

SERMONS OF LEONARD STEEDS

by Leonard Steeds

Steeds' collection exploring suffering, sustenance, and satisfaction through the lens of Christ's example, emphasizing spiritual service and devotion to Christ during life's difficulties.

5 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Steeds, Leonard - Articles
2. S. Suffering, Sustenance and Satisfaction.
3. S. The Doors were Shut.
4. S. The Grave-Clothes
5. S. Three Steps.

00.00. Steeds, Leonard - Articles

Steeds, Leonard - Articles

S. Suffering, Sustenance and Satisfaction

S. The Doors were Shut

S. The Grave-Clothes

S. Three Steps

S. Suffering, Sustenance and Satisfaction.

Suffering, Sustenance and Satisfaction.

Christ, learnt by us in sorrow, results in Him being known by us in all the fragrance that issued from His Manhood, for it was as a Man, in circumstances of sorrow, that He first touched us when, to pick us up, He "came" (Luke 10:33-35) where we were. Then, knowing Him in this way, we become occupied with Him and attached to Him. The glorious result of all this is that we become morally like Him, and His judgment of things becomes, in measure, our own. What a blessed privilege is thus given to us by Him — to have something of His outlook on things; to be allowed to feel, in some simple way, as He felt what surrounded Him; to be permitted to see, dimly it may be, as He saw, and so to appreciate everything in this scene according to its true value — His valuation. Then it is we know what it is to "suffer with Him" (Romans 8:17).

He was eternally with the Father in a place where everything was according to His mind. He came into this scene where nothing was suited to Him. Everything here, His service excepted, caused Him suffering, for there was a complete absence of affinity between Him and all else in this world. He was "out of heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47, New Trans.), the corn of wheat abiding alone (John 12:24), and His feelings not having been impaired by sin, He felt the nature and contrariety of things here far more keenly than the choicest of His Saints could ever do. All that was here — His people the Jews, the state of men generally (fallen and depraved), and the world at large, only occasioned Him grief, sorrow and suffering. But His devoted service to His Father, was His meat — His sustenance and satisfaction, for He could say "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 4:34). This service and communion with the Father during His earthly sojourn, ministered to Him. Nothing else gave Him pleasure or satisfaction here.

What characterised His earthly pathway, should surely be true of us. So the blessed Lord tenderly leads us through sorrow and suffering to conform us to Himself. By this means, He draws us to Himself, and we are led to feel, in no uncertain manner, that He is all that we have here, and that nothing else but our occupation with, and our devotion to Him, displaying itself practically in our service, can minister to, or satisfy our souls. The nearer to Him we live daily, the more we shall feel keenly the barrenness of this wilderness-world, and suffer commensurately. But there is that which brings satisfaction and sustenance — the service committed to us by Himself. His service was His devotion to His Father's will. Our service is devotion to His (Christ's) will. And this is to represent Him morally here. Often we have wrongly assumed that service for Christ is limited to teaching believers, or preaching to sinners. Such activities should certainly be taken up as service for Him, but the service He has given to us embraces far more than preaching or teaching, for it involves the whole of our daily lives. When Christ was here as a Man, He met everything which was contrary to Godliness, by His own divine perfections. Our precious privilege is to continue this service by displaying Christ morally here. Is not this done in the following way? If we have to do with people who act in the power of the flesh, and who display the sad works that result therefrom, is it not our service for Christ to "walk in the Spirit" and so manifest the precious fruits of "love, joy,

peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23. New Trans.)? If, in business, we see corruption and unrighteousness abounding, is it not His will for us to seek to maintain integrity and righteousness, leaving the results with Him? If, in the world at large we see impurity, unholiness and violence, does He not desire us to seek purity, holiness and gentleness? If we see Christendom marked by a profession of the Name of Christ whilst allowing that which is of the flesh, is it not due to Him that we should "depart from iniquity?" Our service for Christ, according to truth, springs from occupation with Himself, and not from being occupied with the service. The latter proves our devotion to Him, for who could possibly be constantly attached to such a glorious Person, and yet not serve Him? Of Himself the blessed Lord could say that He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). If we are prepared for the same life of self-sacrifice, we shall in the midst of the suffering experience the joy of the sustenance and of the satisfaction which comes from serving Him.

Leonard Steeds.

S. The Doors were Shut.

The Doors were Shut.

