

# FEED MY SHEEP

by George Warnock

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*Warnock's pastoral study on the biblical mandate to feed Christ's sheep, examining the nature of spiritual nourishment, the responsibility of shepherds, and the kind of teaching that sustains and grows God's people.*

9 Chapters

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## Feed My Sheep

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## Preface

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As the title of this booklet would suggest, it is an appeal especially to those who are called of God to minister to the "sheep of His pasture." But we would encourage the sheep to read it also, for they need to know the things that are written here. Besides, as we shall observe later on, there is no difference between a sheep and a shepherd, as far as their character is concerned. For God's true shepherds are sheep before they become shepherds; and they continue to be sheep AFTER they have become shepherds. Once we recognize this principle, the barriers that have been erected to segregate the sheep from the shepherds are torn down, and the sheep and the shepherds alike find themselves in one common fold of the Chief Shepherd. For the difference between them is simply one of "calling" in the Body of Christ. In character and in nature the sheep and the shepherd are identical.

We do not intend in this writing to explore in detail the areas of truth related to the shepherding of the flock of God, but rather to bring to the surface certain aspects of Truth that are often neglected, but which are absolutely vital to the people of God who are seeking to become obedient and loyal subjects of His Kingdom. For God is certainly preparing for Himself a people who will walk in total union with Himself: a people who will speak only His words, do only His works, and walk only in His ways. Falling short of this we fall short of God's desire for His people... regardless how great our calling may be, or how mighty the gift or the Word that we may minister. Nor must we shrink back because of the greatness of His calling... for He is able to bring us in and to fulfill every desire of His heart within us, as we believe Him for it, and embrace the Truth that He implants within our hearts.

-- George H. Warnock --

## The Call Of The Shepherd

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"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

The call of the True Shepherd is once again being heard in the land, and there is a new sense of hope and anticipation arising in the hearts of God's sheep who have long been scattered upon the mountains, "as sheep having no shepherd..." or feeding in pastures that have long been barren and dry... or drinking from waters that have been polluted by the ecclesiastical debris that has been thrown into the pure stream of God's Word.

And yet, along with this new sense of hope and anticipation there is oftentimes intermingled a feeling of frustration and discouragement, and somewhat of a spirit of restlessness... as the vision of God's glory seems to recede, or as the fulfillment of it is prolonged. This is true as it relates to the sheep of God's pasture; and it is true as it relates to the shepherds. Thankful as we are for what God has done for His people, we cannot help but recognize that we are still a long ways from the fulness of the glory of God in the midst of His people, and those whose souls are hungering and thirsting after God know what we are talking about. May this hunger and thirst increase more and more, and may we do nothing to try to minimize our need for God, or seek to dispel the concern that exists among God's people, by giving them some kind of spiritual sedative that might alleviate the pain without removing the cause. God has always been concerned, greatly concerned, about the welfare of His people, and has longed to bring them into realms of glory such as Jesus Himself walked in when He was here on earth. In fact, the Lord Himself prayed to that end: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:22, 23). And now for almost two thousand years He has been our advocate with the Father in the heavens, appointed to that office by the Father... not only to represent the Father in His just and holy will for His people, but also to bear upon His shoulders, like the High Priest of the Old Covenant, the responsibility for His people, and to present their cause before the throne of Grace.

How inadequate we feel as we seek to persuade God to move on our behalf, in our great distress and need. But Christ is there in the throne-room acting on our behalf, and interceding for His people who are indeed members of His very own Body. Therefore as we hear the Voice of the Shepherd in the land, declaring God's purpose for His people, and the certainty of its fulfillment in the earth... let us cast from our minds any thought of unbelief which may plague us because of the frailty of our human nature, and our proneness to failure and disobedience... and let us be assured

once and for all that what God has declared and what God is doing in the earth is something that He is doing for His own Name's sake, and because of Him who reigns at His right hand, with all power and authority to do whatever God has commissioned Him to do. Regardless of how well or how long we might pray it still remains a fact that "we know not how to pray as we ought," and therefore the Spirit of God takes up our cause on our behalf in the earth, communicates our cause directly to the Son of God in heaven, and He bears our cause "upon His shoulders" before the very presence of God.

We are "not our own," for we have been "bought with a price." The Psalmist said, "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." We are God's inheritance. We may think our need is great... but if our need is great, God's need is even greater... for God's heart is pained with the pain of His people in a manner far beyond anything we can understand.

God says, "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place" (Jer. 50:6). This wandering about of the sheep, then, is not always due to some inherent fault in them. very often it is the fault of the shepherds. God's sheep are not like hogs. They must have good clean pasture, and drink from pure refreshing streams, or it makes them sick. This is something the shepherds do not seem to understand. Why do the sheep become so restless? Why can they not just settle down where they are and work faithfully for their church, and be content with their lot? Many, of course, have done just that... not because they are really satisfied with present conditions, but because they can see no other way to go. Many have never caught the vision of the "glorious church" that God has promised to bring into being... with every member walking in the Spirit and vitally joined unto Christ in abiding fruitfulness; and many others who have seen the vision have grown weary along the way, and have succumbed to the temptation to just "go to church" and become active in some form of religious exercise, in the hope of satisfying that deep longing within to be truly a fruitful and contributing member in the Body of Christ.

Jesus promised us that the time would come when He would gather His scattered sheep into one fold, and that the sheep would "go in and out and find pasture." He has promised us that He would lead us by springs of living water, and satisfy our soul in drought. He has assured us that in the time of the gathering together of His sheep, there would be "ONE fold and ONE Shepherd." From the very beginning, God has desired for Himself a people who would come into intimate union and relationship with Himself... not only for their sake, but to satisfy the longing and the yearning of His own heart for true fellowship. This is what Redemption is all about; and this is what the Temple of God is all about. God wants to dwell with men, and be their God, and He wants His people to have a personal, intimate relationship with Himself.

Let Us Wait For The Lord

But invariably, in the history of God's people, the sheep of God's pasture have grown weary in pursuing this call unto fellowship with Him; and as the vision begins to dim they become impatient in spirit, and are willing to conform to patterns of life and conduct that they observe in others round about them. This is what happened in the early days of Israel, after they had become settled in the land of their inheritance. God had been their Lord and King from the time He called them out of bondage, and drew them apart into a special relationship with Himself. But now in the time of

Samuel they began to grow weary of it all, and desired a king, like the nations round about them. This grieved the heart of God. All along, right from the beginning, their very existence as a nation was by reason of the fact that God longed for an inheritance of His own in a people that were separate from other people, and very much UNLIKE the nations. It wasn't simply their desire for a king that displeased the heart of God... but the fact that they wanted to conform to the pattern they observed in the nations round about them. God indeed had planned that His people would have a king in the fulness of time. But God's plan for them was a king who would make His people DIFFERENT from the nations, rather than LIKE them. God's king would be a man after His own heart... one who would cause the people to say, "God is our real King... you are not really our king, David... you are just the man that God chose to stand before Him, and to cause us to know Him who is King over all the earth." David therefore, was a true shepherd-king, a man after God's own heart, for he taught the people to sing:

"The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want..." (Psalm 23:1).

"We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture..." (Psalm 100:3).

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:7, 8).

However the people were not ready for this kind of a king as yet... nor indeed was the king himself ready. True, they were in constant conflict with the Amalekites, and the Philistines, and the remnant of the nations that God had left in Canaan to try their hearts and to prove them. Oftentimes they came under great bondage to these nations, and they would cry unto God for deliverance. True, they wanted deliverance, but they were not ready yet for SEPARATION. They wanted, at one and the same time, to be delivered from the nations round about them, and to be LIKE them.

It sounds strange, but it was true... and it is true even in our day. We want the liberty of the Spirit of God in our midst... and we profess that we want Christ to have His Lordship in our lives... but at the same time we are quick to set up a pattern of church life and ritual very much like the old ways we were accustomed to in our former bondage. This seems to be the easy way out: "Make us a king," they said to Samuel, "someone to go out before us, and to fight our battles..." Pursuing the vision of God, and seeking out His will for our lives has become burdensome to many people. "Give us a leader," they are saying... "someone who will tell us what we are supposed to do." Too often leadership has become a very convenient form of escapism... an easy way to avoid the responsibilities that come to one who is dedicated to a personal walk with God.

#### The Call To Intimate Relationship

There is a lot of teaching in the earth today about the Body of Christ... how God has sent forth His gifts upon the people to bind them together in a common fellowship, and to endue them with power and anointing, that they might become vital members of the Glorious Body of Christ. And yet, sad to say, there seems to be very little evidence in our assemblies of the mighty, abiding presence of Christ, and of His Lordship in the lives of His people. I think the reason is quite evident. We want His blessings and His gifts and His miracle working power, and we cry out for more and more of these... but He answers back: "My desire is that you should come into total union with Myself, and

walk in my Truth, in my Life, in my Holiness, in my Patience, in my Long-suffering, in my Kindness, in my Mercy, in my Love... I want you to be ONE WITH ME in all things." And you reply, "I am not interested in any of these strange doctrines... all I want is more power and more blessing and more of your gifts..." But God replies, "My son give me thine heart..." And so this abundant life in Christ is denied us, and will continue to be denied us, until we are willing to confess: "Yes, Lord, it is true... we wanted a king so we could be like other (denomi-) nations... we wanted a nice church system in our community, so we would no longer be a reproach to other churches... You told us what would happen, and so it has come to pass... You told us the king we chose would take our young men for servants to run before him, and to drive his chariots... You told us he would force us to plant his crops, and reap his harvest, and make his ammunition... You told us he would take our maids to be his cooks and confectioners... And even as your servant Samuel prophesied, so it has come to pass". (See 1 Samuel 8:10-18).

Is it not strange, that no sooner do a people who are led of the Lord into new ways of the Spirit, and begin to function in a corporate relationship as God intended... immediately there are voices arising and crying out for someone to be their king... someone who can make them like the other churches... someone who can organize well, and get everyone involved in some kind of church activity. They grew weary of the bondage and servitude in that realm, only to walk right back into it again under the guise of liberty.

We are not saying that there is no place for outreaches of various kinds. God has much work for His people to do... but first and foremost God is after YOU and ME. This is the Day of His Lordship... and because God wants to be your King to make you different, He refuses to give you your heart's desire if in doing so it will leave you inwardly the SAME. O perhaps for a season you might find a new sense of refreshing and renewal as living waters are released from the throne of Grace... and you may begin to feel confident that at long last you are ascending a little higher into areas of the Spirit that hitherto were closed to you. But sooner or later there is another test, another trial, another defeat, another attack by Amalek or the Philistines, ...and you begin to wonder what it is all about.

You cannot appease God by working for Him. You cannot become spiritual by keeping very active in some form of church activity, or the like. God's cry and longing throughout the ages of eternity has been for a HOME, a resting-place in a people made in His own image... and God will not allow you to find rest in your own works. God will not allow you to rest until you find that rest in UNION WITH HIMSELF ALONE. Then, of course, there will be activity... great activity... but in a far different realm. God's priests do not "sweat it out"... that is why the ancient priests in the temple were required to wear linen, rather than wool. They must serve God only in union with Him, clothed upon with the fine linen of His own righteousness... and of their own selves they can do nothing.

And so the Call of the Shepherd continues to go forth in the earth... calling the sheep of His pasture into this intimate union and relationship with Himself. And the sheep are responding, for they know the Shepherd's voice, and a stranger they will not follow. O perhaps for a season the sheep may seem to be a little uncertain as the call of the shepherds and the cry of the hirelings mingle together, but this is all part of the process the sheep must undergo as they seek to learn His voice, and understand what He is saying. Then all this perplexity gives way to positive

assurance, as their spiritual senses become more and more exercised in the ways of the Lord, and they are able to "discern both good and evil..." And in discerning what is GOOD and what is EVIL they are able to find in Him sufficient grace to follow that which is GOOD and to abhor that which is EVIL. The line of demarcation between the two is clearly defined, and no longer do they call evil GOOD and GOOD evil. (See Hebrews 5:14; Isaiah 5:20).

#### We Must Come To Know The Voice

The real burden of the Spirit of God in the earth today is that men everywhere, who are seeking to come into the fulness of Christ, might have strong perception to hear and to know the Voice of the Shepherd as He speaks to His people. Sheep will readily follow... for sheep are prone to be followers. They have a nature that is inclined that way. How concerned the Lord is, therefore, that they come to know the VOICE. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"... is the oft-repeated challenge of the Great Shepherd to the seven churches. Therefore God's controversy has been chiefly with the shepherds that caused the sheep to go astray:

"They are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his quarter" (Isaiah 56:11).

"Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard, for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture" (Jeremiah 25:34-36).

Therefore, because God has a Shepherd's heart, He is greatly concerned about the "sheep of His pasture" and in this hour He is sending forth the voice of the True Shepherd to lead His sheep back into the pastures of truth and righteousness.

"My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: as I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out... I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick..." (Ezekiel 34:6-16).

One cannot help but notice with what emphasis the Lord declares that HE ALONE is the True Shepherd, and that HE ALONE will take the responsibility for shepherding the flock of God in His ways. "I will, I will, I will..." is constantly repeated in this passage, and He has confirmed His intention with an oath: "As I live, saith the LORD..." True, He will use men to fulfill His purposes, as He has always done... but when we understand that GOD ALONE is the True Shepherd of the

sheep, then we will come to understand that true shepherds here in the earth are only true shepherds in as far as they walk in the ways of the True Shepherd, and speak the words of the True Shepherd, and do the works of the True Shepherd. They are not true shepherds in their own right, in virtue of some office that has been conferred upon them by God or by man.

## Delegated Authority

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### The True Shepherd Appears

When Jesus came forth from the heart of God He was God's answer to the needs of the scattered sheep of God... the One that the prophets spoke about, who would come to gather together the scattered flocks of God's pasture, and cause them to lie down in quiet resting places. He had the heart of the Shepherd-God, with whom He walked in total union; and therefore as He looked upon the multitudes who thronged about Him to hear His Word and to be healed of their infirmities, He had compassion upon them, for they were "as sheep not having a shepherd." They were nevertheless God's sheep... not all of them, but many of them... and Jesus knew that all whom the Father had given Him would come to Him and hear His voice. They would not follow the stranger. The "stranger" tried many times to get a following, and for a while there may have been a certain amount of perplexity, but the voice didn't sound quite right. Jesus said, "A stranger they will not follow."

### Sent By The Father

The story of His Incarnation, and His ministry in the earth, is beautiful as we consider it... as He gathered the flock of God about Him, and nurtured them in the ways of God. There was conflict with the hirelings, as might be expected; but the True Shepherd speaks, and the true sheep follow. They cannot help but follow. What they hear may oftentimes sound strange, unorthodox, or unscriptural, ...but still they follow. They know the Voice. What they do not understand they are prepared to leave in His hands, knowing that one day they WILL understand. "To whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." But little by little the scales are removed from their eyes, and the sheep begin to see and to hear more clearly, and to understand what the shepherd is trying to teach them. And little by little the Scriptures take on illumination, and they see from the Scriptures what they hear from the Voice... and the Voice which once seemed to be unscriptural, suddenly begins to shine forth from all pages of Holy Writ.

For Jesus came forth from the heart of God to gather unto Himself the sheep whom God had given Him, and to take them back into the very heart of God, where they would be ONE fold and ONE Shepherd. It seemed almost impossible... for even in that day there were sects and divisions amongst God's people. There were scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Zealots. All wanted to be heard, and all called for a following, but the true sheep did not hear them. Jesus also told the sheep whom He had gathered that He had many other sheep that did not belong to their fold... but that He would bring them also, so that there would be ONE fold and ONE Shepherd. It was very distressing to them when this actually happened, but for the present, at least, it did not seem to disturb them. They really did not understand... it did not occur to them that one day they would mingle freely with Samaritans, and Egyptians, and Edomites, and Greeks... in a common bond of fellowship... and that there would be no distinction between them... washed in the same blood, renewed and filled with the same Spirit, and shepherded by the same Lord.

In the meantime there was but the "little flock." And because they were "little" they needed encouragement. "Fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." This promise they continued to embrace. They were sure He was the King, and they were anxiously awaiting this wonderful Kingdom that prophets and seers had talked about, and which Jesus had assured them would be their very own.

### Sudden Tragedy

Then one day there was sudden tragedy... the Good Shepherd was crucified and the sheep were scattered. It was calamity to the utmost. But it was, nevertheless, in accord with Scripture; for it was written, "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Their Shepherd-King had been crucified! And with His crucifixion their fluctuating expectations also vanished away. They had yet to learn that it was in the smiting of the Shepherd that the sheep would be redeemed. They had yet to learn that it was in the raising of the Shepherd from the dead, that the gathering of the sheep into one fold would actually be accomplished.

It took a long time, but little by little there came to them the understanding of what actually took place. The Shepherd had to die as the Lamb. The Shepherd must rise again as the King-Shepherd. But God's purpose was to take on still greater enlargement, which brought them into still greater perplexity. The Shepherd must ascend into the heavenly Zion, in order that He might gather in the "other sheep" that continued to wander far off from the fold.

### The True Shepherd Is Glorified

But how would He accomplish all this from His throne in the heavens? Surely if He were to remain in the earth it would be much better? But no! God had a different plan. He would send forth His Spirit from the throne-room, and the Spirit of God in the earth would continue to lead the sheep into pastures of Truth, and refresh them with waters from the throne. The work which He began on earth would not be stunted, or neglected, or hampered in any way because of His departure. Rather, it would be His departure into the heavens that would bring about in the earth a greater fulfillment of the purposes of God than might have been possible had He remained in their midst. For the Spirit of God in His people would not just be a gracious influence from Heaven, to encourage them and to inspire them in the ways of the Lord. Rather, He would be the very SPIRIT OF TRUTH in the earth. He would be the VERY SAME JESUS walking with them, but in Spirit form. When Jesus was here on earth the Truth was WITH them in the flesh, but now He would be IN THEM, in the Spirit. Jesus told them plainly, that the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell within them would be BETTER for them, and MORE GLORIFYING TO GOD than if He Himself were to remain in the earth in bodily form. This is something, I feel, that has scarcely dawned upon the people of God, and how I wish I could emphasize it as Jesus did just prior to His departure:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Can we grasp the significance of what Jesus said? Jesus said, "I tell you the truth..." as if to impress upon our hearts the impact of what He said, so clearly, and so definitely:

"I speak the Truth; it is for your benefit that I am going away, it is for your sakes... it is for your own good... it is for your profit... You will lack nothing by reason of My departure, because the Holy Spirit abiding within you, will be to you EVERYTHING THAT I WAS WHEN I WALKED BY YOUR

SIDE..."

Now just before we proceed any further, let us emphasize one thing. When God declares Truth, let us have faith and grace to EMBRACE it whether we see the fruits of it or not; for it is in embracing the Truth that it shall become the Seed of Truth in our hearts, that will bring forth REALITY in the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose. What a revelation this was to my own heart as I contemplated the above Scripture. And how I was tempted to think, like so many others... it sounds so good... if only it were possible... if it had only worked that way! But now I have come to understand that Truth declared by God that remains UNFULFILLED is God's promise to you and I that we must embrace until it is fulfilled! And furthermore, its fulfillment in the fulness of God's plan and purpose is JUST AS CERTAIN as any other declaration of His Word. How prone we have been to read the Scriptures, and as we come to some Truth of great wonder and beauty... to stand back and admire it, and bemoan the fact that it is impossible. But now we are encouraged to grasp it, and lay hold upon it, and embrace it, knowing it MUST COME TO PASS because God has declared it. The Word that He sends forth from the throne will not return to Him empty... it will accomplish the desire of His heart in sending it forth! (See Isaiah 55:11)

I think as Christians we all recognize that if Jesus had remained in the earth after His resurrection and until this day... we would have a sure infallible witness in the earth concerning the Truth of God, and the will of God for His people. Perhaps many of us would never have the opportunity of talking to Him personally, in times of need and perplexity. But some would certainly have this opportunity, and we would be able to receive from them what they had received from Him. But this is not the way it was to be! It wasn't a good enough plan for God! God's plan was far better! Jesus would go away, but Another Advocate would come in His stead, and HE THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD BE TO YOU AND I IN THE EARTH EVERYTHING THAT JESUS WAS WHEN HE WAS HERE... THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE!

But how would He accomplish this? The Spirit of God would take up His habitation in human vessels; and ordinary men, redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and anointed of God, would continue to carry on the work which the Good Shepherd had started; and the Spirit of God would also abide in His people, and would lead and guide them INTO ALL TRUTH. There would be no intermission in the program of God because of the sudden tragedy of His death... for His death was part of the plan of God even before it happened... the sheep moreover had already been warned: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own... and I shall be left alone..." But God's plan was that after the scattering there would come a re-gathering; and He would continue to make a preparation in the hearts of His chosen ones to carry on the work which He had started; and the Spirit of God dwelling within His people...

Would not speak "FROM" Himself...

He would speak only what He heard from the Son...

He would reveal what was yet to come...

He would glorify Christ in all things...

He would take the things that pertained to Christ,

and manifest the same to you and me.

(See John 16:7-15).

### Delegates From The Throne

What Jesus did in the earth He did as the Son of God sent forth from the heart of the Father. So now in exaltation He would send forth His own apostles ("sent-ones") and they would continue the work which He had begun. Their authority would not be impaired by reason of their infirmity... He having come as the Son of God by birth, whereas they were sinners. For they too would become sons of God by new-birth... and though not sharing His place in equality of majesty, or position, or glory... they would share His place in the perfection of the nature of Christ within them, because the Spirit of God--even the Spirit of Jesus--would dwell in them, and walk in them. In this way they would live as He lived, speak as He spoke, and love as He loved. All the former frustrations that they went through as they sought a place of earthly preeminence for their King (and of course, indirectly for themselves). all this had to pass away; and they must learn by experience that the true shepherds would serve the sheep and not themselves. They would feed the sheep, care for the sheep, and would not be concerned about their own welfare. They would in fact lay down their lives for the sheep, even as the Good Shepherd had laid down His life for them.

