

COUNSEL

**LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES
—PERGAMOS (PART 3)**

NEVER ALONE

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE RISEN CHRIST

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

AND IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS

THE PRIESTHOOD OF NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS (PART 3)

THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH

CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD

September — October 2006

**“Cast thy burden
upon the Lord, and He
shall sustain thee: He
shall never suffer the
righteous to be moved.”**

—Psalm 55:22

The Bible is full of wonderful promises for the believer. They are unlike anything found here on earth, but they do provide for us while we are here. Here is one from Psalm 55:22, “*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*”

This promise comes from the Lord and can be trusted because it is the Word of God. But it also comes through David, a servant of God who was no stranger to life’s burdens. As David describes the current turmoil and crisis unfolding in his life we can sense the settled spirit that comes over him as he realizes this amazing promise from the Lord.

‘Burden’ is an interesting word. It means ‘that which he hath given thee to bear’ or ‘that which is formed for you’. In other words the burdens that come to us have been given to us or allowed by the Lord to come our way. It is a double burden when our minds are distressed about why we find ourselves bearing this particular burden. But there is a great relief to understand that nothing comes

our way without His approval. The burden may seem strange and difficult to us, but it has been specifically formed for us for a purpose.

This is true even when the source of the burden is Satan himself. This can be confirmed by reading Paul’s experience in 2 Corinthians 12. The messenger of Satan meant Paul no good, but God took that and used it to equip Paul with a special grace and strength that was borne out of Paul’s own weakness. Little did the devil know he was doing a work for God, not against Him.

But what does it mean to “*cast thy burden upon the Lord*”? It means to ‘throw away’. We are to take the burden and literally throw it away on the Lord. At first this seems like a foolish or irresponsible thing to do. How can we just ‘throw away’ our difficulties? Don’t they keep coming up in our lives? Don’t we have to deal with them one way or another? What the promise is telling us is to leave the burden of the difficulty with the Lord. It means to allow the burden to do its work, but we are to be free of fear or anxiety about it. This is seen in the concluding part of the promise “*and He shall sustain thee.*” In other words the Lord will comfort and strengthen us in the time of trial and relieve us of the fear and anxiety we might feel. This is the exercise of an intelligent faith that watches God do His work.

But some will say, ‘That all sounds well and good, but my problem is devastating me, or my assembly, or home.’ What does the last part of the verse say, ‘*He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*’ Never. The

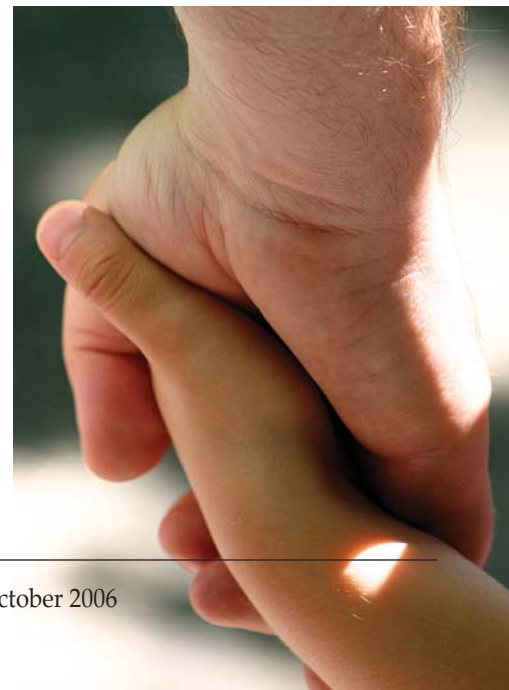
Lord often has purposes far beyond what we can see. Our plans might be upset, but His never are. It may seem all is lost, but with Him it never is. Our duty is to follow Him by faith and to leave the unknown in His hand of love and power.

The promise is so important that Peter repeats it with a slightly different emphasis in the New Testament where he writes, “*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.*” (1 Pet. 5:7). Peter emphasizes the Lord’s loving care for us. He knows all about our burden and wants to keep us in times of anxiousness.

Are you living with some fear or anxiety today? Is there a set of circumstances that is burdening you? The Lord will not abandon you. He will bring this thing to an end in His own time. He invites you to throw your fear and trouble on Him and take His hand in faith and trust and enjoy His sustaining peace. He has not failed one of His children yet and He will not begin with you.