John 20:19 : Acts 21:30. A meditation on the two occasions in the New Testament where the above phrase occurs yields refreshment and divine instruction to those who seek to be devoted to Christ in a day of widespread confusion in the religious world. In John 20:19 we read, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you;" and in Acts 21:30 it is recorded that "they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple; and forthwith the doors were shut." A comparison of these two incidents, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cannot fail to give us food for our souls, and light for our minds and steps. There is teaching for us in relation to our gathering together in the first Scripture, whilst the second has its application to us as servants of the Lord.

Three things of particular interest are found in the first Scripture: firstly, it was the evening of "the first day of the week;" this in contrast to the Sabbath, the seventh day; and clearly shows that a new dispensation and testimony are in view — Christianity. Secondly, it was "where the disciples were assembled;" indicating what is connected with the Lord's people in a collective way. Thirdly, there was "fear of the Jews." In John's Gospel, the Jews are the inhabitants of Judea, who united with the rulers of the people in bitter hostility to the Lord Jesus. In them is expressed the earthly, religious man, who is opposed to all that is heavenly: the instrument for Satan's designs and attacks upon the blessed Lord, His testimony and His people. This is abundantly clear from our Lord's words to the Jews in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil; and also from verse 41. "Ye do the deeds of your father." Here we find their spiritual origin and moral character.

John, in his Gospel, gives prominence to the blessed Lord's divinity and heavenly origin: He is eternal in His being and Person (John 1:1-3), and yet 'The Son of Man which is in heaven' (John 3:13). Throughout the Gospel we see Him as the Son, the Sent One of the Father, a divine Person with a heavenly mission on earth. But this part of Scripture shows that to oppose the Lord and His heavenly work on earth, the devil can use those who boast in religious ancestry and privileges, and who are marked by religious pretension, for we read in John 5:16 "The Jews persecuted Jesus," and in verse 18 "The Jew's sought the more to kill Him." Again in John 6:41, "The Jews therefore murmured about Him:" in John 7:1 "The Jews sought to kill Him;" in John 8:48, they insult Him, and accuse Him of having a demon: in John 9:1-41 they revile one of His disciples and cast him out (verses 18-34); in John 18:1-40 they cried "all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas" (verses 31, 40); and in John 19:15, the depth of their moral degradation is evident by their unanimous cry, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Thus we see that not only is the work of the blessed Lord opposed, but that He Himself is refused and put to death by "The Jews," showing that those born and nurtured in earthly religion, can be hostile to the last degree to what is of Christ. This being so, it is easy to see the reason for the statement, "the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews." Christ having risen from the dead, meets "His own" on truly Christian ground,

where everything is of a new order, heavenly in character. The disciples, being assembled, foreshadow the assembly, of which they were indeed the nucleus and representative. This is what the devil seeks to corrupt and destroy, but the doors being shut indicate the complete separation of the new company and testimony from the earthly religious order represented by "The Jews." One has said, in commenting on another portion of Scripture, "There is an enemy behind who can take advantage of the mind no less than of the body, and whose artifice it is to array falsehood with a fairer garb than the truth, and so not only to gain admission for what is false, but thereby also to expel or undermine what is true." The Spirit of God forewarned the saints of the danger of infiltration of the principles of earthly religion into the Christian testimony (2 Corinthians 11:14). But if the closed doors excluded all that would harm the new company with its precious testimony, how sweet was the holy communion between the Lord and His own. In the place of separation. And such sweet and holy communion can be ours today, if in faithfulness to the Lord we keep the doors shut to all that would defile, to all that is inconsistent with the holiness of His Name. Standing in their midst, the Lord says to them, "Peace unto you," for only in His company can true peace be known. Then He reminds them of His sufferings and death, and so enlightens them as to the greatness of His love. With the peace of His presence, and the knowledge of His love, it is not surprising that we read, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." He next commissions them for service, saying, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Finally He gives them the Spirit of life, by which they were associated with Him in His own life as the risen Man, in the new sphere into which He now brought them. What a sweet, happy and profitable experience must have been that first interview between the blessed Lord and His disciples behind the doors that were shut. The comparison of the lovely scene just considered with the state of the church in Revelation 3:14-20 manifests what has been lost. In John 20:1-31 the closed doors separate the Lord with His own from the evil without; in the Apocalypse the closed door separates the Lord from those who, professing His Name, are corrupted by the evil that should have been kept out. Again, in John, the Lord gives to His own a precious manifestation of Himself in the intimacy of love but in Revelation 3:1-22, the professing church is about to be spued out of His mouth, the penultimate and reluctant act of rejected love. What has reduced the professing church to the squalor and religious pride manifested in Laodicea? Is it not failure to keep the door shut to the principles of earthly religion set forth in "The Jews?" The church having left its first love (Revelation 2:4), has lost the sense of its heavenly calling. As a consequence spirituality and the ability to judge evil have been lost, and evil has been given easy access. The Jews, at the time of their rejection of Christ, were marked by great religious pretension, self-sufficiency, and low moral condition: and these same things characterise the professing church in the last days, for the flesh on which the devil works is the same in Gentile and Jew. Has all this no voice for us? Many local gatherings, that have sought to maintain the truth of the assembly, have eventually been lost in the confusion of Christendom because they failed to maintain the separation taught by Scripture. Opening the doors a little at first to permit the entrance of some idea, apparently unimportant and innocent, but be-longing to the religious world, the thin edge of the wedge has entered slowly but surely to accomplish the desires of the enemy. May we therefore, in our various localities, seek to maintain the testimony of the Lord in its purity, so as to enjoy the sweet communion of our blessed risen Lord, which was the blessed portion of His own on the first resurrection evening; and when we gather to His Name we shall indeed "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalms 29:2). But if the precious portion in John's Gospel speaks to us in connection with the Christian testimony