They were, in fact, delegated by the Son to minister His Kingdom in the earth, just as the Son had been delegated by the Father; so that the works which they would do in His Name would even be "greater" than He did when He was here on earth. Not because they were greater... they were in fact much less... but because the resurrected Christ had ascended to a greater throne and to a greater realm of glory than He had while here in the days of His flesh. And now His chosen ones would partake of His glory by reason of His ascension to the right hand of the Father... where He would ask and receive of the Father whatever provision was needful for His own. In reality, therefore, it was not Peter or James or John or Paul or Apollos doing the "greater works"... it was the Living Christ... living, moving, and walking in His chosen ones in the earth by His Holy Spirit.

### The Power Of Delegated Authority

When God truly establishes Authority in the earth He also projects into the hands of that Authority the power that is required for the execution of that office; and the Authority is answerable to God who established it. This is true as it relates to governments in the earthly realm, or in the Church. A man with authority from God does not need to ask the people for it, or even seek after it... it is just there. If God gave it, He will confirm it; and those who have the Spirit of Christ are content to leave it entirely in the hands of the Lord to vindicate and to stand behind whatever purpose God has in mind. God sent Moses, gave him a rod of authority... and God was faithful to stand behind him when Korah, Dathan and Abiram contested it. In fact Moses simply fell on his face before the LORD, and God did the rest. In like manner God vindicated Aaron, and caused his rod to bud in the Tabernacle, while the other rods remained lifeless. God established the authority of Samuel, so that not one word fell to the ground, and all Israel from Dan unto Beersheba knew that he was established as a prophet of the LORD.

Likewise in the realm of earthly government: "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Romans 13:1, 2). And again, "He beareth not the sword in vain" (verse 4). With every governmental authority ordained of God there is a certain measure of power to stand behind and to enforce the laws and decrees of that

authority.

But in this writing we are particularly concerned about the authority and the power that God has vested in His chosen ones. And we do not need to look far in the Scriptures to see how great that power was. Peter and the apostles had power on earth, and power in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Paul had authority from God to "edify" the Church, and this included whatever authority would be required to discipline those who were not walking in God's ways. He had authority that he might use as a rod of discipline, or something he could manifest in a spirit of love and meekness (1 Corinthians 4:21). In each and in every case it was God who established the Authority Himself, and the minister in question simply walked in God's ways, and God stood behind him. No minister with the authority of God upon him needs to seek, nor should he desire, any other support for that ministry. God confirms and establishes it Himself, and He gives to every one of His chosen ones whatever power and authority is required for the faithful execution of the ministry that God has imparted.

#### Dangers Related To Delegated Authority

Before we proceed with the matter of Delegated Authority we do well to consider some of the dangers that lie in the pathway of a man who has authority from God, but who may be lacking in Grace and Mercy. Ministers who have power and authority vested in them by God are in a place of tremendous responsibility. For they may use the authority they have for good or for evil, to fulfill the purposes of God, or to justify or commend themselves. This is why it is so absolutely important that any minister exercising governmental authority comes into a higher relationship with God than that of his office... a relationship so intimate, that he shall in fact minister out from the very heart of God Himself. Unless such a one pursues this goal, his very office could destroy him, as well as work havoc among the people of God.

In times of spiritual crisis in the Church, when the people of God are being shaken concerning their relationship to established institutions within the Church structure, there is always a tightening of the strings of leadership in an attempt to keep the ecclesiastical systems from falling apart. This seems to be what is happening today, and we are persuaded that this present emphasis on Church leadership and Church structure indicates a certain fear that ecclesiastical hierarchies are being shaken. This fear is well founded, for the time is upon us when judgment must begin "at the House of God" and God always begins with the "ancient men"... the elders, and the leaders, when He begins to judge His Sanctuary. (See Ezekiel 9:6; 1 Peter 4:17). It is the shepherds, not the sheep, that trample down the meadows and foul the waters with their feet. It is the "priests of the LORD" that God calls upon to "weep between the porch and the altar," and their concern is not: "Let the sheep learn to follow me..." but rather, "Spare Thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage a reproach unto the heathen, that the heathen should rule over them..."

It is important therefore, for God's ministers to know that they may have authority and power from God, because of their office, and still walk in disobedience. Let us cite just a few fearful examples:

(1) Moses had authority to strike the rock and bring forth waters to quench the thirst of the people of Israel; but he himself failed to go into the promised land because of his disobedience. (See Numbers 20:12).

(2) Saul had authority to slay the priests of the LORD... and when his personal bodyguard, who were duty-bound to obey their master, refused to do so, Doeg the Edomite took up the challenge, and slew God's anointed ones. Doeg was simply obeying instructions from the authority over him, but hear what God had to say about his actions: "God shall likewise destroy thee forever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living." (See 1 Samuel 22:18; Psalm 52:5). Doeg was not acquitted just because he was obeying the orders of a higher authority.

(3) Peter had just received the office of his apostleship. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18, 19). But hear what Jesus had to say to Peter just a short time later: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). In the first instance, Peter had just received the wonderful revelation of the Christ, the Son of God... and his authority as an apostle followed hard after that revelation. But in the second instance he was speaking as old Peter the fisherman himself... inspired by Satan. How foolish to embrace the thought that we receive anything and everything an apostle or prophet teaches, simply because he is in fact an apostle or a prophet!

(4) Pilate had authority from God, by which he actually crucified the Son of God (John 19:10, 11). We know that Christ died by the "predetermined counsel and foreknowledge of God," but the fact remains that these were "wicked hands" that actually performed the deed. Remember how Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11).

(5) Caiphas, the high priest, who gave sentence of death to Jesus, also prophesied by the Word of the Lord that it was "expedient... that one man should die for the people..." God gave this wicked high priest a Divine prophetic utterance, in view of the high office that he held... he did not speak it "of himself." He did not think it up... it did not come from his own wisdom... God inspired him to say it. (See John 11:51).

Jesus could have called more than twelve legions of angels to His aid as He hung on the Cross, because He was the Messiah. But because He was more concerned about doing the will of God than He was about fulfilling His role as the Messiah--He chose to remain on the Cross. Are we not all glad for this?

God has given us ample warning in the Scriptures of what could happen when His misguided ministers seek to take advantage of the authority they have to serve their own purposes... and these serve as solemn reminders to those who imagine that they can use the authority and power the exalted Christ has vested in them, as they see fit. Their judgment shall be very severe, and I believe we should earnestly pray:

"Lord, how we need the power and authority of Heaven to minister to the needs of suffering humanity, and to deliver your sheep that have been scattered and bruised in the wilderness of life. But Lord! Do not, we pray, place in our trust any measure of authority and power that is not counterbalanced with an equal measure of grace, and humility, and meekness, and patience, and

kindness, and longsuffering, and mercy, and wisdom. Keep this power and authority in Thine own hands, we pray, as the sword of Goliath was taken out of the hands of David, wrapped in a priestly garment, and hidden away in the Sanctuary till he was prepared of God to have it permanently, and to use it wisely. Continue to hold us in the hollow of Thy hand as a sharp sword, to be used of Thee at Thy discretion. Continue to polish us like the shaft of the arrow, and keep us in Thy quiver, that when Thou dost see fit to send us forth we shall not miss the mark, but we shall strike through the heart of the enemy unerringly. Keep Thy power unto Thyself alone, for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory... and may we only partake of it as we come into harmony and union with Thyself. Amen!"

### Our Relationship To Earthly Government

In this writing we are chiefly concerned with the nature of God's Government in the Church, and our relationship towards it. And although it is true that God has established a Government for His people in the Church that is entirely foreign to the governments of this world order... the fact is that the "god of this world" is determined to take over the Government of God in the Church and to sit in the very Temple of God. He has no doubt succeeded in doing this in the past, at least in measure... and he will succeed in even greater measure in the days to come. It is extremely important therefore that we understand our responsibilities towards "government" as such, whether it be in the world or in the Church... for these governments have not always confined themselves within their own boundaries. This matter may seem irrelevant to many today... living as we do in a nation that is dedicated to the individual's pursuit for freedom. But it may not always be this way, and we must know the Truth that will make us free even when freedom is denied us.

Earthly and ecclesiastical governments seem to be drifting closer and closer towards a state of anarchy in many areas of the earth. As this takes place, and one government order is replaced by another, there is inevitably a lot of perplexity and confusion among the people as they seek to determine where their true allegiance belongs. But God wants His people to have peace in times like these. God wants His people to know that they must obey God first and foremost, regardless of the ecclesiastical and earthly laws to which they might be subjected. On the other hand, we simply recognize whatever government we find ourselves subjected to as government sent from God... and we must do nothing, by carnal, earthly means... to overthrow a governmental structure that God has established, or to seek to reinstate or uphold a governmental structure that God is overthrowing.

This is the clear teaching of Scripture:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13, 14).

When Paul and Peter wrote about the higher powers they were not referring to some form of government that was sympathetic to the Christian cause. The immediate reference was to the Roman Government which was at that time worldwide in its domain, was even then opposing Christianity, and which would shortly dedicate itself to the task of crushing the new Christian

religion, and wiping it off the face of the earth. There is no suggestion whatever that if a government becomes perverse, or oppressive to the Christian cause, then the Christian has the right to revolt against it. The governments of other nations, many of which are ruled over by dictators and kings who even now are persecuting the Church of Jesus Christ, are just as much ordained of God as our governments are in a democratic society. The Christian, therefore, will submit to whatever form of government he finds himself subjected to, recognizing as Jesus recognized, that they have no power to exert over men that God did not confer upon them (John 19:11). The Christian will obey these governments, and submit to them... as long as such obedience does not conflict with his commitment to Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Our real citizenship is in the Heavens. Our real walk is in the Heavens. Our warfare is in the Heavens, And in this heavenly realm the Body of Christ is in a position to do the will of God, and to take authority over the principalities and the powers of the spiritual world, according to the will and purpose of God. And let us be assured that this effectual warfare in the Spirit will bring about whatever changes in the earthly and the ecclesiastical realms that God has determined. We are not talking about mere passive onlookers in a world that is governed by anti-christian forces. In the Spirit we are yet to become a vital, powerful army, and in the Spirit only will we wage effectual, triumphant warfare against the powers of darkness. This is the way it was in the early beginnings of the Church... and the godless Roman Empire that was dedicated to the destruction of Christianity from the face of the earth was literally subdued and conquered by an army of saints and martyrs, who drew no sword to support their cause but the mighty Sword of the Spirit. Daniel saw this very thing in vision many centuries earlier... he saw the saints of the Most High taking the Kingdom, and a Stone cut out of the mountains without hands smiting the Roman Empire in the feet, and bringing it to nought. Since then the Stone has been growing... growing... growing... and it shall yet fill the whole earth.

God's people must be fully persuaded that this is the Truth; for though it may not seem important now to those of us who live in areas of the earth that enjoy relative religious freedom, we may not always have this kind of freedom. And if and when we lose it we must be prepared to face whatever situation God may allow to arise in the land, and for the possibility that one day we may be ruled by a government that will oppose the Name of Christ, and begin to enact laws and decrees that are designed to crush the saints of the Most High and destroy their witness in the earth.

### The Three Hebrew Children

The case of the three Hebrew children is a classic example of what our stand ought to be when confronted with decrees from the government that are contrary to the laws of Christ. These young men had been taken into captivity after the Fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah had already warned the people what would happen if they did not repent, but they would not hear; and the whole nation suffered as a result of their disobedience. But these young men were different. They knew and worshipped the true God of Israel. That was something that was settled in their hearts. But now in captivity they find themselves living under a government that was beginning to make demands of them that were contrary to their convictions. On this certain occasion they were to bow down and worship an image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up on the plains of Dura. It would not be something that would be enforced permanently, but during these festive occasions it became a

decree. They could still keep their religion, but after all they were under the authority of the Government of Babylon now. In fact, Jeremiah had told the people to go down to Babylon, and to serve the King of Babylon. (See Jeremiah 27:17). So the issue was very clear: obey the king as citizens of a new country, or be true to their convictions. There didn't seem to be the slightest question in their minds as to what course they would take. "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18).

#### Give Honor To Whom Honor Is Due

There still seems to be a lot of confusion in the minds of the people of God as to what their responsibility is to Government that is ordained of God. When the Word says, "Be subject to the higher powers..." that word does not abrogate and nullify a thousand and one exhortations that we find in the Scriptures to serve the Lord God, and Him only. Did Jeremiah think it necessary to make a list of exceptions to the rule he made when he told the people to "serve the King of Babylon"? There was no need for that. They knew what Moses and the Prophets taught concerning this, and the thought of disobeying God because the government required it was not entertained in their hearts for one moment. The seeming contradictions of the Word will harmonize within us like a beautiful symphony when we begin to walk in Truth. And so it is with our responsibility towards Government. God sets in power whom He will... a dictator, a king, a president, a prime minister. Because we honor God we honor those whom God has placed in positions of authority over the land. We do not malign them; but if necessary we must declare unto them the ways of Righteousness and Truth. We will support them in the Spirit, as we pray for them, and take up spiritual warfare against the principalities and powers in the heavens that are exerting tremendous pressures upon them to enact laws and statutes that are anti-God and anti-Christ. Prayers and intercessions of this nature are effectual, and they are able to overthrow these unseen powers, and cause the earthly ruler under them to submit to God. On the other hand, if the nation does not repent and submit to God, and God has decreed judgment against the land because of the sin and iniquity that abound, no amount of prayer will prevail anything, because the Spirit of God knows the mind of God and will not allow you to pray effectually in the Spirit contrary to the will of God.

The Word is clear as to our responsibility to all men, to the fellowship of the brethren, to rulers in the Church, to rulers in the world. As we walk in Truth we do not require cumbersome lists of "exceptions" to the rule... we know what the Law of Christ says... and we know that we do not go against His holy law in a vain attempt to satisfy and appease some lesser dignity.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers..." But Paul who spoke these words laid down his head on the chopping-block at the command of the higher power, because he refused to stop preaching Christ.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands IN EVERYTHING" (Ephesians 5:24). The virtuous woman submits to this, and she finds it to be her joy and freedom as she does so, for she knows it is God's order. But even as she takes her place as the weaker vessel, joyfully, knowing it to be the will of God... she shall also know the strength of her Lord to resist her husband if he commands her to lie and cheat and steal and commit adultery with his cronies... She doesn't need a list of exceptions to the rule... the Law of Christ is in her heart and mind, and there is no controversy within her, and no doubt in her mind as to what she

should do or not do.

It should hardly seem necessary for us to use illustrations of this nature, but sometimes it seems necessary to "shock" a person to his senses if he has become extremely dull of hearing. The fact is there is not the slightest indication in all Scripture that it is the duty of man to obey any government, in the earth or in the Church, when it begins to intrude into the realm of a man's conscience and into areas which relate to his personal relationship with God. The whole duty of man as set forth either in the Old Covenant or the New, is to obey the LORD first and always... and then, of course, obey whatever government there may be of a lesser dignity. God's people, of all people on the face of the earth, are to be law-abiding; and contempt for established, delegated authority must have no place with them. But when established, delegated authority begins to intrude into areas of your soul and spirit that belong to God alone, then there is no question whatever as to what course you must take.

### Christ Or Politics

Ever since Emperor Constantine put the Cross on his battle standard, and went about to Christianize the Roman Empire, the Church has been confused as to her responsibilities toward earthly governments. Up until that time the Christians were a SEPARATE PEOPLE, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, and were hated and ostracized by pagan Rome. But when Constantine came to the throne the whole strategy of the Enemy of Christ suddenly changed. We believe it was due to the subtle tactics of Satan that Constantine sought to Christianize paganism, by making Christianity the state religion, by baptizing his armies into the new Christian religion, by elevating the ministry to places of leadership in the land, and by granting the Christian Church all kinds of earthly favors. From this unholy union of Church and State the Church of Jesus Christ has never recovered. It now sounds like strange doctrine to most Christians, and to most men in the ministry, that the Church was intended of the Lord to be SEPARATE from the world structure. If Satan is indeed the "god of this world" and the "prince of the power of the air," then only in the power of the Spirit are we going to be able to wage effectual warfare against the antichristian forces that are at work in the earth. (See Ephesians 6:10-18). If the ills of our nation, or any other nation, are considered to be merely of a political or economic nature, then it really doesn't matter all that much if our statesmen are pagan or Christian; and ungodly men will readily support any man seeking political power as long as the ECONOMY rather than CHRIST, is the main issue... as long as our standard of living will continue to rise... as long as it is generally understood that the life style of Sodom with all her debauchery and her unspeakable licentiousness will not be seriously tampered with. Sodom's economy was one of the best in her day, but God was not the least impressed with her abundance and prosperity... In fact, God considered her booming economy to be her fundamental sin: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, PRIDE, FULNESS OF BREAD, and ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS..." (Ezekiel 16:49). How well this sums up the situation as it exists today, especially here in the Western World!

God wants His people to be assured that a Spirit-filled, Spirit-taught, Spirit-anointed, Spirit-led people is the only answer that God has for human need; and that He is in the process of creating such a people. Apart from national repentance and a turning toward God, the Bible gives no hope whatever for the renewal of our society--nor are we to try to change it by any other means. When men desire to continue in their rebellion, God literally withdraws His restraining grace, and gives

the society over to greater and greater wickedness, and finally to a "reprobate mind," which means, "a mind void of moral discernment"... it is no longer capable of knowing right and wrong, but it calls GOOD evil, and EVIL good... and actually believes the lie. (See Romans 1:24-28).

And so as God releases His hand of restraining grace, the forces of evil are being given free course in this last hour, this day of Harvest. Just as the mystery of Christ comes to fulness in His people; so the Mystery of Iniquity comes to fulness in the seed of the Evil One. There is to be an acceleration of evil in the last days... as well as an acceleration of righteousness. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still... he that is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Revelation 22:11). Let him carry on in it... let him increase in it... LET HIM COME TO FULNESS!

Winds of judgment are about to be released in the earth; and when the tables are turned, and God's judgments engulf the earth, God would have us to know the reason for it all. It will be...

BECAUSE the hearts of men have become utterly depraved and corrupt, as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot... and a holy and righteous God can no longer stay His hand in judgment.

BECAUSE our educators and intellectuals have succeeded in brainwashing the nation and persuading our youth that they are but animals in the process of evolution... just a spontaneous outgrowth from the slime of some primeval ocean bed... and now after many eons, just a hairless ape... but gradually rising higher and higher, by his own knowledge and wisdom... that there is really no definite standard of righteousness or morality... and whatever a society deems to be right is right... or if they deem it to be wrong it is wrong... that there is no such thing as a man created in God's image who sinned against his God... that God (if there is a God) is not a holy and perfect Being with whom we have to deal, but merely some kind of impersonal force whose name we still have to use on occasion because of our inability to define certain aspects of the universe that seem as yet to be beyond the understanding of science... and little by little as science is able to understand these mysteries and explain them, then the whole idea of God as a Supernatural Being can be dispensed with altogether...

BECAUSE the hearts of men have become so hardened towards sin and immorality that there is no longer a true sense of moral values. and the basest of sins are considered to be proper and honorable... sins so vile that one would almost hesitate to mention them by name in polite conversation, or even to put it in writing... and in and through it all they are upheld and honored even by men who hold high positions in the land as a people to be desired and lauded. As the apostle Paul puts it: they "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32).

BECAUSE those who profess to be Christian, and to honor the Bible... have in fact become the lukewarm Church of prophecy, concerning which Jesus said, if they would not repent, "I will spew thee out of my mouth..." Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt hath lost his savour... it is thenceforth GOOD FOR NOTHING, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13).

But in the midst of all the chaos and turmoil that shall arise in the land, let the "little flock" not despair, who cry unto Him day and night, because of all the abominations that are committed in the earth and in the Church... and may they take courage in the promise of our Lord, who said, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with

them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7, 8).

### Withdrawing From Established Authority

One would imagine that if and when established authority becomes oppressive or perverse, especially in the Church--that God would immediately take steps to disannul that authority. But God's ways are not our ways. He knows how to deal with powers in the earth or in the Church, and He will do so in His own time. What, then, about those who are forced to live under this kind of authority? When, and under what circumstances, are they permitted to cast off misguided authority?

The question as it relates to Church Government is not: "Do God's apostles and prophets have power and authority to rule in the Church today?" The Scriptures clearly teach that God "hath set" these ministers in the Church; and we accept this as a fact, and we would encourage the believers to recognize and to honor the ministers whom God hath set in the Church to bring order and harmony to the people of God. But the question that seems to be in doubt in the minds of many Christians is rather this: "Am I to give unquestioned obedience and submission to a valid, established ministry in the Church? Or do I have the right to "try those which say they are apostles"... their words, their decrees, their actions... and through it all to maintain a direct, open-line communication with God alone, and refuse to allow any minister, from God or otherwise, to jam this line of communication because of their special office?"

We have many illustrations in the realm of both earthly and ecclesiastical governments of situations where the people of God had to decide whether to obey the Authority, or God who is above all Authority. And we likewise have many examples of God's provision for His own in the hour of their oppression. Until God's hour comes, there is nothing the people of God can do about it, but to obey and submit to whatever form of earthly or ecclesiastical government they find themselves subjected to. In rendering this kind of submission, of course, they are never under obligation to violate righteous principles of conduct in an attempt to satisfy the Authority. But in as far as their conscience will allow, they will seek to render due obedience, until the time comes for God to bring them into deliverance. Israel remained under Egyptian bondage, and had no choice in the matter until God intervened. Later, they were taken into Babylonian captivity, and were exhorted to "serve the King of Babylon," which they did. But when it came to a question of serving God, or the king, they knew where to draw the line.