Brian Gunning

St. Catharines, Ontario





COUNSEL

TIMELY TRUTHS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Volume 36 • Number 5

Postmaster:

Please send address changes to:
COUNSEL
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St. Catharines ON
L2R 6V9

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Purpose:

To present truth in words easy to be understood; to bring the Word of God to bear on the confusion of thought that exists in many places today regarding the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His assembly, His purposes, His people, their privileges and responsibilities Godward and manward. To give a variety of ministry by edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3).

Price:

COUNSEL is supported by those who appreciate the aims and ministry of this work. It is sent freely on request, as the Lord enables. All funds received are used entirely to produce and mail the magazine. No salaries, gifts, honorariums, nor expenses are paid to any of the committee or contributing writers. We are thankful to those who feel their responsibility in this ministry and express their appreciation by practical support.

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Printed in Canada

Canadian & overseas donors:

COUNSEL
P. O. Box 427
St. Catharines, ON
Canada
L2R 6V9

U. S. donors:

Counsel, Inc.
P.O. Box 955
Kirkland, WA
98083-0955
USA

U. K. and Ireland donors:

COUNSEL
c/o W. A. McCulloch
92 Western Road,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex, RH16 3LN

Cheques from U.K. donors make payable to 'Counsel Magazine'

Cover Photo by Rachel Brooks

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Part 3 Letters to the 7 Churches — Pergamos

Revelation 2:12-17

This, the third in the series of seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor, is addressed to the saints at Pergamos. And this letter is the only evidence that there was an assembly in that city. Pergamos was built on a hill located about 20 miles from the coast and about 6 miles north of Smyrna. It was the ancient capital of Asia Minor and the symbol of the city was a sword which particularly indicated that the administration was authorized to make judgement and resorted to the use of the death penalty without the need to seek clearance from Rome.

There was little commerce, as no trade routes passed nearby, so the place was renowned for academia in the forms of art, literature and medical science. Indeed, it was known as the city of the serpent, which represented Aesculapius, the god of medicine. Its university was dedicated to medical science and research.

Pergamos was also famed as a center for emperor worship and other demon-inspired idolatry. Another god worshipped there was Zeus 'the savior'. A temple and impressive altar were built in his honor. The site of the temple can still be seen but the altar itself has been removed to Germany and may be viewed in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin. So many gods, and such great idolatry made it appropriate for the letter to

describe the city as the place where Satan's seat was!

The city had an important library and over the years it had grown to such an extent that it rivalled Alexandria, in Egypt, the world's greatest library. In order to curb the growth of the Pergamos library, the Alexandrians decided to ban the export of papyrus to Pergamos but the resourceful Pergamenes invented and developed their own parchment made from fine calf skin and proceeded with their publishing ventures. The library eventually held over 200,000 volumes.

Revelation 1 the Lord, as He walks in the midst of the lampstands, describes Himself, appropriately, as having out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword. It is therefore not surprising that in this letter the Lord introduces Himself to the assembly, and in particular to the leadership, as the One who has "*the sharp sword with two edges*". This statement would remind the believers that although Pergamos could exercise and execute judgement under licence from Rome, there was yet a much higher executive authority than these and that was the Lord Jesus Himself. The sword

The lessons of Pergamos are that compromise with evil and the abandonment of the truth of separation spell disaster for the church.

The open air theatre could seat nearly 20,000 people. There were many guilds in the city and idolatry and immorality were rife and accepted as the norm. There are ruins to be viewed today but, apart from the architectural interest, the lessons of Pergamos are that compromise with evil and the abandonment of the truth of separation spell disaster for the church.

Introduction (v. 12)

As mentioned above, Pergamos was the city of the sword and in

is described elsewhere as the Word of God, (Heb. 4:12), where it pierces, divides and discerns. In Revelation 1, it comes out of His mouth, which is a very clear symbol of authority but here it is unsheathed in His hand. This indicates that He stands ready to execute judgement. Those who are under threat from it are undoubtedly the promoters and disciples of the pernicious doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitines. The sword has two edges suggesting that the Scriptures are able to deal not only with both problems at the same time but will

do so sharply and swiftly. Here we have precision and the ability to expose, examine, discern and deal with even the trivial matters of wrong doctrine. In all such cases the Scriptures are our first, last and only resort. For continuing testimony today, we need the sword to be available, and it is, to maintain truth and purity for the Lord in the local testimony.