in its collective aspect, the incident in Acts 21:30 gives us as individuals a grave warning. The beloved Apostle, after years of devoted, energetic and faithful service to the blessed Lord, on the advice of prominent brethren, enters the Temple in association with men who had a vow; which results in the people drawing him out of the Temple, "and forthwith the doors were shut; ' as though God was indicating that His people should be clean outside all connected with the religion of man after the flesh. It was doubtless his great love for his brethren after the flesh that had brought Paul into such circumstances, but the place for the Christian in regard to all connected with Judaism, and all earthly religion, has been clearly stated in the epistle to the Hebrews, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). This exhortation proves beyond controversy, firstly, that the blessed Lord is now outside of Judaism (see also John 10:3; John 10:16); and secondly, that the believing Jews who originally had a rightful place there — are urged to leave it. Judaism could rightly claim to be a divine institution: but the same divine authority that introduced it has set it aside. If then the Lord has thus dealt with Judaism, He can have no pleasure in the various imitations of Judaism with which Christendom abounds. Consequently, those who are Christ's, united to Him, according to Acts 9:5, should be with Him, outside of all that which is the practical denial of the truths of His Headship and of the assembly. Of the Philadelphians it could be said that, though possessing "a little strength" they had kept the word of the Lord, and had not denied His Name; that is they were not associated with anything inconsistent with the profession of His Name. For this faithful company the Lord had "an open door" which no man could shut (Revelation 3:8); a door into all the precious truth revealed in His word. The Lord still delights to maintain this open door for the faithful, so that they may still hear His voice clearly and distinctly above all the multitudinous voices around them that clamour for attention. May we therefore be prepared to practise true separation to Christ, and so be able to avail ourselves of His "open door."

Leonard Steeds.

S. The Grave-Clothes

The Grave-Clothes

PETER AND JOHN.

" Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together."

JOHN.

" And the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw THE LINEN CLOTHES LYING; yet went he not in."

PETER.

" Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth THE LINEN CLOTHES LIE, AND THE NAPKIN, THAT WAS ABOUT HIS HEAD, NOT LYING WITH THE LINEN CLOTHES, BUT WRAPPED TOGETHER IN A PLACE BY ITSELF."

JOHN.

"Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and HE SAW, AND BELIEVED. For as yet they knew not THE SCRIPTURE, that he must RISE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD."

BOTH.