We have had similar situations arise in the realm of ecclesiastical governments through the Church's long history, and great has been the agony, and the fears, and the heart-searching of God's chosen ones as they found it necessary at times to stand forth against established Authority, and withdraw from its dominion. As God led them step by step, they were looked upon by those who remained loyal to the Authority... as renegades and apostates. But God vindicated them over and over again, as they stood forth valiantly for the Truth, against all the power and might of earthly and ecclesiastical powers combined. We would like to remind God's people that they simply cannot cast off authority because of certain disagreements that have arisen, or because of certain pressures that they have been subjected to. God must indicate His will in the matter, and He will bring about deliverance in His own time and in His own way. God may seem to be late according to man's standard, but He is always right on schedule. There was need for Reformation many, many years before Luther came on the scene, but God's time had not yet

come. And one cannot read the account of the Reformation without realizing the great heart-searching and agony of soul that these men of God knew and experienced as they were faced with the decision of withdrawing from established ecclesiastical authority. Many of us have gone through similar experiences--and though perhaps not comparable in magnitude with the warfare and the turmoil that we have read about in Church History, we are confident the agony of soul and spirit was just as bitter.

David went through similar experience as God brought him away from the authority and dominion of Saul. God did not abrogate Saul's authority, and David continued to recognize Saul as God's anointed one, even to the day of Saul's death. But David knew that God had delivered him from Saul's authority. He would gladly have returned to Saul's kingdom and come under Saul's dominion again, if Saul would only have changed his ways and walked before the Lord. But David never lived to see that day, and he had to walk in obedience before God, isolated completely from his brethren in the kingdom of Saul. Great was his agony of soul... not simply because of the wanderings to which he was subjected, but because God's "anointed" was walking in perverseness, and David and his band were cast off and exiled from God's inheritance.

"My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword... they have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit for me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves" (Psalm 57:4, 6).

#### God's Sheep Are Looking For True Rest

Some of God's shepherds have been slow to understand the heartache and the agony of God's sheep in times of spiritual drought and apostasy... and when God begins to call the sheep unto Himself, and into union with Himself alone, and they begin to depart from established Church systems and structures... there is usually consternation and dismay among the leadership. And very often this brings about a tightening of the strings of leadership in order to coerce the sheep into obedience to their authority.

The fact of the matter is that sheep, God's sheep, are longing for true guidance and true leadership... but their hearts grow weary and their soul becomes dry and thirsty as they go from one pasture to another looking for true rest. Most of the shepherds do not understand because they themselves have never been sheep. They do not have the heart of a sheep and therefore they do not have the heart of a shepherd. We know there will always be the rebellious and the stiff-necked who will not come under any kind of authority... but these are not the "sheep" of God's flock. they are the goats. God's sheep are looking for true shepherds and true leadership... and that is why so many of them come out from under one kind of bondage, and almost immediately submit themselves to another. until eventually many of them simply give up in despair, and either settle down in some ecclesiastical structure, or withdraw completely from anything that bears any semblance to a meaningful fellowship of the Body of Christ.

Many of us have known much of the Glory of the Lord in times past, and we can find no comfort in the assurances that we receive from time to time that if we will just submit to this New Testament Church order, or get on this sure foundation, or come under this covering or that... all will be well. And though in the will of God many of us have submitted to some form of established church order

for a season, we knew of a certainty that the Glory of the Lord was sadly lacking, and we continued to hope and pray... and to anticipate the dawning of a New Day when the Lordship of Christ would dominate every gathering of God's people in His Name, and where every member of the Body knew what it was to worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth.

In saying this, of course, we are not suggesting that we should look for a return of the Glory that we have known in the past. We simply recognize that the Glory we have known in the past is but a foretaste and an earnest of what God has in mind, and we cannot be satisfied until we explore the whole inheritance. Caleb and Joshua were not interested in making a second excursion into the land of Canaan in order to grasp another cluster of grapes from Eschol, and a few more pomegranates... but having tasted of that precious fruit they could no longer be satisfied with the manna that fell every morning throughout the Camp, with the water that flowed out of the Rock, or even with the Cloud of Glory that hovered over the Tabernacle by day and by night. They appreciated all that... and we continue to appreciate all the way the Lord has led us... but we simply recognize that in spite of the manna, and in spite of the water out of the rock, and in spite of the cloud of glory by day and the pillar of fire by night... **THAT GENERATION OF ISRAELITES WASN'T GOING ANYWHERE.** They were going to die right there in the wilderness. There were not going in to enjoy the inheritance that their present blessings were intended to prepare them for. All over the land we are witnessing many wonderful things, as God pours out His Spirit upon all flesh. And yet in and through it all we are saddened as we behold a great measure of the blessing and the power of God in the midst of His people, and yet oftentimes no real anticipation of coming forth into the inheritance that is ours in Christ Jesus... even the putting on of the very stature and image of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we know that if this is not the vision, and if this is not the hope, and if this is not the expectation of God's people, then all this blessing and glory and excitement that is prevalent today means little or nothing, because it is leading God's people nowhere. We can thank the Lord, however, that there is developing in the hearts of men a new hunger and a new vision... and many are being awakened to the realization that there is indeed much more land to be possessed, and new frontiers in the Spirit to be explored.

## The Authority Of The Son Of God

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The principle of delegated authority is not too difficult for us to comprehend as it relates to us in the realm of earthly governments. We send ambassadors to other countries, and they send ambassadors to our country. These ambassadors are delegated by the government of the country from whom they come, to declare in their name the message that they want the other country to have. He lives in our midst... and is given certain rights and privileges and guarantees of safety... even though the country he represents might in many respects be hostile to ours. When he speaks, he speaks what he considers to be the mind and the will of the government he represents. Thus far it is not too difficult for us to make the analogy. Jesus said,

"He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

They would truly be His representatives in the earth, declaring God's Truth to a world that is at enmity with the Government of Heaven.

But the conclusion that men often draw from this principle is not properly founded. "These men are sent of God, and therefore we will submit to them and obey them, regardless of what they teach... We know that as men they are weak, and subject to infirmity, and they may not always walk as Jesus walked... nevertheless they have been delegated by the Lord to represent Him in the earth, and we must submit to them and obey them even if at times we do not have a clear witness in ourselves concerning their teachings, or the things they are seeking to establish..."

This concept of the Authority of God's ministers has been brought forth in the Church, with varying degrees of emphasis, from the earliest beginnings of her apostasy. And after every new moving of the Spirit of God in the earth... as the sovereign presence of the Spirit begins to ebb away... sooner or later there is a reoccurrence of the same teaching in one form or another. It has resulted in the formation of many new denominations in the Church from time to time... and it has also brought into being other Church structures and systems which have not been around long enough yet to find their place in history, and which generally are not recognized as a denominational structure... but which bear the same stamp if you look at them closely. The phraseology changes from time to time, but the basic concepts of the doctrine remain about the same: A man sent from God has the authority of Christ conferred upon him, and he must be obeyed because of this authority, and not necessarily because his teachings are always entirely right or infallible. He may be wrong in many of the things he is seeking to promote, and he may err at times in his understanding of what God is saying to the people... but that is between him and the Lord... (God will correct him in his error.) But you and I must give him our submission if we are to abide safely under the covering of God.

We feel it is important, therefore, that God's people have a sound scriptural understanding concerning this whole matter of delegated authority; for though these ecclesiastical orders soon perish and vanish away, especially in this day and hour when God is bringing all things to a swift

and final conclusion... it is also true that new kingdoms of a similar nature are constantly arising. And though it may seem to be a matter of insignificance right now to many Christians, let us realize that the time may be close at hand when ecclesiastical and earthly governments will once again walk together hand in hand (as the mystery of iniquity hastens on to full fruition); and God's people are going to have to stand up in the power of the Spirit of God against the combined might of the Man of Sin and the god of this present world, as he sits in the very Temple of God in the earth.

Let us pursue this matter of delegated authority as it pertains to the Son of God when He was here in the earth. Jesus said, "The living Father hath sent me" (John 6:57). All Christians recognize this. But let us go a little further: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself..." (John 14:10). Literally He was saying, "I speak not FROM myself," for the Son of God on earth was not only delegated by the Father to speak God's Word to the people, but the living Father actually dwelt within Him, and the Son spoke out from the very heart of God. The authority and the power that He manifested here on earth was not like that of an ambassador who had to search about in his heart for the answer that he thought would please his government at home. This was something far different. Nor would he just use His own good judgment in matters that seemed beyond His capacity as man to understand. Having learned obedience through the things which He suffered He was the Son who walked in total union with the Father, so that the very words He spoke and the very Works that He performed... though falling from His lips or emanating from the touch of His hand... it was in reality God the Father Himself speaking and working... as He walked in His Son, talked in His Son, lived in His Son, and showed forth the love and mercy of His own heart in His Son. Not, indeed, as a robot of some kind that was under the control and power of another in an involuntary sort of way... but as the Son who purposed in His heart when He came into the earth to do God's will and not His own. "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Christ Was never guilty of acting on His own, by reason of delegated authority. According to the Covenant of Incarnation He refused to do so. "Lo I come to do THY WILL, O God." He was subject to constant pressure to do His own will, but He remained true to the covenant. Satan tried to get Him to act in His own best interests as the Son of God on the Mount of Temptation (...if you are the Son of God...) but He steadfastly refused. The disciples sought to get Him to act on His own, for they were sure He was the Messiah... and they knew He would be acclaimed as the Messiah if He would only submit to the will of the people, but He refused to be pressured. It was not for lack of power or lack of authority that He said, "I can of mine own self do NOTHING" (John 5:30)... but it was rather because of the covenant relationship which He had with the Father. "I can do nothing of Myself, because I have purposed to do everything and to say everything... IN UNION WITH MY FATHER, and not as springing from my own heart's desire."

Therefore, as Jesus walked in total union with the Father, the Father's will became His will, and the Father's works became His works... and there was never any desire on His part to have it otherwise, But it was in the utmost of obedience to the Father that He would learn this kind of union. and it would be through much suffering and anguish that He would have to resist all attempts, whether human or Satanic, to act as the Messiah in His own good judgment, with the authority that the office of Messiah carried with it.

Having learned this kind of obedience, His will became ONE with the Father in all respects... so that even in the dark hours of anguish in Gethsemane, when under the pressure and the burden of

the sins of the world being laid upon Him... He cried out in anguish of soul: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Even then He was quick to respond, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." He conquered in the temptation to act in His own right on the Mount of Temptation... He conquered in the temptation to act in His own right under the pressure of the people to make Him king... and He conquered in Gethsemane under the pressure of the powers of darkness to throw away the cup that God had given Him to drink.

### It Was Good That Jesus Went Away

Now it would certainly seem logical that this kind of Man should continue to live on the earth, and to finish the work which He started by way of gathering together the lost sheep of God's heritage. But to the dismay of the disciples He told them He must go away... but that in going away, it would be to their advantage. Let us repeat it again and again, that we might catch the significance of these tremendous words:

"IT IS BEST FOR YOU... IT IS PROFITABLE... IT IS GOOD... EXPEDIENT... ADVANTAGEOUS FOR YOU... that I go away. Because if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you..." As clearly and as beautifully as any translation can express it, Jesus would tell us that the Holy Spirit, taking up His habitation in the Body of Christ in the earth, would be absolutely EVERYTHING THAT JESUS WAS WHEN HE WAS HERE in the days of His flesh. But it would be BETTER for God's people, and more glorifying to God, because the Christ that was limited and confined by reason of His humanity would become universalized and expanded to embrace a BODY that would fill the whole earth... and reach even into the heavens, by reason of His exaltation to God's right hand.

Now what we want to emphasize concerning the authority of Christ's ministry in the earth is simply this: that His Authority SPRANG FROM HIS UNION WITH THE FATHER, AND NOT FROM HIS MESSIANIC OFFICE. It was not a Messianic Office that He came to fulfill. but it was His union with the Father that made His Messianic Office vital, and meaningful, and valid.

The conclusion of the whole matter is now quite evident... and may God's ministers everywhere, and all of God's people... find grace to grasp the significance of this beautiful teaching. The Only Begotten Son of God would not speak, or work, or minister... out of virtue of His Office. Where, then is that apostle, or prophet, or teacher, or healer, or miracle worker... or elder, or deacon... who would presume to minister in virtue of his office, rather than in virtue of the Abiding Christ within? Or assume spiritual authority over the souls of men in virtue of his office, rather than in virtue of the Christ who dominates his words and his whole way of life? But let us pursue the matter a little further. When Jesus was here on earth He was the Prophet that Moses spoke about, who would come into the world, that all men must hear and obey. He was the Apostle, and High Priest of our profession. He was the Evangelist, the bearer of good tidings. He was the Teacher, who gathered the disciples about Him and unfolded the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. And He was the Good Shepherd... or the Good Pastor, that would lay down His life for the sheep. In other words, He was the fulness of ALL MINISTRY. But now He is exalted at God's right hand, and He has sent forth the fulness of His ministry (even the five-fold ministry) into the Church. This five-fold ministry therefore is but the overflow from His exalted throne in the heavens of the ministry that was His alone when He ministered here on earth. But now He is glorified, and as a result of His glorification He is able to send forth from His own heart a corporate ministry into the earth, who

would minister as He did when He was here... but doing even "greater works" because he has ascended to a greater Throne. Then shall we not learn from His example?

It was not because He was the Apostle that He claimed the authority to tear down the old temple, and build the new. It Was rather because He had come into a true Father-Son relationship; and He was simply doing what God was doing.

It was not because He was the Prophet foretold by Moses that He expected the followers of Moses to hear His Word... it was rather because He was showing forth the Truth of God, and men loved the Truth (the Truth of God... the Truth that Moses gave... the Truth that the prophets brought forth)... then they would love Him, for He spoke the Truth direct from the heart of God.

The Son honored the Father in all things, and for this reason only He expected that men who loved God would honor Him. Many thieves and robbers had come before Him... and many would come after Him. But they would come in their own name, assuming they had the authority of the Messiah, and claiming to be the Messiah. But Jesus simply claimed to SPEAK THE TRUTH and to LIVE THE TRUTH, and therefore men and women who were seeking for the Truth recognized the Voice of Truth and followed Him FOR THAT REASON AND FOR NONE OTHER. Have we not wondered why Jesus would seemingly evade the issue of His Messiah-ship when contested by the religious leaders of His day? For He was not interested in satisfying their curiosity... He was only interested that men should come to know the Truth. Telling the learned and wise theologians who He was might give them something to argue about, but it wouldn't change their hearts. But if they were seeking the Truth, they would discover the Truth in the words he spake, in the life He lived, and in the works that He performed. Jesus knew He was the Messiah; and John had witnessed before that He was the Messiah; and wise men from the East recognized Him to be the Messiah. But as Jesus pursued His pathway of ministry in the earth He would point to none of these things by way of vindicating Himself, or by way of establishing His authority over the people. His only desire was that men should HEAR and KNOW the Truth, that in knowing the Truth they might be made free. When John later sent a delegation of his disciples to Jesus that they might confirm John's earlier conviction that Jesus was the Messiah... Jesus might have said something like this: "Remind John of the time he baptized me in the Jordan... how he heard a voice from heaven saying, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased... Remind him of the vision he had of the Dove resting on My head..." But no! For Jesus wanted to assure John not merely of the great office He had as the Messiah, but that He was indeed the living expression of the Truth of God in the earth.

"Go your way," He said, "And tell John what things ye have SEEN and HEARD: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Luke 7:22, 23).

For Jesus would have all men to honor Him and receive Him simply and only because they behold the Father Himself working in Him, and speaking through Him. His ministers we must learn to honor for the same reason, and for none other. Paul, in fact, taught the same thing.. but this is scarcely noticed. "Follow me..." (Because I am the apostle to the Gentiles? Ah, no!) But "Follow me, even as I follow Christ..."

If Divine Government were God's ultimate purpose, then a strong and righteous Messiah, ruling in equity, could perhaps be the answer, And if Divine Government in the Church were God's ultimate... then strong and righteous apostles and prophets, ministering with authority and power, could perhaps be the answer. But God's ultimate is SONS... Sons from Adam's race... fallen so low, yet to be raised so high... even unto UNION WITH HIMSELF... Sons walking in love, in truth, in meekness, in mercy, in grace... Therefore His own Son must be the PATTERN SON, and BECOME THE WAY... for in all things, even in His life here on earth, He must have the preeminence.

What we have observed, then, concerning ministry is not just some far-fetched doctrine that we are trying to promote. Jesus is not only the TRUTH, and the LIFE, He is also THE WAY... and we must follow Him as the WAY, if we are going to come into the fulness of TRUTH and LIFE.

God Himself, in His sovereign utterances from Heaven, was always very careful to show His Son the WAY, and through Him to show you and me THE WAY. Never on any occasion would the Father say: This is your King; this is your Messiah; this is My Prophet... submit to Him. Invariably the Word was simply: "This is my Beloved Son, in whom Lam well pleased..." Or, "This is my Son, hear, ye Him..."

"If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," the Jews said (John 10:24). It almost seemed that the Lord was seeking to evade the issue, and we used to wonder why. But declaring Himself to be the Messiah, and being received by the people as the Messiah... would not change their hearts... but receiving the Truth that He declared WOULD. True, they were all looking for the Messiah, but many of them had no desire to walk in the Truth. Jesus, therefore, would expect all men to honor Him, simply and only because He was the Son of God, honoring the Father in all things, in the Words He spoke, in the Works He performed, and in the Life that He lived.

Is it necessary to suggest that God may require NO LESS of His ministers in the earth today? Or are we to believe that God would give more honor to his delegated ministers in the earth today than He would give His own Son? Or permit them to assume spiritual authority over the people of God today, that even His own Beloved Son would not assume? God forbid! For His ministers must learn to walk in the steps of the Lord who sent them, and declare the Truth as it proceedeth directly from the throne of God in heaven. "A servant is not greater than His Lord. neither is he that is sent greater than He that sent him..."

But when His ministers learn the WAY, then the sheep will hear God's voice again, and will follow. And then will the Word be fulfilled, as it is written: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent me" (John 13:20).

## Bethesda, The House Of Mercy

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"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market (or, sheepgate) a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water..." (John 5:2, 3).

### A Picture Of Suffering Humanity

What a picture we have here of suffering humanity, lying helpless in the five porches of the House of Mercy! We are called Christians, and we are proud to be members of the "called-out" ones known as the Church of Jesus Christ. And in this Church we have a five-fold ministry, designated as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. (See Ephesians 4:11). We have already observed how these ministries are simply the overflow of the exalted ministry of the Christ who rules in the heavenly Zion. You will recall, perhaps, how the entrance to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was composed of five pillars, on which there hang a linen curtain which formed the doorway; for this was the doorway to the anointed place, the place of priestly ministry. This Holy Place contained three articles of furniture, the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense, and the Candlestick. In type it would speak of the Anointed Place we have come to in the Church... a place of feasting on Sabbath Bread, a place of True Worship, a place of Illumination, and the shining forth of the Spirit of Truth. It is not the Holy of Holies... that realm is a little further on... but it is the Holy Place of anointed ministry and worship... and I believe in the anti-type we have come thus far... as God continues to prepare His people for that Abiding Realm in the Holy of Holies itself.

Here, then, at the doorstep of the Church there lies "a great multitude of IMPOTENT FOLK..." We do not need to enlarge upon this statement. Impotent folk! Sitting on the doorstep of the Church! Huddled together at the Sheep Gate, as sheep that are bruised and torn and bleeding and wounded, crying out for help! Once in a while there is a moving of the waters... and those that are not too lame to arise and walk into the water, or too crippled to get around... they are able to stumble to the waters the best way they know, to see if perchance they may get in line for a heavenly touch, while anointing is still there. The anointing may not last too long. or perhaps the man of God will weary before he gets an opportunity to touch them... and they will have to wait for the next deliverance meeting.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (verse 5). There was a multitude of impotent folk in that place, and I know of a surety that Jesus could have healed every one of them. Nor can I imagine that His concern for the multitudes at Bethesda was any less than the concern and the compassion that poured forth from His heart on many other occasions. Besides all this, He was the Messiah, and He Himself had already quoted the Scripture that would characterize His ministry in the earth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that were bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the

Lord..." (Luke 4:18, 19).

### One Man Healed

Jesus had come forth from the Father to do all the things that we have quoted in the above passage of Scripture. Why, then, did He not seek to fulfill His great Messianic office here at Bethesda, and heal everyone of the impotent folk who lay there in the porches of the Pool, helpless, crushed, and broken? Simply because He did not come forth from the heart of God to fulfill any kind of an "office" as such, but to DO THE WILL OF GOD; and in doing the will of God every aspect of His Messianic calling would be fulfilled, in God's way, in God's time, and in God's order. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." How important it is that we learn to recognize that God has a very definite, and a very explicit aspect of His will for every member of the Body of Christ, just as He did for His Only Son; and that there is a time and a season for the fulfillment of every aspect of His will in the lives of His people. An apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor, a teacher, a healer, a miracle worker... these might go forth in power and authority in virtue of their great office and seek to fulfill the Scriptures according to their calling. But SONS OF GOD who seek to walk in union with the Father cannot do so. Their "times" are in His hands, and their "way" is ordained of the Lord, and they can only minister as they walk in harmony with God, and according to His ways, and according to His timing, not because they sought to fulfill the Scriptures, but because the Author of the Scriptures caused them to do it.

Before any person can truly come into the perfect will of God there must be a complete dedication of our lives unto Him, until the thoughts and intents and motives of our hearts are thoroughly purged from all that pertains to the self-life. And then, from there on, He will continue to guide us individually until we are able to "PROVE... what is that good, and acceptable (or well-pleasing) and PERFECT WILL OF GOD." (See Romans 12:1, 2).

Before we can truly fulfill the Scriptures there must be a complete renewing of the mind, and a changing of our character into the image of Christ. Truth is not an intellectual understanding that we pursue, but the character of Christ that is formed within us. As we pursue the pathway of obedience to the known will of God... being attentive always to hear the still, small Voice of God, little by little do we climb the stairway of Truth that brings us nigh unto the very heart of God.