Commendations (v. 13)

The Lord says that He knows, (i.e., fully knows), the works of the assembly at Pergamos. Nothing is hidden from His sight. He is totally aware. Not only does He know the works but, He is also fully aware of where the believers dwell. The Lord viewed Pergamos as the very seat and throne of Satan. If there was one place on earth where Satan felt comfortable it was in this wicked city. Satan was a settled and welcome resident there and ran his wretched operation on earth from this place. Yet, here, next door to him, as it were, had moved in an assembly of the saints of the risen Lord! The Lord, in judging the saints, takes account of their proximity to Satan and of the severe opposition they faced in service for Himself. Though some were tainted and debilitated with evil doctrine, many others lived righteously and witnessed faithfully even to martyrdom. They are commended as those who have held fast the name and who have not denied the faith. Personal loyalty to the Lord in such circumstances, faithfulness to death, were held in high esteem in heavenly circles. The heathen would threaten and carry out all sorts of diabolical horrors to compel believers to deny the Lord. But men like Antipas refused to bow and suffered the tragic consequences. There is something very lovely about the description

"Antipas, my faithful martyr". It appears too that other saints may have been forced to watch as Antipas was tortured and killed outright before their eyes. This was to serve as a warning of what awaited them if they did not recant. Satan is again mentioned to emphasize where this cruelty and persecution were sourced. This also highlights the fact that the Lord knows the culpability of the evil one in persecution. He is wicked and cruel and devours saints. Govett has written tellingly, *"We must not marvel to find broken bones and traces of blood near the lion's den"*. We, today, need to remember that in many parts of the world the church is suffering horrendously and that it is significantly more perilous to confess Christ as Lord there than it is in our privileged Western society. We should make allowances for shortcomings in those circumstances. Even if we do not ... the Lord does!

Condemnations (vv. 14, 15)

The Lord has *"a few things"* against the church in Pergamos. The use of the word *'few'* does not diminish the serious nature of what is about to be said. It characterizes the points succinctly. They relate to: a) the doctrine of Balaam; b) the doctrine of the Nicolaitians; and c) lack of discernment of things the Lord hates.

We well know, even as they did, the story of Balaam in Numbers 22-24. While the Israelites traversed

the wilderness, King Balak hired the seer Balaam to curse them. Balaam was interested in getting the reward of iniquity from Balak but found he could not deliver what Balak wanted. Each time and in every place when he sought to curse the people he was forced rather to bless them. Stung by acidic criticism from Balak over his failure, Balaam devised a subtle long-term device to curse the Israelites. It seems he persuaded Balak to send the beautiful maids of Moab to the Israelites whose men were attracted to them and took them as wives (see Num. 31:16). Thus, the company became mixed and corrupted and God rose up in judgement against them and slew 24,000 of them before the brave action of Phineas stemmed the death toll. What Balak and Balaam could not accomplish by the front door, so to speak, they did by the back. The doctrine of Balaam being tolerated at Pergamos was that separation from the world was not necessary and that Christians should take their place in all aspects of society. Today, in the 21st century, separation is still a vital truth. Lamentably, so-called 'progressives' may say 'not so', and encourage the flesh to take advantage of all the world has to offer. It seems that 'compromise' is no longer a dirty word but has been elevated and is seen as a pragmatic approach to life and testimony among the unsaved. Compromise with the world is, nevertheless, still a destructive force among the assemblies.



Then there is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which may be an add on from that of Balaam described above. Who, or what, were they? Some say they were disciples of, Nicolas of Antioch, who apparently taught that the saints could indulge the flesh and live in perpetual promiscuity. But that sounds almost the same as the Balaam doctrine.

Compromise with the world is, nevertheless, still a destructive force among the assemblies.

Others say that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the rise of the clergy who sought then, and still do today, to lord it over God's people. This is probably true. It is 'power over the people'—a very rough translation of the word itself. But how does that come about? Like this: the doctrine of Balaam leads to sin, and sin to guilt. Guilt overpowers the normal activities of the Christian experience including reading the Word, praying to God, enjoying the leading of the Holy Spirit who is grieved, and killing the desire to serve. Thus weakened, the believer is happy and even relieved to leave leadership, ministry and priestly activity in the assembly to others, some of whom may take the opportunity to initiate and practice an ecclesiastical structure contrary to the Word. There was, and is, a failure to discern that the Lord hates such things because they diminish the devotion, worship and service that are due to Him from all His people.