" Then the disciples went away again to their own home." WHEN the angel of the Lord, as described in Matthew 28:1-20, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher, we are nowhere told that his object was to open the tomb, as is often assumed, to let the Lord out. It was, on the contrary, to tell the women, Mary Magdalene and the others, that Jesus was risen; to give them a view of the inside of the cave, so that they might see that the Lord was not there; to furnish them moreover, as we shall presently see, with an undeniable evidence of the truth of the happy tidings which he had come to announce. The fact is, before ever he came the Lord had awakened to life, had emerged from the sepulcher. The great stone which closed up its mouth being no obstacle to Him, clothed, as He now was, with a spiritual body, He could as easily pass through it as a spirit could do; in fact, as His own disembodied spirit had done in the act of reuniting itself with. His body; just as afterward, when, the doors being shut, passing through every barrier, He came and stood in the midst of His assembled disciples. All which, observe, was done, not by independently putting forth the almighty power of Deity, which of course had He chosen it He could easily have done; but that, acting still as the servant of Him who had sent Him from heaven into the world to bring life and immortality to light, and who now had raised Him to life, He, as the risen Man, was showing that He was no longer in a natural body, such as He previously had, but on the, contrary in a spiritual one, the Firstfruits of them that slept, the Head of the new creation of God. And now let us turn to the chapter alluded to, Matthew

28:5-7, and hear how the angel speaks to the women:-" Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." Here we have the blessed announcement that Jesus was risen, and at the same time the angel's invitation to the women, either to look into or enter the tomb, and thus to prove for themselves that such was the fact. And how, it may be asked, were they to do this? The mere fact of His not being there would be no proof that He was alive, inasmuch as that the body might have been stolen, as Mary Magdalene thought it had been. There must then be more meaning in the words of the angel than at first sight appears; and when he says, " COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY," he must have meant to direct their attention to something more than the mere spot where the Lord had been lying. And that such was the case we gather from Luke 24:1-53 and from John in the above passage (ch. 21.), the latter especially, where the grave-clothes are noticed as lying on the floor of the cave, the trophies, as I believe, of the resurrection power of Jesus over death and the grave. But how is this? it will be asked. How did they prove that Christ was alive? and in what sense are they to be regarded as trophies, seeing, as we repeat, that the body might have been taken away, and its wrappings left behind in the sepulcher? In answer to this we reply, that we believe it to be quite a mistake to suppose that they lay, as in ordinary circumstances would be the case, scattered in a confused heap on the floor of the cave. The fact, I apprehend, was quite otherwise. There they lay, undisturbed, unchanged as to their appearance and form, just as they were when the body of Jesus was in them. They had not been unrolled by the hand of another, de in the case of Lazarus when he came forth from the tomb: He had passed out of them as a spirit would do, with no effort whatever, by the divine power of God, even His own power, and that also of Him who raised Him to life. This was miraculous,-quite supernatural. None but Jesus Himself could have freed Himself thus from the thralldom of death. This then is that which the angel meant when he said to the women, " COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY." He pointed, we may suppose, as he said so, not to the spot merely, but to the grave-clothes which lay on that spot-the marvelous, incontrovertible evidence that the Prince of Life, the Mighty Victor, had conquered: that He who had passed through the valley of the shadow of death had taken up that life which He had laid down for His people.

All this, as we have said, we gather from the description in Luke 24:1-53 and in John 20:1-31. When Peter, we read, went into the sepulcher, he beheld the linen clothes there,μονα-alone-" by themselves," as it is rendered (Luke 24:12), that is, without the body, which had miraculously disengaged itself from its cerements, leaving them there just as they were. κειμενα, " lying "-that is, lying there undisturbed and at full length as when the body was in them, watched over by two angels, one at the head the other at the feet, during the three days and nights, we believe, that the Lord slept in the grave, in the same spot where Mary Magdalene afterward saw them. Then as to the napkin or cap that was about His head: this we find was " not lying with the linen clothes," but was "wrapped together in a place by itself;" wreathed together in folds-εντετυλιγμενον, as it had been when on His head: it lay apart from the garments the length of the neck, namely, the distance that the head is from the rest of the body, at the point where the neck comes, all just, as it was when Jesus was there. Such I believe to be the simple explanation of John's description of that which met the eye of the two disciples as they entered the sepulcher. And now with regard to the passage at the head of this paper, John 20:1-10. Here we find the two disciples, Peter and John,