We are told that the Lord Jesus, as a child, grew "in wisdom, and in stature." Little by little did He begin to comprehend that Mary was His mother, and that God was His Father; and at least by the age of 12 we know that He was fully aware that GOD WAS HIS REAL FATHER. (He therefore considered it to be the normal thing for Him to linger in His Father's house while Mary and Joseph sought Him.) It is quite evident also that He had acquired, at the age of 12, great wisdom and understanding concerning the Scriptures; and therefore He would have been fully aware of the weight of the ministry that would be laid upon Him in the days to come.

### The Uncomplicated Life of Jesus

What then did He do about it? Did He start acting upon the Scriptures that related to His Messiah-ship, and seek to fulfill what He had read and studied? His pathway is clearly set forth in the Word. He simplified His life by walking in union with the Heavenly Father... and as a result ALL SCRIPTURE WAS FULFILLED THAT GOD INTENDED TO BE FULFILLED in the short ministry that He had in the earth... and what remained unfulfilled He was prepared to commit into the hands

of the Father who sent Him. Doing the will of God was MORE IMPORTANT to Jesus than seeking to fulfill His Messianic office. With what result? His ministry was cut short, for He was "cut off out of the land of the living..." But He did exactly what God intended Him to do... and the Scriptures which He did not fulfill while here on earth will yet be fulfilled in His Body, as He sits enthroned at God's right hand in the heavenlies.

This may not seem important to some... but it is vitally important. For if we understand this WAY, then we can spare ourselves all the frustrations and needless anxieties that a minister of God has to endure when He sets his course to fulfill a New Testament ministry, or to bring into being a New Testament Church.

Let us not read the Scriptures with the thought in mind that it is up to you and I to strive to fulfill all that we read. Rather let us read the Word for our daily bread, that we might have the strength and the wisdom to do just what God wants us to do TODAY, and rejoice in the hope of the promise that seems as yet unattainable. And let us be assured that every glorious promise of the Word that God has given us... high and unattainable as it may seem to be, is nevertheless yours and mine to embrace as God quickens the Truth of it to our hearts. And as we faithfully walk in obedience in the realm that God has enabled us to walk in TODAY, the time will surely come when we shall also walk in obedience in a realm which is at present beyond our grasp.

I am not being "scriptural" when I try to fulfill Scripture; I am only being scriptural when I walk in fellowship with the Spirit, and in union with the Son... and in so doing I make way for the Word to take hold of my spirit and to nourish and renew the inner man.

"Dear Lord, as I meditate upon your Word, help me to know that I hold in my hands the plan and the blueprint of the greatest and most wonderful masterpiece of your creative power that you have ever undertaken to bring forth. For when you formed the heavens and the earth... the heavens and their wonderful galaxies and universes, and the earth adorned with beauty and majesty... you simply spoke a Word, and it came into being. But when you saw fit to bring forth your Masterpiece, even the Church of the Living God, composed of redeemed sons of Adam's fallen race. you must needs descend to the lowest depths with them in the Person of your Son, that in His death, resurrection, and exaltation to highest heaven we also might be lifted from depths unreachable to heights unattainable, in virtue of your own grace and wisdom and power. And now in this Book that you have given us to read you have set forth in minute and intricate detail your plan and purpose concerning your people. Who am I that I could begin to formulate and arrange my life and calling, or the lives of your people, according to your Divine blueprint? I have it in my hands... I read it... I memorize it... I meditate upon it... But Lord! There is nothing that you say that is within my desire to perform or within my power to accomplish except as your indwelling Spirit breathes afresh upon the Word that you have spoken, and causes it to become Life within me. Let me therefore read your Word with the consciousness that you are causing the very dew of Heaven to fall upon it, that it may quicken thy servant, and take on form and reality in my life as I receive it. Give me only that which I need for today, for thus you taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." May we not be greedy for wisdom and knowledge, while as yet we are not able to digest it. For again you have said, "Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it" (Proverbs 25:16). Let us be happy as we walk one step at a time, as long as there is union with Thee, with a Word here and a Word there that we can lay hold upon. But let

us not grasp hold of Scriptures, as an undisciplined and inefficient workman would grasp his tools... to erect the pillars and walls, and install the furnishings... when as yet the foundation has scarcely been laid. For so you have declared Thy Word would be fulfilled to a people who would enter in to your rest":

"For precept must be upon precept,

Precept upon precept;

Line upon line, line upon line;

Here a little, there a little:

For with stammering lips, and another tongue

Will he speak to this people. To whom he said,

This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest;

And this is the refreshing:

Yet they would not hear"

(Isaiah 28:10-12).

And because Israel would not hear, God's Word that was intended to bring them into rest, caused them "to go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (verse 13). "For if the light that is in you become darkness," Jesus said, "How great is that darkness!"

Jesus, then, did not formulate any plan for the fulfilling of the Scriptures, nor for His own ministry... nor should we. He simply walked with the Father in perfect harmony and as He did everything came to pass as God intended, and the Scripture was fulfilled. How often we read the phrase, "That it might be fulfilled, according as it is written..."

This is how He began His ministry; for as He entered into the synagogue of Nazareth after His anointing and baptism, and stood up to read, He opened the scroll to the place where it was written concerning His great Messianic ministry. Then having read the portion that pertained to Him FOR THAT HOUR He closed the book, and handed it back to the minister of the synagogue, saying, "THIS DAY is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears..." (Luke 4:21). There would be other days, when other Scriptures would be fulfilled, But for this day this was sufficient, and this was relevant, and God was truly glorified. God's ministers often feel free to boast: "This is Bible, and I'm going to preach it..." But Jesus was confined to that portion of the Word that God was speaking TODAY.

God Has A Blueprint For Your Life

God has a wonderful blueprint for your life and mine, and a wonderful blueprint that goes beyond this to embrace the corporate expression of Christ in the earth. But the Son of God alone is responsible for the execution of these plans in the earth; and the Vicar of Christ (God's Holy Spirit) is alone responsible to bring it into being... in God's way, in God's time, and under God's direction. And if we miss out in any of these three operations, we have missed the will of God.

The Pool of Bethesda, the House of Mercy, with its five porches... whose waters were troubled on occasion, bringing relief to the ones and twos... was not God's final answer to human need. But into the midst of the multitude of impotent folk who languished there... walked the Son of God, who was Himself the Answer.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus asked the impotent man. "Sir," he replied, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool..." Now we thank the Lord for the troubling of the waters, but let us realize that this is not the full intention of God. How often we have witnessed situations like this... "No, I didn't get healed... I was at the back of the line, and the meeting closed before I got my turn... there were too many there, and the man of God was exhausted before my turn came..." Some wonderful things have happened in the pool of the House of Mercy, but it is not the full intention of God, because it has not met the needs of suffering humanity.

But "a certain man" found the answer. It wasn't in the pool, and it wasn't in the five-fold ministry... but it was in the Man of Galilee. It was in the One who walked in total union with the Father. If He would only have gone through the crowd as the Messiah, as the Prophet, as the Healer... then every one would have been healed. But let us repeat again: Jesus did not go to the Pool of Bethesda to have a healing meeting, so as to fulfill His Messianic calling. He went there because the Father was leading Him there and showing Him what to do.

#### Backlash From The Theologians

Of course, when one begins to walk in this realm, or to encourage others to walk in this realm... we can expect to receive a lot of condemnation from the theologians. It happened to be the Sabbath Day. A little forethought and wisdom on Jesus' part, and He might have saved Himself this embarrassment. Jesus could just as well have waited till the next day. After all, the man had been a cripple for 38 years... one more day wouldn't really matter that much. It looked like a deliberate attempt to antagonize the established religious order of the day. And perhaps it was... but it was not Jesus' doing; for Jesus was not walking according to any plan of His own. It was the plan of the Heavenly Father. And so when Jesus was confronted by the Jews for this "great work" that He did on the sabbath day He immediately disclaimed responsibility for it. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," He said. And this statement only served to increase the problem. Now He was claiming to be God's Son. Do you realize that if Jesus had simply moved in the realm of delegated authority, and in virtue of His Messianic Office, He would have been acclaimed as King of the Jews? People are always quick to rally behind a leader and exalt a hero; and they tried it on Jesus. We are told that on one occasion they got together and attempted to make Jesus their King "by force," but He would not be drafted (John 6:15). But because He claimed to walk in union with the Heavenly Father, and to be ONE with Him in all things, they nailed Him to the Cross. (Let us meditate much upon this fact.)

Jesus therefore disclaimed direct responsibility not only for the "great work" that He performed, but also for having done it on the Sabbath. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, THE SON CAN DO NOTHING OF HIMSELF, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things so ever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). An apostle, or a prophet, or a teacher, or an evangelist, or a pastor... they can do many wonderful things because of the effectiveness of their office. Powerful men in the Church or in the world have no problem doing what they want to do; for they can readily get a following for themselves, But the Son of God is HELPLESS to do anything.

## The Helplessness Of The Son Of God

That is to say, the Son is helpless in Himself; for being a Son implies absolute and total dependence upon the Father for everything... not only for His physical and spiritual needs as such... but for the operation of the very ministry that has been entrusted to Him. This is true of the Son, and it is true of the many sons. And only as we come effectually into this relationship is God truly glorified; for in this relationship we become nothing in ourselves, that He might become ALL. What a difference it will make when sons of God... disciplined and approved of the Father... begin to minister effectively in the Body of Christ. Gone, then, is all the confusion and frustration and perplexity of those who are desperately seeking to fulfill their calling, and to establish Divine Government in the Church, in virtue of the office to which they have been appointed, or the ministry that they have received from God.

"The Son can do nothing of (or "from") Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things so ever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (verse 19). Let us just paraphrase it a little. Jesus was accused of doing something contrary to the Law... healing a man on the sabbath day. But Jesus replied, in effect: "Healing a man on the sabbath day? Would you accuse me of that? That was not my plan at all! The Son can do nothing according to His own desire. I saw the Father healing the man on the sabbath, and I only do what I see the Father doing. It was the Father, not I, who healed the man... for He has been working right up until this time, and now I am working together with Him."

"For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him GREATER WORKS THAN THESE, THAT YE MAY MARVEL" (verse 20)

"Greater works than these..." Where do we find this expression again?

"And GREATER WORKS THAN THESE shall he so, because I go to my Father" (John 14:12). Notice this: the GREATER WORKS that Jesus said the Father would shew the Son are to be accomplished in His many brethren in the earth, while He Himself is glorified at God's right hand.

Let us repeat what we have already pointed out: If Jesus had only been content to confine His speech and His works to the Messianic Office, there could have been no real problem with the people. But God's whole purpose in man is SONSHIP not ministry... DIVINE CHARACTER not Divine Government, The Lord Jesus, therefore, came to show us the Way, and to become the Way. As the Pattern Son He would not only "live" by the Father, but He would also minister in total union with the Father, in order that we who follow after might also walk in the pathway that leads us very nigh unto the heart of God.

Now it was indeed a "great work" that Jesus performed on a certain man at the Pool of Bethesda. And God has been doing a "great work" through His chosen ministry in the earth, on behalf of certain ones who lie helplessly at the Sheep Gate, in the five porches of the House of Mercy. But Jesus promised that there would be "greater works than these" that would cause men to marvel... works that would manifest the very resurrection life of Jesus. We have had a taste of this, that is true. But it is yet to be fulfilled in all its fulness when SONS go forth in union with the Father, rather than MINISTRIES with an apostolic or prophetic office. Many Christians continue to cry out for someone great... someone like Paul, or Elijah, or John the Baptist... or like some of the great men that God raised up in the later history of the Church, But this is not the answer. The heart of God

continues to cry out for SONS... sons in nature and character like His only Begotten, who will simply walk in God.

### A Cripple For Thirty-Eight Years

A cripple for 38 years! What could this signify? Why 38 years? We have at least one outstanding clue in the Bible as to the meaning of the number 38. It was some time during the second year of Israel's exodus from Egypt that Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan to search it out, that the people might gather certain vital information concerning the nature of the land, and the strength of the enemy, before they went forth to conquer it. All agreed that the land was very fertile and productive, but ten of the spies discouraged the people because of the might of the enemy; and the children of Israel turned away in fear and unbelief. Now the spies had spent 40 days searching out the land, and by way of judging them for their disobedience and unbelief God decreed that they would wander 40 years in the wilderness. The spies had searched out the land in the second year; now in the fortieth year the old generation had served their sentence, and had completely passed off the scene:

"And the space in which we came from Kadesh-Barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them" (Deuteronomy 2:14). Thirty-eight years of hopelessness and despair! But by this time God had raised up a new generation and God was preparing them for the conquest of the inheritance. Even before they crossed over the Jordan, God would give them a little foretaste of the inheritance that lay before them; and God said to Moses: "This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble" (Deuteronomy 2:25). At that time Israel took the land of Gilead and Bashan in conquest, under the leadership of Moses, on the Eastern side of Jordan; and the land was given to Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh at their request. They were satisfied with this rich pasture land, and had no desire to go beyond the Jordan.

There are many in the Church today like Reuben and Gad and Manasseh who feel that we have gone far enough. Talk about the inheritance beyond the River in the mountains and hills of Canaan... and it is thought to be "far-out" teaching. What we have is good. Why be concerned about anything more beyond the River? Let us just camp right here on the Eastern banks of the Jordan, and seek an enlargement of what we have already received. We talk in tongues like the Pentecostals. We have gifts of the Spirit. We prophesy. We have healings. We have beautiful praise and worship. Why get excited about things "far-out" beyond the Jordan?

But the "multitude of impotent folk" still lies at the doorstep of the Church... bruised, and torn, and sick--physically as well as spiritually--and how shall we rest until we see what Jesus promised: "greater works than these that ye may marvel"?

### Greater Works Than These

Now the "greater works" are to be accomplished in the earth by virtue of the fact that the Son has returned back to the Father, and has sent forth the Spirit of God into the hearts of His people. He is the exalted Christ, the Anointed One... and now in exaltation the Oil flows down from the Head and permeates the whole Body, like the anointing oil that flowed down Aaron's beard "that went down

to the skirts of his garments." We are anointed with the "same anointing" (1 John 2:27). And with this "same anointing" we must learn to walk in the same pathway that Jesus walked in when He was here, not in emulation... but in knowing the same union with the Son that He knew with the Father. What God did in the early Church was only the beginning of the "greater works." God always reserves the "best wine" until the last; and harvest time is always more fruitful than the time of the sowing of the seed. We must yet witness in the earth the full measure of what Jesus promised just before He went away: "...and he will shew him greater works than these that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the SON quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:20, 21). Resurrection Life! Not just a future historical event, but the living Christ walking and living in the hearts of men! The early Church had a great measure of this life, as God moved mightily in glory and power. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4:10). We know there shall be a Day of Resurrection, when the dead shall "hear the voice of the Son of God" and come forth in resurrection life... but let us always bear in mind the fact that the Resurrection Life is not just an Event to take place, it is a Person who is alive, and with us today. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life..." And God would have us to walk in the glory and power of this life. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken (give LIFE to) your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). There are so many, many Scriptures in the New Testament that emphasize this Life... and we have all read them many times. But let us be assured that God will yet bring forth a powerful witness concerning this Truth, as He has done with other aspects of Truth. We know that Truth was largely lost or obscured during the Dark Ages... but God in great sovereignty began to restore Light and Truth; and as He did so He mightily confirmed the Word that He sent forth, with a mighty operation of His Spirit. Take Hebrews 6, the chapter known as the foundational truths of the Gospel. As God began to restore these foundational truths--one by one--He Himself bore witness to the Truth with a mighty manifestation of His Glory.

Repentance from dead works. From the time of the Reformation and on, there were mighty workings of God in this area, as men were caused to realize that their religious works were but "dead" in the sight of God, and profited nothing.

And of faith toward God. Repentance was the negative aspect... but this was the positive. "Faith" became a new truth in the earth... It was there in the Word, that is true... but very little of it in the hearts of men until God sent forth the Word of Faith... and nations literally rocked under the impact that God sent forth. Next in order was...

The doctrine of baptisms. There is "one baptism," but there are different aspects of the one baptism. There is the outward baptism, with water. But the real baptism is a spiritual baptism. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." This is a corporate baptism into Christ, just as all Israel was baptized unto Moses "in the cloud, and in the sea." "And have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). And so the baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes very personal and individual also. It was always there in the Word, and men read about it, and talked about it. But the time came in restoration when God gave a mighty emphasis to it, and men and women began to experience Pentecost, with its accompanying power and glory. Again, the Church was shaken... and nations were shaken, as God restored Pentecost to His people.

And of laying on of hands. This came next. It was there in the Word before, and oftentimes "laying on of hands" was practiced. But usually it was simply a case of meaningless ritual. But once again God brought it forth in might and in power, and God confirmed the truth of it to hungry hearts. And again the Church was shaken, and the earth was shaken, as God restored His gifts and ministries to hungry hearts.

And of resurrection of the dead. THIS IS NEXT! We have talked about it. We profess to have the Resurrection Life of Jesus within us... because the Bible says we have it when we receive Christ, and we believe the Word. But God will yet manifest the fulness of the resurrection Life of Jesus here in the earth. We testify to it in baptism... and as we continue to submit to the dealings of God we shall yet walk in the fulness of His Life.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Do not be discouraged if you discover, as most of us have, that this wonderful miracle of life did not immediately happen when you came up out of the water. And do not think for one moment that a second, or a third baptism... might somehow work the miracle of Life that you so desire. Just simply recognize that there it was, in baptism, that you indicated your faith in Christ, and your desire to be ONE WITH HIM. If your marriage seems to have failed, don't blame it on the wedding vows... simply recognize that you did indeed become JOINED unto the Lord, and continue to pursue that vision until this joining becomes meaningful, and vital, and real. When you walked in the waters of baptism with your Lord, you indicated your intention of becoming ONE WITH HIM in all things... now the Lord would hold you to it. Jesus prayed that it would be so: "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be ONE in us..." You testified that it was so, when you took Him in baptism. Now why do you fear to embrace the Truth of it, as God seeks to bind you to Himself, until you are indeed in total union with God?

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5). When? In the Day of Resurrection, away off in the future? True, that day will come, and we anticipate the day when this "mortality... shall be swallowed up in life." But even now He would manifest this Life WITHIN our mortality:

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is LIFE because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us... always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the LIFE also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the LIFE also of Jesus might be made manifest in our MORTAL FLESH" (2 Corinthians 4:7, 10, 11).

Because of the infirmity of our flesh we fear at times that we will never know the fulness of LIFE until our bodies are changed. And indeed in this body we "groan" yearning for full glorification. But we do not want to miss out on the experience of RESURRECTION LIFE here and now, as we fellowship in His sufferings, and know what it is for the very Life of Jesus to be "made manifest in our mortal flesh."

Union With Christ Glorifies The Father

When Jesus spoke of being ONE with the Father, the people said He blasphemed... that He was making Himself equal with God, But in fact He was NOT... "My Father is greater than I," He said, and again, "I can of Mine own self do nothing..."

In this realm God is truly glorified; for in this realm we must decrease, that He might increase. In this realm we can do NOTHING, that He alone might be the One doing ALL THINGS. In this realm we have no righteousness of our own, no truth of our own, no doctrine of our own, no ministry of our own, no life of our own. All this we must lay down. All selfish purposes and ambitions must be laid aside. All talents, gifts, and enablements must be laid on the Altar of Burnt Offering... the Altar of total sacrifice. (Remember, Ishmael must be cast out, but Isaac the beloved had to be laid on the Altar of Burnt Offering.) Henceforth we must walk only in His life, in His Truth, in His Righteousness. His purpose in our lives is all that we pursue, and doing His will becomes our highest prize. Henceforth we must live and work and minister only IN TOTAL UNION WITH HIM. The impossible requirements of the New Covenant are no longer a stumblingblock to men of faith, for they have learned that God is the God of the impossible. And once again, may we repeat the promise of Jesus that He left us just before He went away... and let us paraphrase it:

"I am telling you the truth when I say it is for your own good and well-being that I am going away... so that I who am the Truth dwelling with you, might then dwell within you... and be to you everything that I am now, as I dwell here in your very midst..."

Of course we are all quick to affirm that the Holy Spirit has come to abide within us, as God's faithful Advocate in the earth. And we are certain that He will speak only the words of Christ, and do only His works. But having affirmed this we immediately excuse ourselves for putting forth our own ideas, and formulating our own doctrines, and doing our own works... and then asking the Holy Spirit to come and help us in our worthy endeavors. When is the Church of Jesus Christ going to come to the solemn realization that we have virtually made it impossible for the Holy Spirit to fulfill the purpose for which He came into the earth: to speak only the Words of Christ, and to do only His works? When are we going to realize that when He speaks, He must speak through your lips and mine, and when He ministers, He ministers through your hands and mine, and when He walks in the earth, He walks in your feet and mine? How long will it be ere we recognize that WE ARE THE TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit? How long shall we seek to USE Him, rather than be USED of Him to do His work? How long are we going to ask Him to anoint our words, and confirm our doctrines, rather than recognizing that we have no right to our teachings... and that we are to speak ONLY what He is speaking? How long shall we go about seeking to build the Church of God with His help and encouragement, rather than realizing that He is the Master Builder of the Temple of God in the earth, and that we are simply to work together with Him, doing only what He is doing? If He came to abide in a temple made of wood and stone, then I might excuse myself for my shortcoming, and honor Him who speaks from the Oracle of the Temple. But if He comes to abide in the TEMPLE THAT I AM, then I have no choice in the matter. He must possess me through and through... because He is UNDER OBLIGATION to do nothing, to say nothing, as "from Himself"... but only what proceeds from the glorified Son of God in the heavens.