Instructions (v. 16)

The instruction is clear for all involved and for all who may be attracted by such doctrine and prac-

tice. It is unequivocal. It is, "Repent". The church as a unit must repent that such things have been tolerated and such treachery encouraged. The leadership is called upon to take dramatic and united action to change that stance in a fundamental way. It is 'Repent ... or else!' The Lord is saying, "If you don't deal with this, I will". His intervention would not

be petty nor halfhearted. It would be quick, violent and devastating. Herein lies a warning for many assemblies today. If wrong doctrine and wrong practices exist, it is the responsibility of the leadership, in spite of the majoritarians, to bring the church back to first principles. Where this does not happen voluntarily the Lord Himself will come and fight against His own people with the sword of His mouth. That is a fearsome threat. Remember Balaam himself was slain with the sword (Num. 31:8). We do well to take heed.

Conclusions (v. 17)

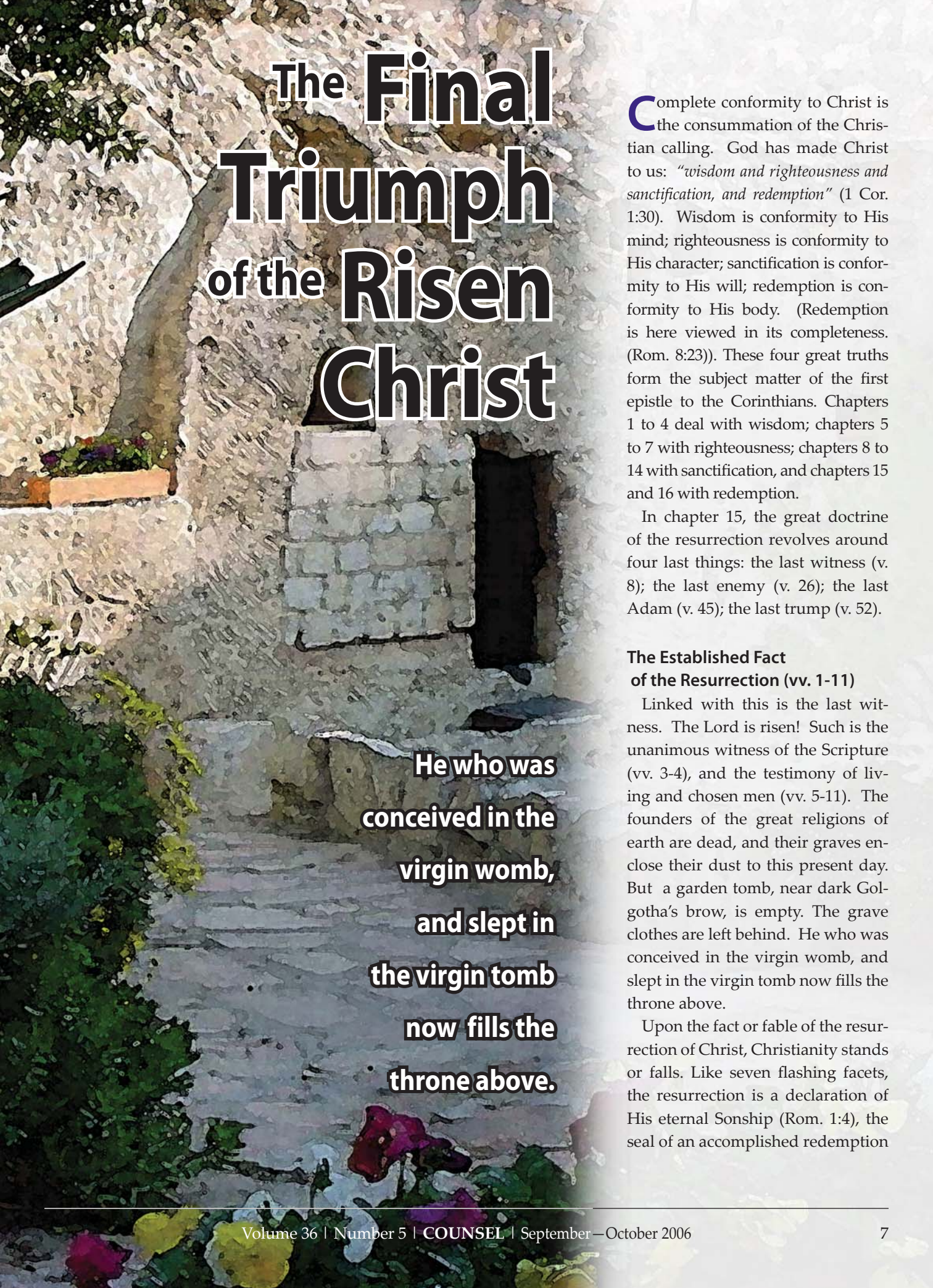
Verse 17 provides the usual form of advice as in each of the other letters. It is an appeal for those who hear to take heed. The overcomers, those who will no longer accept compromise, will not encourage nor bow to clerisy (or anything remotely like it), are promised gifts from the Lord. These are the hidden manna, the white stone and the new name.