on the report of Mary Magdalene, who fancied that the body of Jesus had been taken away, making together for the sepulcher; John outstripping the other. John however does not enter the tomb; but looking into it, is struck with something strange and unusual in the disposition and general appearance of the grave-clothes. After which Peter, overtaking his companion, goes in, and has a full view of the. grave-clothes; he sees the linen clothes, as we read, lie, and the napkin that was about the Lord's head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. What we are to understand by this description we have already said. As to Peter, however, we do not here learn what impression the peculiar appearance of the grave-clothes makes upon him; whether he was convinced or not that Jesus had risen. Not so as to John: he next going in, sees and believes: while Peter was inside and he outside the sepulcher, he had time to ponder on what he had had only a glimpse of at first: and now, on a closer inspection, finding that the casket, though despoiled of the jewel, so to speak, is still locked, he is convinced by this fact that the whole thing is supernatural-miraculous-that the body, though not there, had surely not been stolen, according to Mary's report; and that Jesus had, by His own power, freed Himself from the grave-clothes, and consequently that He was alive. His faith however, it must be allowed, is of a very low order: both he and Peter ought to have believed the scripture on this point; both the written word and the word of Jesus Himself having taught them to believe that He would rise again from the dead. But they lost sight of both. And now, assuming that they both were convinced, when they do believe, it is, as in Thomas's case, not, on the scripture of truth, but on the evidence of their senses that their faith rests. Hence their faith is inoperative: they go away from the tomb, and seek their own home. Love surely, had it been fully in exercise, would never have allowed them to rest till they had either found Jesus Himself or ascertained what had become of Him, whether He was still upon earth or had ascended to heaven. A sad failure this; the result, as we have seen, of their defective views of the word as to Christ's resurrection; too much, alas! like that of the Sadducees as to the doctrine of the resurrection in the abstract: all springing, in the case of the latter, from the same evil root-ignorance of scripture; as shown in the answer of Jesus to their caviling arguments, " YE DO ERR, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES, NOR THE POWER OF GOD." (Matthew 22:39.) This surely reads a very solemn lesson to us: it shows us that, so far as we fall short of simple faith in the word, we of necessity dishonor the Lord and lose our own blessing; Miracles; providences, mercies, all hold their due place in the economy of God, and as such are to be valued by us: but let them take the place of the word-let us make them the ground of our confidence-that moment we sink into the weakness of nature; and whenever the temptation arises, we shall assuredly act like the two disciples, when they went away from the sepulcher and listlessly sought their own home. E. D.

FRAGMENTS.

Boaz's wealth and stores were the Lord's, and he knew it,-and so did Ruth, when she had gleaned in his field,-and so did Naomi when Ruth had returned to her. In 2 Peter 3:1-18 we get the evening, post-millennium judgment. In Jude the morning judgment. Was it to be expected that Christendom would prove faithful to a position when all others (Adam, Noah, Israel, &c.) had failed.

" The day of the Lord" is that which establishes the kingdom of Christ. "The day of God" is at the close of the day of the Lord, and introduces us to the delivering up of the kingdom that "God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

I have spread your wish about S.A. and S. before One Friend who never makes Mistakes-never is too quick-never too slow-who IS. Who or what He IS-'tis not for me to attempt to say. Yet He IS-which is a great thing to say in a world of shadows.

If you cannot lay hold of that, it may help your infirmity to notice that IS might stand for Jesus Savior if it be allowable to put a stop between the two letters, thus LS.

S. Three Steps.

Three Steps.

1 Timothy 4:15-16.

Three distinct steps are in view in this portion of Gods word, which gives us instruction connected with the House of God in order. They are, firstly "Meditate upon these things," secondly, "give thyself wholly to them," and thirdly, "continue in them." Had these three exhortations been heeded by the Lord's people in the past, much disorder, failure and weakness in the Christian testimony would have been avoided, and the saints of God spared much grief and sorrow for, we read, that it is by taking heed to ourselves and the doctrine, and continuing in them, namely, the "things" in the doctrine, that the Lords people save themselves and those that hear them (5: 16). If, therefore, the cause of much of the breakdown today is the non-observance of these three injunctions, we might well consider them, and seek to respect them, for it is only by so doing we shall obtain any measure of relief, or freedom, from the influence of departure from the truth which abounds on all hands today.