Let us continue to embrace this Glorious Truth; for once we embrace the Truth, even though it is not yet completely in our possession... we nevertheless project ourselves into a greater measure of captivity unto Him, and at one and the same time into a higher realm of liberty in Him, than we

have ever known before, for it is always true that the more captive we become to Him who has liberated us, the more freedom do we actually enjoy.

#### Another Advocate

The Holy Spirit is called "Another Advocate" ...for Jesus is the One who sits enthroned in the heavens as a glorified Man; while He, the Holy Spirit, is the One who abides in the Body of Christ in the earth. Let us not get "theological" about this. He is called "Another Advocate" only by reason of the fact that the Christ Himself is for this present time separated from us bodily; and as we are therefore TWO and yet ONE (for we are a corporate people, yet one with the Head)... so the advocate is TWO, and yet ONE. He is indeed the very same Christ that once walked the earth, but now abides within us in Spirit form. "I will not leave you comfortless," Jesus said, "I will come to you"; and in making this promise He was referring to the coming forth of the Holy Spirit to abide in His people. (See John 14:18). The Holy Spirit is therefore the Spirit of Jesus. (See Acts 16:7, RSV.) He is the Spirit of God's Son (Galatians 4:6). And as He comes to take up His habitation in the Temple not made with hands, He bears the same relationship to the Son on the throne, that the Son does to the Father. Now we are the BODY in which the Holy Spirit dwells. We are "joined unto the Lord," and are therefore "ONE SPIRIT" with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). He, the Spirit of God, being the life of the Body of Christ, makes this kind of relationship possible. It is the desire of God's heart for His own. It is part of His plan. Jesus enjoyed this intimate union... but He also said it was BETTER that He should go away, that His many brethren might also partake of this glorious relationship...

#### That They All May Be One...

"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory, which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be ONE, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in ONE: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:21-23).

The teaching so prevalent in the Church today that Christians everywhere should forget their differences and come together in one vast union has nothing to do with the fulfillment of this wonderful prayer of Jesus. What Jesus prayed for was this: that we might come into perfect union with Himself, even as He is in perfect union with the Father, and in this manner reveal the perfections and the glory of Christ in a world of sin and unbelief.

Now the Spirit of God inhabits the Body of Christ in the earth to speak and to declare what He hears the Son saying. That is why there are many, many in the earth today who are beginning to hear these words. O we have all read it many times in years gone by... and recognized it as a very beautiful prayer... something that revealed the desire of the heart of Jesus... but of course we knew it just couldn't come to pass. Then suddenly we hear the Spirit declaring it in the earth... and as we walk in the Spirit, the Voice becomes more and more pronounced, and we are compelled to say: Jesus prayed for this, Jesus declared this, the Spirit of God is declaring this... I must declare it.

What a difference it will make when the Ministry of Christ in the earth begins to sincerely and truly make this commitment: "Lord, you have declared so many wonderful things in your Word... and we

have sought to explain and to expound many things that we have read. But henceforth wilt Thou seal our lips with the words of the Son-Father Covenant, "Lo I come to do Thy will, O God." Remove from our hearts any desire to expound the Scriptures that you are not illuminating by your Spirit, or to declare mysteries that you have not chosen to unravel as yet. And may our ears be truly pierced by the circumcision of your Spirit, that we might hear only the Words that Thou art uttering direct from the throne, and then have grace and authority to declare the Truth to the sheep of Thy pasture."

"He shall not speak FROM HIMSELF, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak" (John 16:13). He shall not speak FROM HIMSELF! And because He abides in the Body of Christ on earth, and is in fact the very life of that Body, it means that the members of Christ in the earth are not afforded the luxury or the privilege of preaching and teaching from the storehouse of their study and learning, nor yet from what they have discovered in the Scriptures. It is not enough that God has seen fit to record it in the Scriptures, ...the important thing is this: "Am I hearing what the SPIRIT IS SAYING to the churches, this very moment?" It is indeed a high calling, and impossible of attainment by any human effort. But as we catch the vision of the Son-Father relationship, the bonds of this relationship will take ever-increasing control of our tongues, yea of our whole being, and our whole manner of life... so that we will speak, and declare, and work, and minister simply and only as the exalted Christ sends forth His Word by the Spirit.

This is God's standard, and God will not make allowance for anything less for the simple reason that He has made provision for the standard that He requires. Were He to make allowance for something less, then He must condone man's unbelief in the matter, which He will not do. Everything we now have from God... justification by faith, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit in their various out-workings... these were all in the realm of the impossible at one time. But when the time came for God to bring them forth into the realm of human experience, God made every provision to that end, and sent forth the Word concerning it. Then as God's people grasped the Word which He sent forth, it began to work in their hearts until it finally brought into being in the earth that which God had provided.

Today God is sending forth His Word concerning this high and holy calling of TOTAL UNION WITH HIS SON, not only as it relates to the ministry of the Word, but as it relates to the life and walk of the whole Body of Christ... and He sends forth this Word that we might embrace it, and so eventually appropriate it and walk in it. In the outworking of faith there is always a processing that takes place... and God is simply asking His people to continue to submit to His processings, and at the same time to believe and embrace His Word, until He has accomplished the desire of His own heart.

We mentioned that God does not make allowance for human failure... but He does make provision for it... and that is what the Grace of God is all about. Therefore we simply acknowledge that we have not attained to this high standard that God has in mind, and we continue to seek His face to that end. In the meantime, let us confess that we are all subject to error because of our infirmity, at times stumbling in our own ways... and God forbid that the sheep of His pasture should ever cling to any word that proceeds from our mouth that did not first of all proceed out of the mouth of God. God forbid that any of His sheep should willfully follow any one of God's ministers in any manner of behavior or teaching, that did not originate in the heart of God.

## Blessed Are The Hungry And Thirsty

Even as we speak about the purpose of ministry in bringing the people of God unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ... we recognize that there are many who feel neglected and frustrated, because they have been pressed into circumstances and situations that do not appear to have for their objective the unfolding of the character of Christ within them... And yet at the same time they feel in their hearts a tremendous longing and desire to go all the way with the Lord, and to do His will.

Then, let the people of God who are subjected to tests of this nature rest assured in the knowledge that what man or devil intends for evil, God intends for your good. And though you are longing and thirsting for the rain from Heaven that will refresh your spirit, and encourage your growth in the LORD... and still find yourself in a barren and thirsty land, a waste and howling wilderness... be assured of this: God is faithful, And He will cause His Word to descend as dew upon your life as you wait before Him. Oftentimes you may have to walk in darkness... oftentimes in isolation from your brethren. But one day, when the wilderness testing has served its purpose, and has come to an end, you will discover that what you lacked in the rain, God supplied in the dew. For there on the dew the Manna from Heaven settled while you slept, and you will gather it in the morning before the heat of the sun causes it to melt away.

## The Corporate Relationship

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### God Is Building A Temple

God is building a Temple in the earth, not made of hands, a Temple whose glory shall radiate throughout the whole earth. If ever there was a need for true God-given leadership in ministry, it is today. And if "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former"... then we may be assured that those whom God has ordained to teach, and to instruct, and to lead God's people in His ways will be as carefully chosen and disciplined of the Lord as were the leaders in any of God's former, lesser temples. It is God who chooses, and ordains, and establishes in the Body of Christ those whom he has chosen, and whom He has made ready, to lead His people into the land of their heritage. No man ever takes this honor unto himself, but God is the one who appoints accordingly to His own will; and they are sent to the people directly from the Throne. God may, or may not, use other men to designate His chosen vessels; for Joshua was designated by Moses, and Paul was designated by Ananias, and the elders of the churches were set in their place and designated by other ministers in the Church. But the office thus conferred upon such a minister proceedeth directly from the throne and not to the one whom God may have used to ordain him. Jesus Himself was designated by John the Baptist, but God put a special seal upon Him in the form of a dove from Heaven, and a voice which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Notice again, that it was the Son that God ordained, not the Messiah; and because He was ordained and designated as a SON, He knew He must walk constantly in the realm of SONSHIP, which implies total and absolute obedience unto the Father in all things. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..." (Hebrews 1:8). And again, "The word of the oath, which was since the law, APPOINTETH THE SON, who is perfected forevermore" (Hebrews 7:28). He was the Messiah, the Christ. Other Messiahs had come in their own name... others would yet come in their own name... But He is the SON-MESSIAH, which implies that God the Father remains the supreme Sovereign over all, even as the Son reigns on the throne. For when He was exalted to highest heaven, and given a name which is above every name, this was in no way a dividing of the Authority of the Godhead... it was rather a case of Christ actually BECOMING THAT AUTHORITY, sitting at God's right hand, until all enemies are subdued under His feet.

In the meantime He reigns in the midst of His enemies, and is preparing a people, making them to be a willing people in this Day of His power. (See Psalm 110.)

### Our Relationship To The Body Of Christ

As God's purposes hasten on to fulfillment, He who sits enthroned at God's right hand is literally shaking the "heavens and the earth"... and He is doing so on behalf of His people, who are partakers of His unshakable Kingdom. In the meantime, as the old order in the world and in the Church passes away to make way for the new, God does not want us to be mere onlookers, observers, standing by to see what is going to happen. Men of vision must be men of faith... they must not only see what God is doing, they must embrace it, and become involved. And then as they do, they begin to discover a new relationship in the Body of Christ that they had not known

heretofore.

Perhaps one of the first things we discover is the fact that we can no longer be a law unto ourselves. Nor can we imagine that in our own individual and personal relationship with Christ we can attain to the standard that God intended for our lives, apart from a right relationship with our brother. This is not just an arbitrary arrangement on God's part... it springs from the fact that God requires (in virtue of the infinite longings of His own heart) a BODY in which He may dwell, and through which He may express all His glorious fulness. True, He found this Body in the person of His own Son... and God found supreme delight in Him. But the love of God and the purpose of God could not stop there; and the expression of the heart of God in His own Son must find still greater enlargement in His many brethren. On the earth Jesus was indeed the very Temple of God. But now henceforth in His exaltation He would become... not the Temple, but the Chief Corner Stone of an enlarged Temple composed of His many brethren. This has therefore been the burden of the Spirit of God in the earth ever since His exaltation in the heavens... and particularly so at this present time, as the purposes of God hasten on to complete fulfillment.

Once we fully embrace this revelation there is no longer any place, nor any desire, for that spirit of individualism that has prevailed in times past, with respect to our relationship to the Body of Christ. I cannot "go it alone." I am but a member of a vast Body, and as such I have responsibilities to my brother, as I come under subjection to the Head of the Body, which is Christ. The Head rules from Heaven, and He has placed ministries in the earth, "For the perfection of the saints, for the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the Body of Christ." Therefore I am directly related to the rest of God's saints, if so be I am a member of His Body. We must not lose this vision, because our individual relationship with the Lord will depend greatly on our corporate relationship with the rest of the Body. By way of illustration let us observe:

Israel must come out of her bondage as a corporate people. The "individual" approach that Moses tried 40 years earlier could only fail; God's plan was for the whole nation.

Israel must cross the Red Sea as a nation; and in so doing they were "baptized unto Moses" as a nation, "in the cloud, and in the sea."

They must submit to the government that God ordained for them in the wilderness, as a nation. There were 12 tribes. Each tribe had their own leadership, with all the tribal heads forming a corporate leadership under Moses and Aaron.

They were judged as a nation when they refused to go into the Land of Promise... the old generation passing away, making way for a new generation that would arise to take the inheritance.

The new generation must cross the Jordan as a nation. Caleb and Joshua could not go in alone. They had to wait for the new generation that God was preparing in the wilderness.

The new generation was circumcised as a nation. It was a new circumcision, preparing them for the new land.

They must possess the land as a nation. The two and a half tribes that were content with their heritage on the Eastern side of the Jordan could not possess their heritage until the whole land had been conquered. They could not live unto themselves... even though they were distinct tribes

within the nation. God was dealing with one people. They fought their battles as one nation, attained to victory as one nation, suffered defeat as one nation. In fact, when one man sinned, God said, "Israel hath sinned," and the whole nation suffered defeat because of one man's idolatry. (See Joshua 7:1-12.)

We believe these things were written for our admonition, and for our instruction, that we might know how we are to relate to one another, as fellow-citizens of the "Holy Nation" of God.

### God's Purpose-Liberation

God is a God of order. Everything that God does, He does in order and in harmony. This is what Divine Government is all about. We need, however, to keep God's purpose in mind lest we fall into the trap of thinking that God's desire is to establish some sort of Divine Hierarchy in the earth, and that His ultimate purpose is simply Divine Government. Divine Government is rather the means. His purpose is order, and harmony, and unity... and eventually, LIBERATION. Creation is longing for liberation as she groans and travails, and her groaning is bringing forth SONS OF GOD, not kings and dictators..., not apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors and teachers...

"For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the SONS OF GOD..." (Romans 8:19). These SONS may at this present time be fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters... or they may be apostles, or prophets, or elders, or deacons... But it is in their ultimate training and disciplining as SONS that they shall become the LIBERATORS that God has in mind for a world in darkness and in bondage.

No matter what your calling may be in life (and let us all learn to accept our calling as God's calling for us, if indeed we are committed to the doing of His will)... no matter what your calling, you are not to be denied the privilege nor the responsibility of learning obedience and submission to the will of God... and THIS IS REALLY ALL THAT MATTERS, And if you deem the calling of your brother to be of a higher order than your own calling, then be assured that so also is his responsibility greater. Your calling is in the hands of God. It is really "His calling," and it is only yours because He committed it to you... and you are exhorted to "abide in the same calling wherewith you were called" (1 Corinthians 7:20). Having greater gifts and an exalted calling does not place one in a place of greater favor with God. In fact, these very things could be detrimental to one's growth unto maturity if such a one does not remain very low at the feet of Christ.

A deacon is often considered to be of little account in the things of God. His services are usually considered to relate to the physical and the temporal. But this is not so. If you take your concordance you will discover that this service also pertains to spiritual things. And of the deacon it is said that he may "purchase for himself a good degree..." because by the very nature of his office he is called to SERVE. And let us never forget, it is the SERVANT who qualifies for promotion in the Kingdom of God.

Children are usually very anxious to "grow up." But children have a wonderful opportunity to learn obedience, submission to their parents, submission to their teachers, submission to authority in general. While very young, children may learn righteousness, truth, meekness, gentleness, and childlike simplicity... qualities which are inherent to the Kingdom of God.

Wives sometimes resent their role, and oftentimes there is a longing to assert equality with the man, and to throw off her yoke of submission under the guise of "liberation." But in so doing she is actually throwing away the golden opportunity God has given her to partake of such virtues of grace, and meekness, and submission, and quietness of spirit... without which there shall be no promotion in the Kingdom of God.

The husband, on the other hand, by virtue of his calling, is ruler and head of the wife, and of the home. But the domineering man is far, far from the Kingdom of God; and unless he submits to the will of Christ, and learns humility, meekness, lowliness of mind, he will never rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom.

The employee oftentimes resents his role in life, But the employee who truly takes the place of a "servant" is said to be the Lord's FREE MAN (1 Corinthians 7:22). Once he recognizes that he is really serving the Lord, and not his earthly master... then he is indeed free, for subjection unto Christ always brings about true freedom.. And if he is accounted faithful as an employee (or a "true servant")... so shall he be accounted worthy to receive the "reward of the INHERITANCE" (Colossians 3:24).

The employer on the other hand is somewhat at a disadvantage, because he is in a place of authority. (And let us remember, being in a place of authority never qualifies one for a place in the realm of the Kingdom.) But if he truly desires to walk in Truth he too shall be made FREE, But he shall be free only as he takes his place as a "servant" (a "doulos"... a "bondslave") of the Lord! Not only so, but if he truly recognizes that he is but a "servant," he has discovered the key that will open the door into the Kingdom of God, and will also cause him to live humbly before men, and to honor and respect his servants as potential rulers in the Kingdom of God, and as he would desire his Lord to honor and respect him.

All men are not born equal... nor do all men become equal in this life... nor is this important. For all men may share equally in the New Birth, and in the Grace and Mercy of Christ, and come into a place of equal favor with God.

Once we realize of a certainty that God's purpose is for the LIBERATION of mankind, and that His calling toward us is to prepare us to that end... then it no longer concerns us whether we be an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor, a teacher, an elder, a deacon, a husband, a wife, a son, a daughter, a master, a slave, a king, or a peasant. In each and every case we are in subjection to a still higher authority, and it is in learning obedience in this realm that we may qualify as SONS OF GOD... approved of the Father, and accounted worthy to rule with Christ as co-heirs in the Kingdom of God.

#### God's Purpose--The Maturing of His People

God's purpose, then, in sending forth His ministers from the throne, is to prepare in the earth this kind of people... a people who shall come unto full maturity, even unto the stature of Christ. There is a great deal of emphasis in the Church today concerning the shepherding of the flock of God; but very often God's purpose in sending them forth to the sheep of His pasture is not emphasized. There are often vague references to the word "perfection" or apologetic interpretations of the meaning of the word. It seems to be too high an ideal to set before the people of God. But let us remember it is God's ideal, and also His responsibility to bring it into being.

Now the word "perfection" in its most common usage means "maturity." But what is "maturity"? And what is God's standard of "maturity"?

"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry..." Let us just pause here a moment: THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY IS TO EQUIP THE PEOPLE OF GOD THAT THEY MIGHT ALL BECOME MINISTERING SERVANTS TO THE BODY. And what is the ultimate purpose of "ministry" in and through the Body? "TILL we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT MAN." For the Body of Christ in its ultimate fulness is viewed as ONE PERFECT MAN IN CHRIST; and the standard is nothing less than the standard of the Living Christ: "UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST" (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

God is always faithful to send forth true leaders to bring His people into new ways in God, when the time comes for His people to enter in. And God is faithfully doing this today. That is why it is so important that the ministry, as well as the people, "hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches"... lest the ministry on the one hand assume a place of carnal authority and leadership that has no relation to what God is doing today... and lest the people on the other hand submit to such authority under the false notion that it is the highway to the Kingdom of God. The ministry must not take the place of a Mediator... for there is "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Nor is it a "husband" ministry... the relationship between the ministry and the people must never become a bridegroom-bride relationship. Rather, the ministry seeks to prepare the people to become the spotless "bride" of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The ministry has amply fulfilled its purpose in the earth if it succeeds in declaring Him, speaking about Him, and leading others into direct union with Him. And having fulfilled this Divine objective they should be willing to just "fade away," as it were (as Moses and Elijah faded away on the Mount of Transfiguration)... that the people of God might "HEAR HIM..." and see "JESUS ONLY." Moses and Elijah have an important part to play... and the ministry that is sent forth from the throne as God's gift to the Church has an important role to fulfill. But they are important for one purpose only, and that is... to bring men into closer union with Christ, where they can hear his voice, and see His face, and have personal and intimate communion with Him who is the Head. As the government of Christ increases in the hearts of His people, then the ministers of Christ must decrease. As the heart of a true son begins to mature and develop, then the servant (for God's true ministers are "servants") must be quick and anxious to loosen the ties of allegiance that somehow may have come into being as he sought to lead God's son into maturity; and encourage them to walk alone with God. (Alone, I say, because no matter how many thousands there are who are walking with you and with God... your walk with God is intended to be very individual and unique.) Ministry in the Holy Place must give way to SONSHIP in the Holiest of All, as faith must give way to Hope, as Hope gives way to Love... as the Blade gives way to the Ear... as the Ear gives way to the Full Corn in the Ear... as bondage in Egypt gives way to a walk of discipline in the wilderness... as the wilderness gives way to fruitfulness in the land of Canaan. In other words, the ministry has fulfilled its purpose if it has been successful in bringing the people of God into direct, intimate communion with the Lord.

The Inheritance Of The Individual

Divine law and order and government were very important by way of bringing Israel as a nation into the place that God desired for her: namely, liberation and fruitfulness in the Promised Land. But because God was dealing with them corporately, this in no way diminished the measure of liberty that God had in mind for each individual. The laws and rules and governments to which they were subjected were intended to safeguard and guarantee the rights of the individual to his own personal inheritance in the Land. They in no way deprived him of those rights. God always establishes and vindicates the leadership that He provides for His people; from their standpoint, their only concern is that the Sheep of His pasture be safeguarded, and their rights upheld.

One of the most fundamental of all our basic rights, whether it be in the realm of Church Government, or earthly government, is the freedom of the very heart and soul of the individual to serve God. Not only is it RIGHT for us to enjoy, it is a RESPONSIBILITY that has been granted unto us, and we cannot afford to relinquish it into the hands of any government, in the Church or in the world. It is God's abiding place alone, and it must not be usurped or handed over to any other. The forces of good and evil will continue to wage warfare in this area, and the true shepherds will take up true spiritual warfare on behalf of those who seek to retain this portion of their inheritance... they will not stand by unconcerned when others seek to take it from them.

#### Conscience, The Ear And Eye Of The Soul

A man's conscience is his own private inheritance from the hands of the Creator. See that no man or angel, no priest or bishop, no pastor or elder, no king or dictator... takes it from you. Give them your possessions, if need be; and take the spoiling of your goods with joy. Give them your fields and your vineyards... your stocks, your bonds, your houses, your lands. Give them even the labor of your hands without reward, if need be... but do not sell your conscience. For this is the jewel that God put in the heart of man when He created him in His image... a jewel that He denied all earthly beasts and creeping things. He gave it to you, because you were made in His image... and it was an impartation of Himself that would make fellowship and communion with Him possible; and it was for true fellowship and communion that He created you. With "conscience" you have an inner, inborn knowledge: for that is really what is implied in the word. Animals have "instinct"... and we marvel at the seeming wisdom and discretion that they display without their being aware of it. For with instinct they have an inborn wisdom that relates them to their environment and safeguards their very existence. But you are higher than the animals, and you have a "conscience"--which makes you aware, you know not how that THIS is right, and THAT is wrong. And when any one succeeds, knowingly or otherwise, in robbing you of this your heritage... then you are left as a ship without a rudder, a bird without a wing, a fish without fins... a man without vision. For it is in the knowledge of what is TRUTH and what is ERROR that you pursue your course of life in this world; and it is your acknowledgment and pursuit of the TRUTH that you shall be made free.

