they had not the honour of being chosen as His apostles and of being specially endowed and given authority to decide right and wrong in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Luke 6:13; John 20:22 & 23).

We can be misunderstood when we plead for "Apostolic Christianity" but when we take the phrase in its simplest meaning we can rightly say "Christianity is either apostolic or it is not Christianity." It was established and promulgated by the apostles. Their word and practice is final. Their authority is not based on their individual virtues so much as upon their having been personally chosen by the Lord Jesus. Their qualifications included

their being with the Lord Jesus throughout His ministry (Acts 1:21 & 22), their having seen Him after His resurrection, and having miraculous powers. There is of course the outstanding case of the Apostle Paul, who on account of his extraordinary appointment, names himself as "one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8). As a claimant of apostolic authority, he makes their distinctive position abundantly clear again and again. Apostolic authority is Christ's authority—deny one and you deny both.

Our readings this month provide some special evidences of this exclusive position. It is Peter to whom God gave the revelation about the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira. The spiritual outpouring stimulated by the preaching of the gospel filled the hearts of the believers with overflowing generosity. It changed their attitude to material wealth completely. We understand there were Jews from all over the world in Jerusalem at the feast times, and many caught up in the flowing tide of the new faith would stay there and be in financial difficulty. Here entered the new spirit of love marking the new community with an outstanding characteristic so that "neither was there among them any that lacked" (4:34). One case of special interest is noted on account of the man's characteristics and his later history—Barnabas—and this indicates the appreciation and approval of the apostles (4:36 & 37). This credit excited both the generosity and the cupidity of Ananias and Sapphira. They wanted the praise but did not want to part with all the money gained by a sale. Satan works on us in this way at times, and we all need to beware of this kind of hypocrisy, for that is what it is. So that the apostolic power should be assured and deception discouraged, a terrible judgement fell upon these two.

This not only marked out the apostles as pre-eminent in the church but it excited the envy of the priestly authorities. Divine authority resided fittingly in the apostles, so that they were able to teach in the very precincts of the Temple, and crowds flocked into the city to enjoy their ministry of both teaching and healing. But this was a defiance of human authority exercised by the religious leaders, and they could no more leave it alone than they could the Saviour Himself. Their previous

effort to stop the apostles was being proved ineffective and they were blind to the wonderful blessings obviously sent from heaven, and ministered by them. The second effort was even more strikingly a defiance of God by the rulers. At least one of them saw this, but the main body remained completely set upon destroying the apostles. Gamaliel must have realised that the release of the apostles overnight was a divine intervention, but there was a weakness in his position, shown by failure to seek the praise of God rather than man's (John 12:42 & 43). We must give him credit however for speaking up alone, as Nicodemus did (John 7:50).

In spite of their judges being "cut to the heart" (5:33) the apostles' lives were saved by Gamaliel's interposition, but they were beaten, in accordance with Deut. 25:1-3 we assume, though illegally. Their reaction must have surprised both their judges and the church, but it was in obedience to their Lord, and strength was given as promised. We do not know for how long they were allowed to continue the great work (5:42) without interference, but their next step broadened their authority into organisation of the charitable work of the church by the appointment of seven men to take over distribution of material benefits. Here we must be content to draw attention to their wisdom, and their authority manifested in laying their hands upon the seven men to authorise their work and empower them for it. That both Stephen and Philip received divine miraculous power there is no doubt, and the other cases of the laying on of hands confirm the thought (Acts 8:15; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6).

R. B. SCOTT

God put you in complete charge of only one thing a person—yourself.

* * * *

It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.—*Alfred Adler*.

* * * *

In the morning, prayer is the key that opens to us the treasures of God's mercy and blessings; in the evening it is the key that shuts us up under His protection and safeguard.

IT CAN'T BE DONE

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). This is Paul's admonition to Timothy after having told him of the Spirit's prediction that some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Vine says that the expressions "hold fast" and "form" mean "steadfast adherence to" and "an outline or sketch" (Vol. II, p. 253, 125). Thus, the admonition to "hold fast the form of sound words" is one commanding the giving of steadfast adherence to the outline or sketch of sound words that he had been taught.

Ten ladies cannot take the same pattern and steadfastly adhere to its outline or sketch and make dresses that differ. If one makes a dress with a square collar and another one with a round one, or one a dress with a zipper in the front and another one with buttons, it's evident that someone has not steadfastly adhered to the sketch or outline given in the pattern.

Ten builders cannot take the same blueprints and build houses that differ in shape and arrangement. If one builds a house having three bedrooms and another one having two, or if one places the kitchen on the south side and another places it on the north side of the house, someone has not steadfastly adhered to the sketch or outline given in the blueprint.

Neither can ten preachers take the same Bible and preach different doctrines and make members of different religious organisations. When preachers teach doctrines that differ and cause persons to become members of different religious bodies, someone is not steadfastly adhering to the sketch or outline of sound words that inspiration has given.

The ladies cannot do it by steadfastly adhering to the pattern, the builders cannot do it by steadfastly adhering to the blueprints, and preachers cannot do it by obeying Paul's admonition to Timothy.

Lewell Blasingame in *Truth Magazine*

AN APPEAL

Dear Brethren,—The church in Motherwell have to vacate their present site and meeting-place because of the re-develop-

ment of the surrounding area. We have been allocated a new site and are at present in the process of negotiating the amount of money due to us from the local authorities towards erecting a new building. It is also our intention to take the opportunity to increase our present accommodation and to add kitchen facilities.

It appears that to meet our aims we would require either gifts or an interest-free loan of approximately £6,000, and we have decided to appeal to our brethren in other places to help us in this matter.

Should you be in a position to help us and are willing to do so, please write to Bro. Leslie Purcell, 98 Addie Street, Motherwell, indicating to him what you can do.