God has His Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, before Him and is working forward towards the time when all shall speak of the moral features of Christ. To this end, the will of God is that all who are saved should be conformed to His Son even now, for the moral characteristics of Christ in the believer give delight to God the Father. God not only sees us in Christ, but by the Holy Spirit indwells us, and seeks to produce Christ in us by taking of His "things," and revealing them to us, so occupying us with His beloved Son. Thus God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is also our Father, seeks to develop in us that which is suitable to Himself; whilst we, responding practically to the revelation, are conformed morally to Christ and become pleasurable to God Himself (which is of paramount importance) and are found as true witnesses to Him, and to His beloved Son, in this scene. With this end in view, God originally gave to His people on earth His word, now known as the Holy Scriptures, and has graciously safeguarded and preserved them, and their translations, down to the present time. Furthermore, to reveal His counsels and purposes in Christ to us, He has set them out in various forms and lines of teaching in His word, so that the Holy Spirit, can reveal truth to us in all simplicity.

Even the Old Testament, was given to minister Christ and His things to us, for, are we not told that the blessed Lord (Who before the New Testament was written) on the memorable walk to Emmaus "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself?" (Luke 24:27).

Whilst then the appropriateness of these three steps being given in 1 Timothy (that portion of God's word with instruction for our behaviour in His house) will be readily appreciated, the devoted child of God will surely delight in a wider application of the three earnest exhortations under notice. They can be applied to the whole of the Word of God — the Scriptures, from which we learn the "things" concerning Christ HIMSELF.

Meditate upon these things or "Occupy thyself with these things" (New Trans.). When we read our Bibles, we miss much of the Spirit's teaching in the truth by reason of our failure to quietly consider what we have read. God, as our Father, in His great love, delights to minister Christ to us when we read His word, and the blessed Lord Jesus Christ seeks to speak to us of Himself when we are so engaged. But how much more should we receive if we meditated more upon the scriptures in the spirit of one of old who could pray "Open Thou mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of Thy law" Psalms 119:18. The Holy Scriptures abound with instances of men of God receiving spiritual enlightenment during moments of meditation, that is, when led by the Spirit, they have concentrated on the things of God to the exclusion of the affairs of earth. It was when Moses was ready to "turn aside" from the quiet task of minding the flock of Jethro, to the even more quiet occupation of looking at the burning bush, that God could call to him out of the midst of the bush and acquaint him with His intentions concerning Israel's deliverance (Exodus 3:1-22). Similarly, Daniel, when he was prepared to turn away from everything else on earth, and set his "face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications" was "informed," or enlightened, by Gabriel, and given "skill and understanding" in the truth relating to God's future dealings with His people, as bound up with the Messiah (Daniel 9:3; Daniel 9:20-22). Then there is the case of Peter in Acts 10:19. It was when he pondered, or "thought on the vision," which he had seen, that the Spirit of God instructed him in connection with it.

Then, as if to emphasize the importance of our giving ourselves to a study of the Word, the Holy Spirit leads the Apostle Paul to write "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things" 2 Timothy 2:7. A meditation "upon these things" of Christ is but the introduction, and leads to the holy contemplation of Himself. Who would not delight in such an occupation? To linger adoringly over the One who was ever the delight of the Father in eternity; to trace Him through the Old Testament scriptures, which abound with prophecies of His coming and resultant suffering and glory (1 Peter 1:11); to think of His grace in coming into this scene, which He had created, and which He sustained, and yet in which there was no room for Him, even in the inn; to appreciate, in some feeble measure that "in Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell;" to recall His perfect life as a Man dependent upon God, and as Son revealing the Father — a life marked by devotion, obedience, humility, loneliness and suffering; to behold His grace to His own people, the Jews, in spite of their rejection of Him: to stand amazed at His loving kindness to men generally, in the presence of their extreme wickedness; to marvel at the character of His death of ignominy and shame: to rest upon the efficacy of His sacrifice; to enjoy His love now known; to consider Him the "Apostle and High Priest of our confession:" to glory in His Headship of the Assembly and New Creation; to rejoice in His exaltation as Man to the right hand of God "above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion" (Ephesians 1:21): to explore His unsearchable riches; to be exercised as to our being of Himself, His Body, and see this to be the means of our displaying His moral characteristics in this scene of His rejection; to know that the Assembly increases unto a Holy Temple in Him; to look forward and see His loved One, the Holy City, Jerusalem, "coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:10-11); to transfer our thoughts right on to the eternal state and anticipate the grand and glorious results of His work, when God shall tabernacle with men, when every tear shall be wiped away, and when neither death, nor grief, nor cry, nor distress shall exist any more — all in order that our hearts may be drawn out to Him, that we might adore Him and become morally like Him, whilst we wait for that happy moment when HE shall come into the air to take us up to be with Him;