#### Is Conscience My Guide?

What we have said, of course, raises many questions: Is my Conscience to be my guide in life? Is not the Bible greater and should it not have more authority over me than my conscience? If I am fallen by nature, how can I be sure that my conscience gives me a true sense of right and wrong?

Let us get, first of all, a clear understanding of what the conscience is. According to the meaning of the word, and according to its usage in Scripture, it relates to that inward awareness and

understanding of what is good and what is evil. (Greek: "suneidesis"--a knowing with one's self--Dr. Young) Man as originally created knew only good by nature. But since the Fall he knows "both good and evil"... and ever since the FALL that inward awareness has been there: law, or no law; government or no government. It is the Law of God written in the inward soul of man... so as to either accuse him when he goes against it, or to excuse him if he refuses to violate it (Romans 2:15).

Now from the Fall even unto this day men have persisted in their evil ways, even to the defiling of their conscience... so that the compass which once pointed unerringly to the Truth no longer does so; and man has come to the place where he may call evil good, or good evil... and actually believe the lie. When men persist in their evil ways, contrary to their conscience, their conscience becomes so seared and callous that it is no longer sensitive to that inward danger signal that it used to hear so faithfully.

Man, then cannot be saved by following his conscience; nor can we say that a man's conscience is in any way a safe guide in life. Nor was it ever intended to be. It is rather that inward sense of hearing, that inward sense of vision, that inward capacity that man has to come into contact with God and the Truth. And if perchance it has become dulled or callous it needs to be quickened and made sensitive by the Spirit of God that the man, long hardened to Truth and blinded in unbelief, might be restored to a place of sensitivity. This is what happens when the Word of God comes to him in power, as a sharp two-edged sword, and challenges him with the Truth. Of course the Word of God is "above" a man's conscience, as God is "above" man, as a light of this world is "above" my vision. But without clear vision I cannot see what the light would reveal. And when a man is taught to walk in a certain pathway because of certain Church rules and regulations, regardless of the man's conscience, this would have the effect of robbing that man of the dignity that God gave him when He created him in His image. The faculty of the conscience is something deeply implanted in man... related, perhaps, to what the wise man said: "The Spirit of man is the candle of the LORD" (Proverbs 20:27). It is just a candle... but it searches out the inner thoughts and motives of the heart. It may flicker many times... it may even go out. But God put the candle there, and as the light of His Truth shines upon him and the flame is rekindled, at that very moment the man is brought face to face with a new awareness of God, and his need for God, and he is enabled to reach out and lay hold upon LIFE.

Now the Word of God does not overrule your conscience any more than we could say the light of the sun overrules your eyesight. It could, of course, blind you... if you persist in your disobedience. For Jesus said, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). But the purpose of the light is not to blind, but to give direction. And so your conscience is that inward eye that enables you to see the pathway in which you must walk... it is not your guide. God's Word alone is your guide as it is ministered to you by the Spirit. But you do not blindly follow the Truth. He quickens it to you, so that you know of a surety in your own selves, "This is the Way... I shall walk in it." You SEE it and HEAR it for yourself; otherwise it profits you nothing.

This faculty to "know both good and evil" was an awareness that came upon man after the Fall... for until he sinned he knew only good. How could he know evil when there was no evil? But that inward faculty was there by creation, and as soon as he sinned he became aware of his sin, and

sought to hide himself from the presence of God. Now as God leads us back to the image of God, that image will be of a much higher order than what Adam knew before he fell, For the first man was "of the earth, earthy; but the second man is the Lord from Heaven." Nor does God intend to bring us back to a state of innocence. The knowledge of evil becomes an inherent part of his conscience; and in the midst of all the evil and darkness that surrounds us God will have a people who have come to full maturity in Christ, whose senses are "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). In other words, He will understand clearly: This is Truth, and That is error; This is right, and That is wrong. This mingling of light and darkness... this calling good evil and evil good... this mixture of flesh and Spirit... will not always co-exist in the midst of God's people. For as the saints of God are "weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts," and partake of "solid food," they are going to have clear vision and a sure sense of direction, and will know of a surety the true ways of the Lord. Once again God is in the process of separating the Light from the Darkness, and the Light will be called DAY, and the darkness will be called NIGHT.

### Strong Meat For Full-Grown Men

Notice, then, the function of the "strong-meat" of the living Word of God. It is intended to impart within God's people that inward awareness of Truth and Error so that they themselves know where to draw the line. The "milk of the Word" will always be necessary for the nurturing of the new-born babes in the Church of God. They are spoon-fed... and no questions are in order. They simply receive it because it was given to them by one of God's "nursing" fathers (1 Thessalonians 2:7). So may the Lord help every minister who ministers the "sincere milk of the Word," that it may be that indeed... pure, and wholesome, and fresh.

But as men grow to maturity the strong-meat will cause them to have clear vision, and clear perception. Therefore the true shepherds and fathers in the Church will not seek to keep the people in a perpetual state of babyhood, but will seek to bring them into a higher and more direct relationship with the True Shepherd. He is only a true shepherd and father as he pursues this objective. May God search out the hearts of His ministers everywhere, that they might discern what their real motives are:

To lead the people of God into the liberty of true SONSHIP with the Father

or...

To keep them under control, as babes, in some form of ecclesiastical structure.

(It seems to me there is only one thing that is more pitiful to behold than a child that is mentally retarded..., and it is to see a congregation of people, who sit in the same pews week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade... with no other desire but to have their bottle of milk every Sunday morning, perhaps a little pabulum on Wednesday or Thursday night... Spiritually retarded Christians, ...and seemingly enjoying it.)

### What About One's Individual Pursuit For Liberty?

And what about a direct, personal relationship with God? This is all part of the inheritance. True, I cannot take this inheritance by my own isolated efforts, and I must recognize that there is a Divine order that causes me to relate properly to all other members of the Body of Christ. It is an Order that comes into being according to the Law of the Spirit of Life that functions in that Body; and if we

find grace to have the life of First Corinthians Thirteen thoroughly implanted within us, we will have no problem in this area. On the other hand, we also need to be reminded that our inheritance in God is something very personal and very individual... something that no earthly or ecclesiastical government may interfere with. There is law and order and government in everything that God created. But the law that governs the Body of Christ (though ministered through the lips of men) is in reality THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS, also defined as THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY. Guidance we need, and watchcare, and correction, and instruction, and chastisement. But we dare not alter the course of LIFE that God designed for each individual member of the Body of Christ. The true shepherd must guide the flock; but he does not fear to turn them loose in the open grasslands.

The Shepherd calls His own sheep by name, and the sheep knows his name, and will respond. The sheep is not just a number, one among five hundred others. He has his own name, a NAME that no other sheep knows anything about; for his relationship with the Shepherd is very special, even though the Shepherd may have ten thousand times ten thousand others in his fold.

The gardener must care for his plants, water them, nurture the soil, root out the weeds... but the whole purpose of his care over the plants is that the LIFE within will not in any way be hampered or stunted or diseased because of the adverse effects of the Curse. That is about all he can do. The Law of Life must do the rest. The gardener has no authority to alter the course of life that functions in the plant... according to the plan of God that He put there when He created it. Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). What a tremendous INCREASE we are going to see when God's gardeners are content to sow the seed... or water it... or weed the soil, and let God give the increase as He sees fit; rather than seeking to alter the course of LIFE that God designed specially for each individual member of His glorious Body!

#### The Land Of Promise

When the land had been conquered and the seven abominable nations of Canaan had been subdued, there was an immediate dividing of the inheritance. Every man was to receive his portion "by lot." In other words, God was to designate the portion that was to be allotted to each individual. It was not left to the leaders of the tribes to make decisions of this nature. He may have been used to cast the lots... but God made the decisions; for "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33). Paul tells us that God hath set the members in the Body "even as it pleased Him." They may have received their gift and calling "through prophecy, and the laying on of hands"... but this in no way altered God's intention for their life; it merely conformed it and established it with greater unction. Leadership is intended to lead the saints into their own personal inheritance in God. The True Shepherd is always seeking to bring His sheep into that individual place in God that will bring forth true liberty and fruitfulness. True, this pathway may lead to confinement at times; but after the confinement there is the enlargement. David said, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6). These "lines" defined the extent of his heritage... for God "divided them an inheritance by line" (Psalm 78:55). Paul talks about the "measure of faith" that God has distributed to every man. No individual can have all the "fulness of God." This heritage is so vast that God designed a BODY to encompass it; for only in union with the vast Body of Christ can we know and apprehend the

FULNESS and COMPLETENESS of the Christ, Having the "measure" that God apportions me does not "confine" me; for it is this "measure" that effectually joins me to the whole inheritance. "That ye may be able to comprehend (apprehend) WITH ALL SAINTS, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be FILLED WITH (UNTO) ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD" (Ephesians 3:18, 19).

But let us not be "slack" to lay hold upon that measure that God has placed within our grasp, like the tribe of Joseph. They complained that they didn't have enough. Joshua replied, "That's your own fault... go up to the mountains and clear the land... it's all yours." They said, "We can't do that... there are too many enemies..." Joshua said, "You can do it if you want to... iron chariots or no iron chariots..." Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Even now let the saints of God begin to explore the inheritance that they have in God. Shrink not back because of the vastness of it, and because of the strength and the power of the Enemy that would withstand you. And as you are enabled by His Spirit from time to time to make little excursions, into the Land... stake out your claims while you are there, and be not discouraged when the glory of His presence seems to fade away, and you feel you have lost out. No man will be able to lay hold upon the fulness of this Glory until the Body of Christ is prepared to possess it as a corporate unit. But stake out your claims! (When God reveals His Truth to your heart, lay hold upon it. Say, "Yes Lord, I believe it, and I will embrace it...."--even though it may seem to be utterly impossible.) And remember, when Caleb finally came into the Land of Promise, after 45 long years of patient waiting... he got the very land that he had walked upon and claimed 45 years earlier. God had reserved it for him. But he didn't really possess it until 7 years after they entered the Land. He was too concerned and busy helping the rest of the people find their own inheritance, than to worry about his own.

The LORD was so concerned about the individual lot of the Israelites, that when Zelophehad had no sons to carry on his name in the inheritance, it was decreed that his daughters would be entitled to the land after their father died. And lest they should marry, and the inheritance pass to another tribe, they must marry within the tribe of their father. Let us remember, "for our sakes" these things were written... for God is keenly concerned about each individual and their personal relationship and union with Himself. That is what the inheritance is all about: our whole sphere of LIFE IN GOD. For we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

No leader of the tribes, no high priest or king, has any place interfering here. When Ahab tried to take Naboth's inheritance, God punished him very severely. He was king... but that gave him no prerogatives in this area. Being king rather placed upon him a greater responsibility... to guarantee and to protect the rights of Naboth, not to take them from him. "Now ye are the Body of Christ..." And this needs to be emphasized continually. But it will never function properly as the Body of Christ until the individual members come into the borders of their own inheritance, and find themselves in a place of fruitfulness "under their own vine and fig tree." The ministries in the Body cannot define these boundaries for them. All he can do is to "cast the lot"... like Eleazar the priest. All he can do is to faithfully minister the Truth... and then as the Truth begins to lay hold upon the saints of God, individually, they shall be encouraged to reach out after God and to prove for themselves "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Every individual must be encouraged by the Word of the Lord to earnestly seek the Lord, until he finds his place in the Body

as a "member in particular." Until this takes place the Body of Christ will never amount to anything more than it is now... isolated and divided members... sitting together in the same pews, visiting a little with each other in a social sort of way, preached at from the pulpit, and keeping together as a social unit... but not a vital organism, pulsating with the Life of Christ... every man in his own inheritance in God... every one making his own contribution to the welfare of the whole Body because of a vital, personal union with his Lord.

You are not really being fair to the sheep of God's pasture if you put a halter on them, or a bit and bridle, as you would to a horse or mule. You are robbing him of his inheritance if you define the will of God for him... and he in turn (under the guise of submission and obedience) finds in you an oracle to direct his steps. A disciple such as this will discover one day, much to his own sorrow and regret, that in the simplistic manner in which he was made a disciple he was actually denied access to the very stepping-stones that God intended for his maturing... such stepping-stones as Abraham, and Moses, and David... and God's men of all ages... had to climb...

... .Stepping stones of great heart-searching, and times of perplexity and frustration, as he sought to know God's direction for his life...

... .Seasons of walking alone..., oftentimes in the night... as he called upon God and the heavens seemed to be silent...

... .Times when he sought God in earnest fastings and prayers, as he came to the crossroads... and knowing in himself that he dare not let anyone else decide for him which way he must go...

... .Long nights wrestling it out with God at his Peniel, when he was sure he saw the Face of God... yet somehow could not help but resist and fight back... until the Angel of God touched the hollow of his thigh and crippled him... and then he would not be denied... he would not let go... and God could not get rid of him...

... .And in and through it all this man came to know the Lord God... just a little more, just a little better.. .just a little more intimately than he had ever known Him before.

#### David And His Renegades

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. All kingdoms recognize this, and any division that appears in a kingdom is certainly cause for immediate alarm; and I think this has much to do with the fear that seems to be mounting higher and higher in the ecclesiastical realms... that some of God's people are getting to be just a little too free.

The fact is that God has been bringing division into the midst of kingdoms since the day kingdoms began... for the simple reason that God has an "everlasting kingdom" in mind, and any kingdom that does not give way to the everlasting kingdom is doomed to failure. It is not difficult to recognize this when it concerns the kingdoms of this world, but as Christians we find it difficult at times to recognize that God often brings divisions into the ranks of the ecclesiastical kingdoms. They are not called kingdoms, of course... we use different names... like Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian... and we just stop here for lack of space and time. But God has one Kingdom in mind, even "the Kingdom of His dear Son." The heirs of this kingdom are for the most part scattered throughout the other kingdoms... but God's plan is for "one fold, and one Shepherd." This is what the ministries are for... to gather together the scattered flocks of God.

That's why it sounds strange when some of these ministers say, "You are all right where you are... just stay in these other kingdoms... it doesn't really matter."

God's purpose in sending forth the Ministry is very clearly set forth in the Word: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: TILL WE ALL COME in (unto) the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST" (Ephesians 4:12, 13). We realize that many good brethren who have been enlightened concerning the moving of the Holy Spirit in the earth today, do not realize that God would bring them out of the old ecclesiastical structures, and we recognize that God alone must make this matter clear to them in His own way and time. But let us not labor under the delusion that somehow God is going to refashion the old ecclesiastical structures so that the new thing He is doing can be accommodated in some old wineskin that has been rejuvenated with Charismatic oil.

The King-Shepherd continues to call the sheep that are scattered upon the mountains, calling His own sheep by name, and there is a response. A new sense of hearing is coming to his chosen ones, and they are arising and coming towards their Shepherd.

So it was with David and the discouraged and the distressed who labored under Saul's dominion. It was not rebellion, or disobedience, or hatred, or lack of submission... it was simply a case of God urging them to get out. They could not be satisfied where they were. Many other dissatisfied ones remained where they were because they lacked the courage, or the vision, or perhaps both. But a handful of the brave-hearted resorted unto David, and he became a captain over them.

Now as soon as this begins to happen, there is further distress in the kingdom of Saul... and greater and greater hatred develops in the heart of Saul against David and his company. This is inevitable. But from your standpoint and mine, all we can do is gather together out of love for our David, and follow where He leads us. We will be accounted renegades and rebels by the ass-herder Saul, but we must remember that God's Anointing is still there in many of these old kingdoms of the house of Saul, and we have no part in trying to tear down the old as we see God making way for the new. (It will disintegrate of its own accord.) We just want to associate with brethren who have caught the vision of what God is doing... and God forbid that we should rejoice over any distress that may come into the ranks of those who remain in the old ecclesiastical order. Many even now are at the cross-roads... what shall we do? All we can say is, "Hear the Shepherd's Voice..." and when He speaks, have courage to follow at His call. You are not being rebellious, nor are you rising up against established authority, if He who is the Author of all Authority has called you to move forward with Himself.

#### A Solemn Lesson From A Misguided Prophet

This is a rather tragic story. It is the story of a prophet of God who had a clear Word from God, but acted contrary to it on the advice of another prophet. He had been sent to Bethel out of Judah to cry against the idolatrous practices of King Jeroboam, and his prophecy was confirmed right before his eyes. As the king who resisted him reached forth his hand, his hand shrivelled, and the idolatrous altar split asunder, pouring the ashes on the ground.

But there was another prophet of God living in Bethel at the time, and naturally when he heard about all that had happened, he wanted to have a little fellowship with the man of God who came

from Judah. So he saddled the ass and went down to meet the Judaeen prophet, who had already started for home by another route, as the Lord had commanded... and sought to bring him back home for lunch. "But I can't do that," said the prophet from Judah, "Because God told me not to eat bread or to drink water in this place, and not to return home by the same road." "But wait a minute," said the old prophet of Bethel, "I am a prophet too, and God told me to bring you back for some lunch, and to have a little fellowship." So the prophet from Judah went back. And as they sat at the table the WORD of the Lord came to the old prophet of Bethel, and he cried out: "Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers" (1 Kings 13:21, 22). The prophet of Judah then went on his way, and shortly afterwards a lion sprang out of the bush and slew him... tragically fulfilling the true prophecy of a lying prophet.

These things may sound strange to our ears; but God wants us to know that when He speaks to your heart and mine, and we know it is the LORD... there is no prophet, no apostle, no priest, and no king that has authority to change what God has made clear to you. Counsel and fellowship with one another is good and profitable... and we are to "submit" ourselves one to another as we recognize the voice of the Lord... but the will of God for your life is part of your own individual inheritance from God; and when God indicates His will for you, no man has any right to intrude into this holy place.

#### A Lesson From A Righteous Prophet

What we have mentioned might indeed be considered to be a very extreme situation... and we do not anticipate things like that happening among true brethren. This may be so; but you and I have a personal responsibility in the matter, to pursue the will of God for ourselves, and this does not depend on whether the apostle or prophet that I am in fellowship with is true or false. In either case, when God indicates His will for you, this is final. Let us learn a lesson from Jeremiah, and his dealings with the Rechabites.

By the Word of the LORD Jeremiah went down to the house of the Rechabites, brought them into one of the chambers of the Temple, set wine before them, and said to them: "Drink ye wine..." He wasn't laying a trap for them... he was simply doing what God told him to do. But the Rechabites had other convictions. God knew this; but we have no reason to believe that Jeremiah knew anything about it. It must have been quite a test for these men, for they certainly recognized Jeremiah as a man sent from God, and did not hesitate to come to the Temple when the man of God asked them to do so. What would they do then about this command? Perhaps somewhat apologetically, but without hesitation, they replied: "We will not do it..." and they explained why. Their father had taught them among other things to leave wine alone. They were grown men now, and on their own--but they still respected the teaching they had received from their childhood days.

Then, after the Rechabites had refused to go along with the prophet, the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah again saying, "Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD..." Then he went on to show how one godly man had so instructed his sons in the ways of righteousness that his sons embraced it, and clung to it, and nothing could shake them from their convictions... not even the Word of the

LORD through Jeremiah... whereas God had been rising up early and sending the prophets to His people, saying, "Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings... but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." (See Jeremiah 35:13-15.) Let us notice the end of the story. God pronounced a blessing on the house of the Rechabites for all generations to come, for their courage and their stalwart stand for what they believed was RIGHT. And we may conclude, as a result of this blessing, that there must be somewhere in the earth today descendants of the Rechabites who are serving the Lord Jesus Christ... and it can be attributed to the fact that many centuries ago a man by the name of Jonadab taught his sons in the ways of truth, and they in turn had the courage to disobey the prophet of the LORD who unwittingly gave commands that were contrary to their convictions.

### Freedom To Do The Will Of God

Now this matter of knowing the will of God and doing it is one of the most vital of all aspects of Truth in the Word of God. For "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17). It is very important then to have the assurance that we are doing the will of God, and we cannot allow anything to come in between that would hinder us from pursuing the fulness of God's intention for our lives. I may receive help from my brethren in this area, as we have fellowship together. I may know of faithful men in the ministry that will give good counsel and advice. But in the final analysis we all must "prove, what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2). Notice that there is progression in this realm also: (1) That which is GOOD. (2) That which is ACCEPTABLE (or rather, WELL-PLEASING). (3) That which is PERFECT. You and I may be in the will of God now. But we cannot settle for that. There must be a going on into perfection in this area also... as God leads us from one phase of his dealings to another, and as we partake more and more of His nature and character. And let us remember that the will of God is primarily a SPIRITUAL LOCATION IN GOD, and not a geographical location. True, as we walk in His will it is important that we find ourselves in that particular geographical location that God would have us to be... but this is only incidental. To be spiritually located in the Land of our Inheritance, is most important... and from then on the earthly and the material matters relative to the will of God find their proper sequence.

We mentioned that the individual in Canaan received his inheritance "by lot." But this did not imply that it was a game of "chance." This was God's way of assuring you and I that He alone can choose and ordain the pathway in which He would have us walk. That is really what is meant by the word "predestination." He marks out beforehand the whole sphere of life pertaining to His chosen ones. The "lot" is cast... and so much of our life seems to be mere "chance," but God is faithfully preparing the way before His own... having in mind, and having for His objective, nothing less than conformity to the image of His Son. The "lot" that was cast was not a set of dice, or something of that nature. It was something God ordained... and no doubt refers to Urim and Thummim, that unknown something called "LIGHTS AND PERFECTIONS" that were in the breastplate of the High Priest. This precious gift of God would give unerring, infallible direction according to the will of God. The High Priest was only the minister whom God used to place his hand over these precious gems... or whatever they were. (We do not even seek to know what they were... for the "secret of the LORD" is to them that fear Him, and God has deliberately shrouded these precious provisions of His grace in secrecy, as a fitting type of the hidden wisdom and knowledge and mind of the Lord that He imparts to those who love Him and walk with Him in the

secret place.) And if, perchance, there was disobedience on the part of the one who sought counsel from the LORD... then even the Urim and Thummim gave no answer, and the High Priest was helpless to do anything about it.