Yours in the Master's service,

Hugh Davidson
Robert Longmuir
Leslie Purcell

[In view of the Redevelopment plans to be carried out, no doubt many churches will find it necessary to rebuild, with the consequent outlay of money involved. This is, therefore, a matter in which the mutual help and support of the churches and individuals can be shown. We urge that all such appeals as this be treated with sympathy and answered with generosity. —Ed.]

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kentish Town.—Bro K. Jeevanandam, an Indian teacher and preacher, arrived in this country on December 26th for a week's visit. He was endeavouring to interest brethren in the remarkable work which has been going on in India for some years involving the baptism into Christ of about 75,000 men and women, convinced of the New Testament position. Our brother was able to visit six churches up and down the country, giving them details of his work among orphans, and the school of which he is head. Gifts of clothing and financial aid would be appreciated. Write in the first case to R. B. Scott, 20 Midhurst Avenue, London, N.10 3EN.

Woodstock, Cape Town (South Africa).—"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." On 15th November, 1970, Julian Tejada, aged 15, and on 6th December 13-year-old Glenda Daniels were baptised. Our prayers are that God might bless them and that they may be the means of encouraging others of their friends to Christ.

W. T. Hartle

OBITUARY

Slamannan.—It was sad to learn of the death on 30th December, 1970, of our beloved Bro. Adam Bruce in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Bro. Bruce had been connected with the church here from his youth to the time of his emigrating fifty years ago. Two years later Sis. M. Mackie, Limerigg, joined him to be his bride.

Bro. Bruce was a talented young man who remained steadfast to his early teaching. During the war soldiers who visited Windsor church remarked that one had the impression that it was the Slamannan congregation one was worshipping with, the service being exactly similar. In recent years he and Sis. Bruce have been home quite often, their last visit being in the autumn of 1966, when he exhorted us every Sunday morning during his long vacation. He cherished the ties which bound him to Slamannan.

Our sympathy goes out to our sister, his sorrowing widow, whom we commend to the God of all comfort.

Mary S. Neilson

Slamannan.—With feelings of deepest sorrow we report that the church here has been called upon to part with an aged and honoured member—Sister Walter Sneddon, senior. She passed peacefully to her rest on 10th December, 1970, at the residence of her daughter, Agnes. She had almost reached her 94th year and had been a faithful member of the church for over fifty years.

Our late sister was always present at the Lord's Table until health began to fail a few years ago. She loved to speak about the goodness of the Lord, whom she loved

and she was not afraid to meet Him. In latter years her memory failed, but she was pleased to converse with anyone who visited her.

She witnessed the baptism of five of her family and grandchildren. Our greatest sympathy is extended to them in their loss of a good mother.

Many were her trials, and deep the waters through which she passed, but the Lord brought her safely through.

The interment took place at Slamannan cemetery in the presence of a number of brethren and friends. Bro. David Dougall, evangelist, officiated in the home and Bro. Paul Jones, evangelist, at the graveside.

Mary S. Neilson

Up - Holland (Wigan).—Sister Mary Breakell passed away on Wednesday, December 30th, 1970. Her passing was rather sudden, but she had not been well for quite a while. Her illness was borne with patience and fortitude, and was a wonderful example to many who had the privilege to know her personally. One could not but admire her quiet dignity and bearing as a child of God, manifested both in the home and in the assembly.

The funeral was on Monday, January 4th, 1971, when the writer, in the home, paid tribute to her life, as shown by her love for her husband, family, home, and Lord.

Bro. Carlton Melling, at the service in the crematorium, reminded us of that wonderful description of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, and of Dorcas, recorded in Acts chapter 9.

Our sister died in the Lord, and awaits the resurrection call, when all the faithful will meet Him.

We commend her husband (our brother John), her family, and relations, to our loving Heavenly Father, and trust that He may give strength to bear the parting. The child of God we can lay hold upon the many precious promises in His word, and we commend the Scriptures to them:

"He knows, He loves, He cares:
Nothing this truth can dim;
He gives the very best to those
Who put their trust in Him."

L. Morgan

CHANGE OF MEETING TIME

Stretford. — The church meeting at 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester, will until further notice meet for breaking of bread at 2.30 p.m., and hold their gospel discussion meeting at 6.30 p.m. each Lord's Day (D.V.) to enable those who rely on public transport to attend.

POINTS FOR BIBLE READING

1. Read the Bible *yourself*.
2. *Live* by its teachings.
3. Tell your children *why* you love it.
4. Tell your children Bible stories, especially stories of Jesus.
5. Read the Bible to your children, making simple paraphrases of difficult passages.
6. Never bore your children with Bible talk.
7. As soon as your children can read give them the most beautiful Bibles you can afford, and encourage their use.
8. Sometimes ask a child to read the Bible to you, or at family worship.
9. As they grow older, answer your children's questions; let them have a Bible dictionary within reach; encourage them to make their own Bible notebooks.

A CHURCH MEMBER

Am I an active member, the kind who would be missed ?
 Or am I quite contented that my name is on the list ?
 Do I attend the meetings and mingle with the flock ?
 Or would I rather stay at home and criticize and knock ?
 Am I alert to do my part to help the work along ?
 Or am I satisfied to know that I at least belong ?

PSALM 126, VERSE 6

The seeds I have scattered in springtime
 with weeping
 Were watered with tears and with dews
 from on high;
 Another may gather, when harvesters
 reaping
 Shall gather my grain in the sweet
 by-and-by.

Over and over, yes, deeper and deeper
 My heart is pierced through with life's
 sorrowing cry;
 But the tears of the sower and the songs
 of the reaper
 Will mingle together in the sweet
 by-and-by.

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