"So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Meditate upon these things — every convenient moment of the day. What a precious privilege! What a wonderful opportunity! What a glorious occupation! What balm for a troubled mind! What rest for a weary soul! What sustenance in the conflict for truth! Is it not really to live with Christ? Surely we shall gladly take, not only the first step exhorted, but also the second, which is:

Give thyself wholly to them or, "be wholly in them" (New Trans.), for in so doing, shall we not be giving ourselves completely to Christ? Truth is only valuable to us in so far as we come under its influence, or, in other words, as we are subject to it as a controlling power in our lives. Hence the desire of the Lord that we should give ourselves wholly to these things which speak of Himself. A summary of the comprehensive effects that God's truth should have upon His people is given in Deuteronomy 11:18-20, these, no doubt, prefiguring the way in which Christ today desires to mould and develop those who believe in Him. The commandments, being the manner and extent of the revelation of God's truth for that dispensation, having been given through Moses, the children of Israel were exhorted to lay up these words in their hearts, and in their souls (5: 18). Thus "the soul," was to be governed by the truth given, and the affections to be developed by it. Their members also were to be controlled by the words received, for they were to bind them for a sign upon their "hands," so that they should be as frontlets upon their "eyes." The truth set before them had also to form the subject of their conversation at all times, and be taught to their children (5: 19). Lastly, the words had to be written upon their gates and door posts so that a testimony to the truth went out to all (5: 20).

Thus the lives of the earthly people of God, whether lived privately before Him, domestically before their families, or outwardly before all, had to manifest the words, or truth, received. If God required these results from a people under the commandments, how much more should similar results be love's response on our part today, seeing that not only are we under grace, and not under law, but also that the truth which we have is really the shining forth of Christ Himself. Giving ourselves wholly to these things of Christ, represents a complete surrender to Him on our part. There will be the daily walk with Him, and the sense of His presence with us at all times. Our wills abandoned, His will supreme, He can then teach us, and form us to correspond to Himself morally. Not only what we say and do, but the manner or way in which we speak and act will testify to our intimacy and communion with Him. Then the spiritual "progress" made, or our "profiting" by the truths received, will be manifest to all, according to verse 15 of our chapter. Those about us will see that we are in His blessed company. What a happy position! What a blessed condition to be in! Making everything of HIM. And to maintain us in both a good condition and a right position, the Holy Spirit then leads on the Apostle to bring before us the third step. He proceeds. in verse 16 of the portion under notice, to exhort us to "take heed" to ourselves and to the doctrine, to the end that we may:

Continue in them, namely, the things of Christ, for in so doing we shall surely be responding to our blessed Lord's desire "Abide in me" (John 15:4-6). It will be observed that we are to pay attention both to ourselves and to the doctrine: to have regard to the one without the other is an unprofitable, if not dangerous, procedure. We might be occupied with our conduct apart from the consideration of truth, and merely be engaged in harmful introspection. On the other hand, to dwell much on truth, but fail to apply it to ourselves, is to become pure theorists, not benefiting by what is set before us. But allowing the truth in the doctrine to regulate our lives results in the Spirit

moulding us as individuals according to Christ, so that we answer to His mind for us. Some of God's people vainly seek to excuse themselves remaining in a wrong position, or of continuing with something not sanctioned by scripture, by putting forth the plea of desiring to help others who are regarded as weaker, or more unscripturally situated, or entangled, than they are themselves. Such a course, however, is condemned by God's word. It is only by "continuing in the things of the doctrine, or, walking according to truth, that we can hope to save "those that hear" (verse 16), that is, those to whom we speak and seek to help. No doubt, we shall find that in seeking to take the three steps brought before us, we are at times apparently faced with insuperable difficulties, but let us remember for our encouragement that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Thus, to summarise the teaching of the passage under consideration — by meditating upon the things recorded in the Scriptures, we are led to and become occupied with Christ Himself; by giving ourselves wholly to them, we surrender our lives completely to Him and become morally like Him, and by continuing in them, we are saved from influences which by leading us away from His blessed company, seek to destroy the testimony of Himself which He has so graciously committed to us. May we all, then, be prepared to take these three steps.

Leonard Steeds.

O keep us, love divine near Thee. That we our nothingness may know, And ever to Thy glory be Walking in faith while here below.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net