It is absolutely necessary for any man or woman who sincerely desires to go on with the LORD, to walk in obedience before Him, and in the light of His Word, in personal union with Christ. Get what help you can from this minister or that, from this brother or that... but the true shepherd will seek to illumine the Urim and Thummim in your own spirit that you might be able to say for yourself: "This is the Way, I must walk in it." Fellowship and union with our brethren in the Body of Christ does not, cannot, take the place of this inward awareness and consciousness of God's desire for you.

#### Paul Set His Face As A Flint

The apostle Paul had clear direction from the Lord. He was to go to Jerusalem to attend one of the feasts of the Jews; and then after that he was to see Rome. We read, "Paul purposed in the spirit (it could have been written 'Spirit') when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). As he went on his way in ministry, he left Ephesus, passed on through Macedonia, then on to Greece, back again through Macedonia... stopping here and there on his return trip home... pressed in his spirit to get to Jerusalem. All along the way, in just about every city where he ministered, there were prophecies and utterances to the effect that he was heading straight for imprisonment and trouble. As he talked to the elders of Ephesus who had come down to Miletus to receive a parting word from the man who had given them such tremendous help and encouragement, he reminded them: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit (Spirit) unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide (await) me" (Acts 20:22). But none of these things moved him... he knew that all these things were part of the "course" that he must finish, and the ministry that he must fulfill. The Lord had already shown him in times past "how great things he would suffer for His Name's sake."

When he landed at Tyre, and gathered with the disciples, the same thing occurred again. The Spirit revealed that he was heading for trouble if he went to Jerusalem. The disciples said to Paul "through" the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). It was their own good counsel, but it was "through" the revelation that they had received by the Spirit that Paul was heading for trouble. The next stop was at Caesarea, and here it was that a prophet of God shows Paul very clearly by sign language that he would be bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Again there were all kinds of good counsel: from Luke, from the disciples of Caesarea, and others of Paul's company... perhaps Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timotheus, Tychicus, and Trophimus. (These men had been with him earlier on the trip, and some of them at least may have accompanied him to Jerusalem) "Don't do it Paul... God has warned you what is going to happen." They wept, as they tried to persuade him to pay heed to all the warnings that he had received along the way. But Paul answered, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). And how did the brethren respond to this? "We ceased, saying, THE WILL OF THE LORD BE DONE." After all their good advice and counsel had been rejected, they finally had to confess that Paul was doing the will of God. And what did the Lord Himself have to say about it all, after Paul began to enter into his troubles, which he might have avoided had he taken the counsel

of the brethren? "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). This is exactly what the Spirit had impressed upon Paul months earlier: "I must go to Jerusalem... after that I must see Rome." (Some, of course, will argue to this day that Paul was wrong in not yielding to the other brethren, because of all the trouble he got into. But these troubles were all part of God's plan for this man of God who was called upon to suffer "great things" for His Name's sake. And out of these sufferings there has come forth the great Church epistles of the apostle Paul some of which were penned in a prison cell in Rome... but released to the Church of his day, as well as to the Church of every generation thereafter... epistles of truth which we would not have if the apostle Paul had yielded to the well-meaning but misguided counsel of his brethren.

It is right and proper to be yielding and submissive and cooperative with fellow ministers in the Body of Christ. But there is a place where you have to stand alone, and resist every brother and every minister who would seek to hinder you from walking in the pathway that God has clearly defined before your eyes.

## New Wine In New Wineskins

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There are a lot of songs and a lot of teaching today about the new thing that God is doing... and the new wine that God is bringing forth to His people.

But what about the new wineskins for the new wine? "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles (wineskins); else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish" (Luke 5:37).

However it is not too difficult to discern in the midst of the joy and rejoicing of the new thing that God is doing... a desperate attempt to keep the old wineskins from bursting at the seams. New Wine... Renewal... Restoration... Revival... Refreshing... Glossolalia... Charismatic... and all this in old wine-skins. No wonder there is an attempt to strengthen the seams, and to patch the cracks in the old structures, and a warning to the sheep to follow their shepherds... because if something is not done about it, it would appear that the whole thing might crack wide open, and the new wine may be lost.

Jesus has already warned us what would happen if we try to renew the old forms with the New Life of the Spirit. It can only be for a short season... the old forms will just disintegrate, and the wine is lost...

What, then, are we going to do about it? The same thing, I would suggest, that we did before God began bringing forth the new wine. Recognize that the old forms are no longer adequate, and seek God earnestly for the new provision and the new way that He has in mind for His people.

When God does a "new thing" in the earth it is really a progressive unveiling of what He had in mind from the beginning, but it is something NEW in manifestation in the earth. We always have those that resist anything "new"... they say God never does anything "new" that He hadn't done before. True, we have the SEED of everything that God would ever bring forth away back in time... even as far back as "Genesis." But in the outworking of His purposes there are constantly new horizons, new workings, new temples, new forms and structures, new workings of His Spirit... as He leads His people out of bondage and into the fulness of New Creation Life. "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth" (Isaiah 42:9, 10).

### There Is A New Song

God is declaring "new things"...and every time God declares a "new thing" there is a "new song" that accompanies that declaration. The new song of the Spirit that is being sung throughout the earth today is not the work of a few good musicians whose talents have found a new expression (though some might seek to capitalize on it)... but the new song of the Spirit is an accompaniment to the "new thing" that God is declaring concerning His people.

"O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth..." (Psalm 96). It is the song that God gave David at the time of the dedication of the Ark of God on Mount Zion... and it

concerned the "new thing" that God was doing then. But it was really prophetic of the "new thing" that God is doing now. It is the song of His Glory, the song of His Kingdom, the song of His righteous judgments in the earth.

### There Is New Expectation

When Jesus was about to appear the first time we are told that all men were in "expectation." God puts that expectation there, because the brooding of the Spirit of God upon His people arouses that new life that is within the shell. The embryonic bird within the shell has that cramped, pressed feeling. It feels hampered, and hindered... and somehow knows there is something better... but it cannot see what it is. It is the Spirit of Life within that causes this cramped, pressed feeling... and the longing to be free is something that God puts there as He seeks to draw us into a realm of greater liberty and greater understanding of His ways and of His Truth. Without that longing, and that continual pecking away at the shell... we can never come into the liberty and joy of the new life. This continual pressure against the shell will eventually crack it wide open, but God is not in the least concerned about that. The shell was only intended as a protection against the elements during the formative stages of our growth. Necessary then... and perhaps for a while longer... but no longer necessary when the bird is fully formed, and comes forth in new life. Let us not get too concerned about the outward forms and framework of Church life and activity, or consider that all is lost when it begins to disintegrate. When the shell has been discarded, there is something else to take its place.

And what is that? A nest has been prepared to house the little birdlings, to shelter them from the elements as they are fed and nurtured and grow into maturity. But the nest, too, is just a temporary thing... for as the Law of Life continues to function in the growing bird, the old nest takes on less and less meaning. In fact, it is not long until it too becomes a cramped, dull, boring place to live. What is it that causes the bird to continue on, expectantly, in spite of the constant change, and the pressures they feel as they become more and more mature? It is the Law of Life within, which in turn produces new hope and new desire to be FREE. And so before long the nest itself, once a symbol of rest and security... becomes meaningless, and suddenly the bird begins to realize why there was so much discontent with the old forms and rituals that were associated with life in the shell and in the nest. Suddenly the bird discovers its true element... in the pure, unclouded atmosphere above. And now it begins to soar into its new environment... forever delivered from the shell and the nest, but moving in perfect order, and under perfect law (even the Law of Life)... and also IN PERFECT HARMONY WITH THE WHOLE CREATION OF GOD.

Let us not be too worried about the cracking of shells, and the tearing apart of nests. (On the other hand, you and I must not meddle with it either.) God has something NEW for His people; something far beyond anything we have known in Church life. No man has the pattern for it. The Great Architect and Builder alone knows the pattern, and the Holy Spirit (God's "Advocate" in the earth with His people) will bring it into glorious manifestation in His own way and in His own time. In the meantime let us continue to abide "under the shadow of the Almighty," even under the shelter of His wings. And be assured that if God permits the shells and forms of our Church activities to disintegrate, it is because He has something far better in mind, In His Divine ultimate, all God wants in the earth is a people BORN of the Spirit, FILLED with the Spirit, and WALKING in the Spirit.

## There Is A New Crossing Over

First there was the crossing of the Red Sea, bringing the chosen people out of the bondage of the land of Egypt. But now there must be another crossing. Coming out of Egypt did not take Egypt out of them. The wilderness was intended to do that, if they submitted to God; not merely the "wilderness" as such, but God's dealings with them in the wilderness. But the older generation did not come to know God's ways, and the character of Egypt lingered with them to the end: The new generation, however, would go in all the way. For them there was to be a moving beyond the shell of wilderness life, into new realms of Canaan life. The priests of the LORD were to carry the ark forward, step by step into the Jordan, and stand in the bottom of Jordan while the people marched across. The people were very closely identified with the ministry... but only insofar as the ministry CARRIED THE ARK OF THE COVENANT. "When ye see the ARK OF THE COVENANT of the LORD your God, and the priests of the Levites BEARING IT, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it ("not them")" (Joshua 3:3). No man could look ahead of him and say, "Isn't Eleazar a wonderful priest! I'm sure if I follow Eleazar I'll make it!" Another couldn't say, "I've got every confidence in Ithamar... I'm going to be his disciple... I'm sure he would never lead me astray." The fact of the matter is, the Israelites could scarcely see these men, because they were at least half a mile down the road. All they could see was a CLOUD OF GLORY hovering over the Ark of the Covenant, and perhaps very faintly a company of moving objects that one would suppose were ordinary men. God warned the people that the priests and the ark were to be about 2,000 cubits on ahead of them SO THEY COULD SEE WHERE THEY WERE GOING. Do you realize that a lot of people in this day and hour who are excited about the "new thing" God is doing, do not really know where they are going because they are following flat on the heels of their idol-ministers? Only the sight of His GLORY can lead you and I in the right way. And besides, if Phinehas or Ithamar happen to stumble a bit, or carry on a bit of theological conversation that is really not relevant to the journey... nobody is caused to stumble because all they can see is the GLORY, and all they can hear is the Word of the LORD: "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you... Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan..."

Surely God had disciplined the new generation, as He is seeking to discipline the new generation in our day. And one of the things that we must learn by hard discipline is that no man is anything, and no apostle or prophet is anything, and no pastor or teacher is anything... EXCEPT AS HE BEARS THE GLORY OF GOD UPON HIS SHOULDERS. And when the people began to cross over the Jordan, instead of stopping along the way to admire Eleazar and his wonderful sons who stood in the bottom of the river... they marched right on by, and left them standing there alone... and the people of the Lord entered into Canaan FIRST, even before the priests did! The priests, in the meantime, stood in the place of DEATH... perhaps they recalled how Nadab and Abihu had offered up strange fire before the LORD, and were consumed right on the spot. Here they stood in the place of DEATH... the waters piled high on each side of them... any moment they could be swept away if they were not diligent to obey the Word of the Lord.

Says Paul, "But we had the sentence of DEATH in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). And again, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death..." (1 Corinthians 4:9). And again, "For we which Live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be

made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:11, 12).

It is only as the ministry stands in the place of DEATH IN CHRIST, that the people of God may arise to walk in newness of life.

#### There Is A New Circumcision

The old generation had been circumcised, but the new generation that was born in the wilderness had not been circumcised. Circumcision signified a cutting away of the flesh... and the new generation must enter the land completely cut away from the old life of Egypt. They still carried the "reproach of Egypt"...which they inherited from their fathers. The old life still clung to them. The old generation couldn't shake it off, because they did not have the vision of the Land of Promise. How desperately men have tried to disentangle themselves from the old ways, the old habits, the old lusts... only to find themselves after every prayer meeting, after every deliverance meeting, after every visitation of His presence--much the same as they were before. We are not denying that we may experience a very sudden and a very definite work of the Spirit in our lives; but there is no such thing as "instant perfection." If there is not a heart that is open unto God, and desirous of going all the way with Him, even into the very fulness of the Life of Christ... sooner or later the old life will reappear, and will linger on.

But God has for His people a "new circumcision," to prepare us for a new life in God, and to "roll away the reproach of Egypt." Old Testament circumcision has its counterpart in New Testament baptism. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11, 12), But just as the REAL circumcision was an inward work, rather than an outward ordinance (Romans 2:29; Deuteronomy 10:16); so the REAL baptism goes far beyond the ordinance itself, and is in reality that inward work of the Spirit which completely cripples the old life, and nullifies the deeds of the flesh "by the circumcision of Christ." I think most of us are willing to admit that our experience in water baptism did not bring us into the reality of the Resurrection Life of Jesus. Nevertheless we testify to the fact in baptism; and we really must continue to embrace the truth of it until it becomes REALITY within us. And as the Body of Christ becomes vitally identified with the sufferings of Christ, we are going to experience also the power of His Resurrection Life.

Here they stood, a whole army of young men, on the Western banks of the Jordan... completely crippled because of the circumcision, and helplessly exposed to their enemies. Yet the fear of God was on the inhabitants of the land, and they were completely terrified. We must yet discover that it is in our absolute weakness and nothingness that we may expect to enter into the power and strength of His resurrection life, and he clothed upon with the whole armor of God.

#### There Is A New Food

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land" (Joshua 5:12). The manna was a wilderness food, intended to prepare them for Canaan. It was sufficient for their every need in that realm. It was "spiritual" bread because it was given by God, to prove them, to try them, and to cause them to hunger... so that they might "know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD..." (Deuteronomy

8:3). The wilderness was a necessary area of discipline, by which God would prepare the people for life in Canaan. It was not intended as punishment, but as preparation. (It became punishment to those who refused to enter the Land, but it was preparation for those who would.) The manna which could not satisfy their appetite was intended to cause them to hunger after God. But for Canaan living they needed the "old corn of the land." In other words, it was "corn of the storehouse." It was PREPARED for them, and it grew right there in the Land. The Land speaks of our whole sphere of life in Christ in the heavenly realm... in the abiding realm of the Spirit. In the wilderness we remained in parched and dry places... with every provision for our need... but never really going anywhere, and never coming into anything permanent in God. Manna from above... water from the rock... healing when we needed it... the Cloud of His Presence in our midst to guide us and to protect us. But it still left us hungry and dissatisfied... or we should say, unsatisfied. In the Land we come into a prepared place... there is nothing in this realm that we can do by our own efforts. It is entirely the work of the Spirit; and because we are in union with the Spirit we are in union with the Son... doing only as He is doing... speaking only as He is speaking... thinking only as He is thinking. It is a place where we constantly ABIDE in the realm of the Spirit... flowing streams. brooks of water... fruitful vines and fig trees... corn and wheat and honey... houses built that we did not have to build, orchards planted that we did not have to plant. What a glorious day when the Body of Christ begins to enter into her heritage, and God's people begin to realize that we no longer work for God (for we are "co-workers with Him")... and we no longer launch crusades and programs for God... and we no longer build New Testament churches... and we discover that what God has in mind for His people has already been prepared by the Spirit of God in the earth, and we simply become JOINED UNTO HIM, and ABIDE IN THE LAND!

Jesus lived in this realm constantly, and in doing so He has shown us the Way... rather, He has BECOME the Way. That is why there was never any frustration, anxiety, or perplexity as He did the will of God. Everything was PREPARED. Of course, this was no push-button type of life... even for Jesus. He had to wait before God... pray long hours on the mountainside... learn obedience through the things He suffered... bear the reproach of walking alone, and going against the established order of the day. But all this was the FOOD of His inheritance. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of..." Then, as the Father showed Him what He himself had prepared, the Son walked in it, and immediately the plan and purpose of God took on visible form and manifestation in the earth, and the Scriptures were fulfilled. How vastly different from the old ways of the Church, where we have taken the Scriptures and tried to make them work!

Of course, when God's people walk in this Way they will be recognized by the religious order as a strange, peculiar people... as it was with Jesus, If He would do the Father's will... then He must leave the big meetings, and go out of His way to talk to a woman in need at the Well of Samaria. It meant ignoring the pleas of His very close friends, as they implored Him to come and heal their brother Lazarus who was sick. It meant healing a man on the Sabbath Day... when He could just as well have waited till the next day so as not to antagonize the religious order of the day. It meant staying away from Jerusalem during the feast days, when He might have gone there as a miracle worker, and made a name for Himself. It meant setting His face to go to Jerusalem at the wrong time... when everyone knew that it would mean certain death. In short, it meant choosing the Cross according to the will of God, rather than taking His proper place as the Messiah. But He walked in the realm of a PREPARED LIFE... prepared by the Father, and as the Father showed

the Son what He Himself was doing, these things did the Son likewise. Men only saw the visible form that came into being, and marvelled at His miracles, at His wisdom, at His teachings, at all the wonderful works that He performed. But the Father simply showed the Son what He Himself was doing in the realm of the Spirit; and because the Son was abiding in the Father, He simply walked through the Land that God showed Him, and brought into open manifestation what the Father had already accomplished.

It is not to be our concern, then, to establish New Testament Churches, and Church Government, or to get involved in any other good and worthy causes. This is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, God's Advocate in the earth... to bring to pass in the earth what the Advocate at God's right hand has decreed. Whatever God has in mind will come into being in beautiful perfection, as we come into the Land, and partake of the "old corn," and WALK IN THE SPIRIT. That is why we pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven..." His kingdom is sure, and steadfast, and very REAL... but it is IN THE HEAVENS. Our prayer is that it take on manifestation in our lives, and throughout the Body of Christ, and eventually in the whole earth.

### There Is New Leadership

We might have mentioned this first in our list of "new things"... but we purposely left it till the last. For though Joshua was the new leader, and was appointed by Moses to succeed him after his death... Joshua must discover, just prior to the full-scale attack on the enemy that a greater than Moses, and a greater than Joshua, was to become the real leader.

God had already told Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people..." (Joshua 1:2). Moses' ministry was great and mighty, but he was identified with an old generation that would not obey God; and when his ministry was finished, and the new generation was ready, God removed him to make way for new leadership under Joshua. With great authority and power Joshua, the new leader, began to show the people the ways of the LORD, and to prepare them for this new day that was before them. God vindicated Joshua on every hand, and Joshua was magnified in the eyes of the people.

But before Joshua could begin the conquest of the Land he had to learn that having the Authority of God was not sufficient. He must learn that... after all was said and done... He was not really the new leader.

One day as Joshua was surveying the strongholds of Jericho, contemplating ways and means of taking the Land.., he noticed a strange personage standing nearby with a clenched sword in his hand. Boldly Joshua walked toward him and asked, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Joshua was in charge of the armies of Israel. What was this fellow doing there with a drawn sword in his hand? But the answer came back with a sudden rebuke: "Nay; but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:14, 15).

"Dear Lord, grant unto Thy servants everywhere, whom Thou hast chosen to lead your people into the new realms of our heavenly heritage, such a direct, open confrontation with Thyself, that they shall know of a surety that Thou, O Lord, art alone responsible as the Captain of our Salvation,

and as the Builder and Architect of your Church, to bring your people into the inheritance that Thou hast prepared for them. And grant that these Thy servants might be quick to remove the shoes from off their feet, that henceforth they might walk only in the shoes of Another. For only then will their leadership be valid. And only then will your people be assured of total victory."

#### What About The New Structure Of The Church

If there is to be a "new wineskin" for the "new wine"... what are we going to do about it? Let us just remind God's people everywhere that God will be as Sovereign in bringing forth the new wineskin as He was in bringing forth the new wine, and we do not have to meddle with it in any manner whatsoever. May we be openhearted before the Lord and come to realize for a certainty, that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in His Body as the living Presence of Christ Himself--not just to influence His servants with certain gracious impulses that will inspire them to fulfill the Word of God, but that He is indeed the SOVEREIGN LORD OF THE CHURCH. No matter how sincere the ministers of Christ may be, they are not going to persuade Him that they have the right pattern for the New Testament Church order, and that He should therefore come forth and crown their efforts with His blessing. The "Glorious Church" that Christ is bringing into being is as far different from the New Testament Church as the pumpkin fruit is from the pumpkin seed. True, they are one and the same in POTENTIAL. But in the formation of the pumpkin there are functions and laws that come into operation that were not relevant to the sprouting of the seed under the ground, or the formation of the flower on the vine. And yet in and through it all there is ONE LAW that remains in constant operation, and without any remission, namely, the LAW OF LIFE.

Now Christ was the true Seed, because He was the Word; and the Harvest is the end of the age, as Jesus said. So we may rest assured that we are now in the hour of the formation of the FRUIT. There has been ONE LAW functioning in the Body of Christ from its earliest beginnings until this day, namely, "The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." But throughout the whole process in these past 2,000 years there has been a continual changing of the form and structure of the plant itself; and all this has been entirely consistent with the LAW OF LIFE. True Life cannot submit to any kind of stereotypic pattern. And yet from almost the very beginnings of Church life, and right on through her long history... in times of apostasy and in times of refreshing and restoration... we have had Church leaders getting together and trying to maintain forms and structures that they feel Christ instituted in the beginning, or restoring others that were lost. In the midst of it all, the Spirit of God who is Sovereign Lord of the Church and Vicar of Christ on earth, simply ignores the efforts of men, and moves right on to perform exactly what the Son in Heaven has purposed.

Now we have come to the day of Harvest, and the "glorious Church" that God promised is about to come into being. Men continue to go about establishing patterns of government and Church structure that they feel they have discovered in the early Church, and therefore must be reinstated, And the Lord of the Church simply ignores it all, and moves on to fulfill what He has in mind. For every gardener knows that when that little pumpkin begins to take shape on the vine, he does not have to take some old discarded pumpkin shell and place it carefully over the little bud that has begun to form. to make sure it will know what shape it is supposed to take as it gets bigger and bigger. Somehow, the gardener knows that if he just waters it, and weeds the soil... and perhaps does a little pruning here and there... somehow he discovers that the pumpkin will take on beautiful form and structure without his tampering with it in any way. And he fully expects that the

fruit of the harvest will be far more glorious than the seed which he planted... and so entirely different, that he couldn't begin to compare the two.

How can he be assured of this? It is really quite simple. He knows that the whole process is governed by THE LAW OF LIFE IN THE SEED. The seed must fall into the ground and die. He does not worry about that. He is prepared to allow the form of the seed to go into decay and disintegrate... he has confidence that whatever God's intention was when He made the seed, will come forth in beautiful manifestation in the FRUIT... yet far more glorious and more beautiful than the little kernel that was planted under the ground. Once we see this, we cease to worry about forms and patterns of Church structure; for then we are assured that Church government, as well as the framework and structure of Church life, is just as much subject to spiritual change and growth as any other aspect of the Kingdom of God. For God certainly gave us a pattern Son, but He never at any time gave us a pattern New Testament Church. However we do have in the New Testament God's intention for the ultimate New Testament Church, and it will yet come into being.

"That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Now the Corinthian Church is by no means a pattern Church... but in Paul's letters to the Corinthian Church we do have the seed of God's intention!

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2). The Church at Philippi is not the pattern Church... but in Paul's epistle to Philippi we do have the seed of God's intention!

"...To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD" (Ephesians 3:19). The Church at Ephesus is not the pattern Church... but in Paul's letter to Ephesus we have the seed of God's intention!

"...That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH" (Ephesians 5:27). Again, we have the seed of God's intention!

"...Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not... he that doeth righteousness is righteous, EVEN AS HE is righteous" (1 John 3:6, 7).

"...He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love MADE PERFECT..." (1 John 4:16, 17).

There it is in the Seed! And we could go on, and on, and on declaring God's intention as it is revealed in the Seed. It is not there in fulness in any New Testament Church, but it is there in the Seed! Therefore, rather than attempting to reconstruct the pattern of the seed, God's plan is that we simply PLANT the Seed in the hearts of men, if so be God will grant them grace to receive it and believe it, and embrace it... and then allow God to bring it forth in the fulness of time, in the fulness of His purposes, and in the glory and beauty of New Creation Life.

Let God's ministers everywhere save themselves the trouble and the frustration of trying to establish a New Testament Church in their community or anywhere else in the earth. God has something in mind far beyond anything we can imagine, or even contemplate. Every desire of God that He has expressed in the New Covenant will come to pass... for the New Covenant is simply

the New Will that Jesus left for His people, and ratified it by His death on the Cross. The glorified Christ is now the Mediator of that Covenant, And the Holy Spirit is in the earth to be to the Church of Christ EVERYTHING that Jesus was when He was here, and to establish in the earth what the Son has decreed in the heavens.

Let us not approach the New Covenant as something we consider God has delegated to us, to mediate in the earth. We are simply to minister it, and declare it... as faithful ministers of the New Covenant. For as we come to recognize that the New Covenant is not just a compilation of apostolic letters and injunctions, but in reality a CREATIVE WORD that goeth forth out of the mouth of God, then you and I are relieved of any responsibility other than this: to walk in the Spirit, and to declare the Word that proceedeth alive and creative out of the mouth of God.

We are talking about what God is doing. We are talking about God's New Creation. We are talking about a Living Christ building a Living Temple, and breathing His own life into it, as truly as He breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam... only on a much higher plane...

For the first Adam came from the earth... dust of the ground... and God breathed into him a life, soul-life, that would be sustained from the ground from which he came.

But the last Adam came from Heaven..., became a "Life-Giving" SPIRIT... He has "life in Himself"... and the power to impart it to others.

If we are assured that we are born of Adam, and have inherited his life, his soulish life... and the death that comes with it...

Is it too much for us to believe that if we are born-again in the Last Adam, we have inherited His Life, His Spirit-Life, and that His Life will yet come forth in the fulness of His image in His people?

## The Lamb-Shepherd

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"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed (shepherd) them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

### The Purpose Of Ministry

The purpose of all ministry that proceeds from the exalted Christ is to so minister the Truth that the sheep of God's pasture might come into direct, unhindered personal union with the Lord. Ministers of the New Covenant are not to be "mediators"--as Moses was, or as Jesus is. They are rather "servants" (Greek, "doulos" or "bond-slave") Slaves have no right to call anything their own... not even the ministry that God gave them. In another analogy they are "stewards" of God's household (1 Corinthians 4:1). They are particularly responsible to reveal God's "mysteries"--or God's secrets--to the members of God's household. It is simply a trust that has been given into their care. They make disciples for Christ, but they must have none of their own. Having fellowship is something else; for in fellowship there is communion, sharing, giving and receiving, ..And the true minister will discover that unless he receives spiritual nourishment from the people, he cannot minister spiritual nourishment to them. In still another analogy, God's ministers are gardeners; those who plant the seed, or those who water the growing plant, or those who reap the harvest. They must not meddle with the seed, or with the growing plant. God is the real Husbandman, and He it is that giveth "the increase." "So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

The "fathers" in Gods family are something like Joseph was to Jesus. He was given the responsibility of providing for the child Jesus until He came of age... but Joseph knew he was not really the father. Paul likened himself to a father... to the Corinthians... to Timothy. But he did not meddle with their relationship to Christ. His purpose was that he might present the Church "as a chaste virgin"... unto Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

So it is with the "shepherds." There has been too much "possessiveness" among the shepherds concerning God's sheep. They cannot rightfully say, "my sheep," "my flock," "my church." It is not something they build, and it is not something they can trade off with someone else. They cannot accept a pastorate that is offered to them, nor resign at will. It is not theirs to take, and it is not theirs to hand over, They simply move in the midst of God's church as one of His ministers... coming to an assembly of God's people and ministering as long as God indicates His will in the matter, and then moving on as God directs. When Paul left Ephesus he had no other provision for them but to commend them unto God, and to the word of His Grace... and then he went on his way. No promise that he would take the matter up with headquarters at Antioch, and see that they got a pastor as soon as possible. The "word of his grace" would be sufficient; and God would be faithful to send them from time to time whatever apostle, or prophet, or evangelist, or pastor, or teacher... that they needed for further edification. In the meantime the elders of the Church at Ephesus were charged to "feed the flock of God"--or literally to "shepherd" or "pastor" the flock.

The people were not kept on "milk" the rest of their days as one pastor after another traded places with each other... they were thrown into the midst of the sea of life with the Grace of God as their only resource; and it was up to the people to "try" the ministries that came their way... some of whom would be looking for a place to land, "to draw away disciples after them." Was the Grace of God sufficient for them? Hear what Jesus had to say about the Church at Ephesus... perhaps 35 years later.

"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted..." (Revelation 2:2, 3).

Very commendable, would you not say, for an infant church that was left in the hands of a few elders, who were at that time but recent converts to Christ? But then, it wasn't really left in their hands... it was Christ's Church, and He was the Lord of the Church, and they had been taught to hear the Shepherd's Voice by the apostle Paul... so that when the false voice sounded forth they were able to say: "He is a liar... the voice doesn't sound like the Voice of the Shepherd."

#### Saul, The Son Of Kish... A False Shepherd

Saul was not really God's man. But they wanted an "instant" king... they were not prepared to wait for the king God had in mind... and God gave them their heart's desire. Some might question God for giving Israel a king like Saul, when He knew that Saul would be a stubborn, rebellious king. But this is consistent with God's ways. God always gives rulers as He sees fit, regardless of the choice of the people; and it is according to His righteous judgments. The ruler that God gives may be the kind they WANT, or the kind they NEED, or the kind they DESERVE... according to God's judgment in the matter. Now Saul was the kind of king the people WANTED, (and as it turned out, he was the kind they DESERVED)... and there was an immediate response from the people when they saw the man that Samuel had anointed. "God save the king!" they shouted. Israel could not have picked a man more to their liking, if they had cast their own ballots. They were a rebellious, stiff-necked, and undisciplined people; and God gave them a rebellious, stiff-necked, and undisciplined king. (It seems significant that Saul was out chasing ASSES when Samuel found him. Calling the asses by name would not accomplish anything... he had to follow them wherever they went... and lost his way doing so. He did something similar when he was king: when the people were "scattered"--he took matters in his own hands and offered up the burnt offering, contrary to the Word of the Lord. When the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and the cattle--Saul went along with the idea. If it seemed logical, and made sense... and if it would help to keep the people together... then this seemed to be more important than obeying the Word of the Lord.)

#### A Shepherd-King From Bethlehem

We can always rest assured that God's plan is only delayed, not frustrated, by human failure. And even that so-called "delay"--God is able to work it in, and make it to be part of the plan. For it is in the hour of apparent futility and frustration that God behind the scenes is making very diligent preparation for the new thing that He has planned to bring forth. We must always bear this in mind. God doesn't wait till man has failed, to prepare for that failure. But even while man is seemingly

doing very well, and there appears to be no need for Divine intervention, yet God knows it is doomed to failure, and is even then preparing a people to stand in the gap in the day of sudden calamity.

Out on the fields of Bethlehem there was a young lad by the name of David, shepherding sheep. He was the one that God had in mind for the shepherding of Israel, but he was hardly ready for it yet. Nor was Israel ready: they had a good king, Saul the son of Kish... stalwart and strong, and able to lead the armies of Israel against any enemy that would dare attack them. But God knew that Saul would not walk in His ways, and He must prepare a man to shepherd His people when Saul's kingdom would come to nought. We all know about the tragic downfall of Saul, and we do not need to enlarge upon it here.

Samuel mourned over Saul, but God sent him to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from the family of Jesse. David wasn't even considered to be eligible; and they didn't bother inviting him to the coronation feast. But he was READY. When they went looking for him he was easy to find. (He wasn't out chasing asses, like Saul... but he was tending sheep when God called him.) He was a good shepherd, and his sheep were close to his heart. He would risk his life to save them from the lion or the bear. He would call his own sheep by name, for they were close to his heart; and they knew his voice, and would follow. "And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (1 Samuel 16:12). A new king for the nation of Israel! Anointed to be the shepherd-king of God's heritage! But not quite prepared as yet...

#### The New Shepherd Must Become A Sheep

The true shepherds over God's heritage are sheep before they become shepherds, and after they become shepherds they are still sheep. And so David, anointed to be the shepherd of Israel, must learn the way of a sheep. He had to undergo some hard discipline, in order that he might qualify as a shepherd of God's flock. He had to learn to take on the heart of a sheep. He must learn patience. He must know what it is like to come under the wrath of an angry king, and be chased as a lamb running away from a ravenous wolf. "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Psalm 44:22). God's sheep have known and experienced an awful lot of suffering... not only at the hands of earthly kings and rulers, but also at the hands of ecclesiastical kings and rulers. God requires that His shepherds have the heart of a sheep. David, therefore, had to become a sheep in order that he might be a true shepherd of Israel in the days to come. "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want..." he was to sing in later years.

The sufferings of David, then, not only prepared him for the role that he would play as the shepherd of Israel, but in a certain sense, so to speak, he became the lamb that had to be slain for their redemption. (According to the law, every firstling of an ass had to be redeemed with a lamb, otherwise it's stiff neck had to be broken.)

This is all part of the process that God's chosen ones have to go through in order to bring forth the lamb nature that God desires them to have. For it is the lamb that reigns with Christ on the throne, and therefore a shepherd has no preeminence above a sheep. If we are "shepherds" in this life, we are still the sheep of the "Chief Shepherd," and our place in God will be determined as to how well we have been "examples of the flock." If, on the other hand, we are "sheep" in this life, then as those qualities of meekness, and forbearance, and patience, and gentleness have been

developed... so do we become heirs of the Kingdom of God: for "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

### The Blessedness Of The Sheep

Let the sheep, therefore, take their place as the "sheep of His pasture," learn obedience by the things which they suffer, learn submission one to another, and to shepherds that are over them in the Lord, obeying always as they hear the voice of the Shepherd. For if they find grace in this realm, their portion in God is no less than that of apostles and prophets. And let the shepherds, whose calling is greater in this life... recognize that with the greater calling there has been laid upon them a greater responsibility; and the task of "learning obedience" (without which they shall not be accounted worthy to be shepherd-kings of the everlasting Kingdom)... their task of learning obedience is more difficult for them than it is for the sheep, by reason of the temptation of their office. A degree in "obedience" is not required by hirelings, but it is required of the shepherds. Without it there may be a great deal of success in this life, but without it there will be no reigning with Christ in His throne. For let us remember that our Lord does not sit enthroned in the heavens, as Ruler of the Universe, because He was Divine in His birth, and Messianic in His office... but because He was a LAMB IN CHARACTER...

...It was because He "made himself of no reputation" (literally, "emptied Himself").

...It was because, coming as a man, He took the form of a servant (a "doulos"... a "bond-slave").

...It was because, as a bond-slave, He learned obedience.

...It was because, in obedience, He went all the way, even unto the death of the cross.

"Wherefore (FOR THIS REASON) God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name..." (Philippians 2:5-10).

John on Patmos wept bitterly when no one was found worthy to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof. But the angel comforted him with the words, "Weep not, John... Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome, and He will open the Book..." Then as John dried his eyes to catch a glimpse of the conquering Lion, what did he see? "A Lamb as it had been slain..." And He it was who came and took the Book out of the hands of Him that sat upon the throne. A bleeding Lamb became the conquering, triumphant Lion of the tribe of Judah. But even as He assumed that character, He was still the Lamb that was slain... and the overcomers that we find coming forth in the Book of Revelation are those who "follow the Lamb"... not those who follow the Lion.

God has promised that He would raise up shepherds for His people, after His own heart. Shepherds who would feed His people with truth and knowledge... the true knowledge of Christ. Shepherds who would have the welfare of the sheep at heart. Shepherds who know and understand that they themselves are but sheep. Shepherds that cautiously use the staff of instruction and correction on others... knowing that as they reward the sheep of their pasture, so they may expect the Chief Shepherd to reward them. Shepherds that seek to be examples of the flock, not lords. Shepherds that are servants, not masters.

"And I will set up ONE SHEPHERD over them, even my servant David; and he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23).

## David, A Sign-Shepherd

David as a prophet, was a sign-prophet; and as a shepherd, he was a sign-shepherd. Not only the things that he declared, but the things that he endured, were prophetic of the sufferings and trials that the True Shepherd would have to go through in order to become "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." Through all his sufferings David would recognize the hand of God, the purpose and plan of God, and would know the anointing of God. The anointing he first received at the hands of Samuel must increase until he was saturated with it. "I shall be anointed (literally 'mingled') with fresh oil" (Psalm 92:10). Like the Meal Offering that was "mingled" with oil, his whole life was to be mingled and invigorated with the presence of God, until the Anointing would not only be effectual for his office as the shepherd-king, but it would also transform his very character. He would learn obedience, and patience, and meekness. as he endured affliction under Saul. He would attain to such a place of grace in his life that he would know how to show mercy and kindness when he might legally have taken vengeance and enter the realm of kingly authority that he has been promised. But his heart was fixed on God, and he purposed to simply walk with God and allow God to work out His purpose in His own way and time. Therefore as patience and grace came forth in his character, and as he walked in the presence of God, he knew that it was not up to him to try to fulfill God's promise. (This is where we fail so often.) David did not take the Word that God gave him and seek to bring it to pass. He just "hid" that Word in his heart... and God watched over it, and brought it to pass. He was not an opportunist. He did not look upon "open doors" as the call of God. Several times God deliberately opened a doorway to the kingdom, and he could have slain Saul whom God had rejected. But having learned grace, and mercy, and God's way... he closed the door, knowing it was far more important for him to shew mercy to others, as God had extended mercy to him... than it was for him to get into his office. We must stand ready to embrace the fulfillment of God's promises; but we must first of all learn God's ways, become aware of God's time, and come to know God's heart... lest we be tempted to take the kingdom by "violence." Some would grasp kingdom power and authority in this manner (with a certain amount of apparent success)... but God's sons cannot do so. They take the Kingdom as Jesus did... as a Lamb that was slain.

## A Lamb Shepherd Sits On The Throne

Even now, as Christ sits enthroned on the right hand of the Father, He reigns in virtue of the fact that He is a Lamb. He reigns as a Lamb-Shepherd, because God is raising up lamb-shepherds in the earth, and it is the office work of the Holy Spirit in the earth to establish in the Body of Christ the nature, and the character, as well as the authority... of Him who sits on the throne. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14). It is the work of the Holy Spirit not only to impart unto His people the POWER of God, but "ALL THINGS" that pertain to the exalted Christ... His very nature, and character, and life. The Great Shepherd of the sheep is in no way hampered in His office of tending the sheep, by reason of His enthronement in the heavens. Rather He went there that the work which He began on earth as He gathered "the little flock" around Him... would take on further enlargement and fulness by reason of the fact that the Holy Spirit abides in His people. For He is here in the earth, dwelling in His Body, to be to you and I EVERYTHING THAT JESUS WAS WHEN HE WAS HERE.

Therefore we read, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed (or "shepherd") them" (Revelation 7:17).

And again, of the overcomers it says, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4). Whom do they follow? The LAMB! Why do they not follow the Shepherd? Because the Shepherd is a Lamb; and He is worshipped and adored and obeyed by the sheep of His pasture by reason of the fact that He is a Lamb.

#### A Word Of Encouragement

In this tremendous hour, as the Lamb goes forth to lead the sheep of His pasture into realms that we have not known heretofore, let me give a word of encouragement to all whose hearts are longing and thirsting for Truth and Reality.

If you know and are inwardly aware that you have not yet come, in any degree of fulness, into the "resting-place" that God has for His own, then you must continue to obey the Voice of the Shepherd as He speaks unto you: "My people, come up higher!" Fear not to ascend the unknown pathways that lead to higher heights in God, as long as you hear the Shepherd calling. You know in your own heart whether or not you have entered into your true rest. If others have found sufficient pasture on the Eastern banks of the Jordan, like the tribes of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh... then the call to move forward and upward into the hills and mountains is not for them. It seems burdensome to them. But with you it is different. You are not content in your present habitation. You know in your own selves that there is a deep cry within to move higher into the heavenly realms in Christ, even into perfect union with the Father. And therefore you cannot find rest in any doctrine or in any teaching that would discourage you from discovering God in your own inheritance. You bear in your heart and mind the "white stone" of His covenant with you, a token of His personal affection for you as an individual. For you are a special individual to God, created in His image and likeness, to have personal communion with Him, and with Him alone. Continue to polish that stone, and keep it safe. Let no man come in between to mar its beauty. Let no man take it from you. Let no apostle or prophet or priest because of his authority persuade you that you ought to surrender it to him. It is God's covenant with you that He is yours, and it is your covenant with God that you are His. And as you cling to this (giving honor to whom honor is due, respect to whom respect is due, and submission to whom submission is due)... then you shall experience the joy of knowing Him for yourself, as no other person can know Him. For your inheritance in God is different than that of any other created being, and God's inheritance in you is likewise something very distinct and very special. In the Body of Christ you are a "member in particular"... having a very special function, and having a very individual relationship with your Lord. As a sheep of His pasture you are not just a sheep among many sheep. You are a special "sheep," and that is why He calls you by a special name. Each of you has a very special place in God, and each brings special joy and delight to His heart. Therefore He gives each of you a special "name" signifying what you as an individual mean to Him. It is a name that He has given none other. It is a name that no man can defile or dishonor... because no man knows what it is. It is a name that reveals the inner joy and delight of the Father's heart as He communes with you alone. For as His love takes hold upon you, and you find it in your heart to respond to that love... then does He find a special pleasure in your presence, and the joy of His heart is increased; for He said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto

him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). It is this special joy and delight of the Father's heart that you feel as you walk with Him alone.

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty;

He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy;

He will rest in his love,

He will joy over thee with singing"

(Zephaniah 3:17).

Many years ago, at a time when this matter of Church leadership seemed to be taking on an undue emphasis, I awakened one morning with these words running through my mind: "Just Content to be a Son." As I meditated upon it, a message seemed to develop in the form of a poem, which I would like to share with our readers in closing:

Just Content To Be A Son

Just content to be a son

With no ambition to succeed

In realms of earth, and have no need

Of popularity's acclaim,

Or purchase for myself a name

In serving Christ; for He must be

The Lord throughout eternity.

To see His face and hear His voice,

And do His bidding is my choice.

Just content to be a son,

A son of God without a home,

To stay, or go, or wait, or roam...

Hither and yon without a plan,

Led of the Spirit, not of man.

I'll have no monument of praise,

But I'll have peace in God's own ways;

And though I tread this earthly sod,

I'll walk with Him, I live in God.

Just content to be a son,  
Misunderstood, and yet I know  
The path I take shall overflow  
With life abundant and with grace.  
I only need to run the race  
With patience, waiting, seeing Him...  
Hearing the still small voice within.  
If others want the earth to quake...  
I'll hear His voice when I awake.  
Just content to be a son,  
No words to say... but what He says;  
No work to do... but what He does;  
No fear or worry, anxious care,  
I live with Him, His yoke I share...  
No name to make, He writes His own  
Upon the heart's pure glistening stone;  
No life to live, I lay it down,  
I'll share His cross... and live again.

"TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE HIDDEN MANNA, AND WILL GIVE HIM A WHITE STONE, AND IN THE STONE A NEW NAME WRITTEN, WHICH NO MAN KNOWETH SAVING HE THAT RECEIVETH IT" (Revelation 2:17).

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