The hidden manna probably refers to the manna kept in the golden pot within the ark of the covenant. The

manna speaks of Christ. The thought is that the overcomer, rejected both by the world and its feasting, and by his brethren and their fellowship, will enjoy, together with the Father, the delightful beauties of the Person of Christ in a very special way. This appreciation, hidden from Christian compromisers and society generally, is available to the overcomer and appreciated by him. The white stone was, in legal trials, the sign of acquittal whereas the black was the sign of guilt. The overcomers, judged by the world, are justified in the sight of God and accepted by Him. In some circles a white stone was the authorization for entry to court or to some special events and that is suggestive here too. A new name is indicative, as used in Scripture, of a new relationship with the Lord and a new direction to be pursued under His guidance. Think of Abram—Abraham, Saul—Paul, etc. Thus, the reward for the overcomer brings a closer relationship with the Lord, greater appreciation and love for Himself and justification of the scriptural position taken and maintained in the assembly.

The over-riding lesson of the letter to the church at Pergamos is that while special circumstances and difficult situations are taken into account, compromise with the world and loose living cannot be tolerated. Individuals must overcome and in so doing they will enjoy wonderful blessings not available to those tainted with departure from the word and from the Lord Jesus.

Roy Hill
Bristol, England



The Final Triumph of the Risen Christ

**He who was
conceived in the
virgin womb,
and slept in
the virgin tomb
now fills the
throne above.**

Complete conformity to Christ is the consummation of the Christian calling. God has made Christ to us: *“wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption”* (1 Cor. 1:30). Wisdom is conformity to His mind; righteousness is conformity to His character; sanctification is conformity to His will; redemption is conformity to His body. (Redemption is here viewed in its completeness. (Rom. 8:23)). These four great truths form the subject matter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Chapters 1 to 4 deal with wisdom; chapters 5 to 7 with righteousness; chapters 8 to 14 with sanctification, and chapters 15 and 16 with redemption.

In chapter 15, the great doctrine of the resurrection revolves around four last things: the last witness (v. 8); the last enemy (v. 26); the last Adam (v. 45); the last trump (v. 52).

The Established Fact of the Resurrection (vv. 1-11)

Linked with this is the last witness. The Lord is risen! Such is the unanimous witness of the Scripture (vv. 3-4), and the testimony of living and chosen men (vv. 5-11). The founders of the great religions of earth are dead, and their graves enclose their dust to this present day. But a garden tomb, near dark Golgotha’s brow, is empty. The grave clothes are left behind. He who was conceived in the virgin womb, and slept in the virgin tomb now fills the throne above.

Upon the fact or fable of the resurrection of Christ, Christianity stands or falls. Like seven flashing facets, the resurrection is a declaration of His eternal Sonship (Rom. 1:4), the seal of an accomplished redemption



**“Remember that
your cause is the
cause of truth,
your Captain is
the Lion of the
tribe of Judah,
your armor is
impervious,
and all that
you need in the
field of battle
is abundantly
supplied. Your
victory is certain,
and your reward
is sure.”**

(Heb. 10:12; 13:20), the vindication of His holy claims (1 Tim. 3:16—justified in the Spirit), the witness of His mighty victory (Acts 2:24), the cause of our justification (Rom. 4:25), the pledge of the saints’ resurrection (1 Cor. 15:21-22), and the prelude to the judgment of the world (Acts 17:31).

Hail; the triumphant Lord,
The Resurrection, Thou;
Hail! The incarnate Word,
Before the Throne we bow.
Captivity is captive led,
Since Jesus liveth that was dead.

**The Unfolding of the
Glory of the Gospel (vv. 12-28)**

Linked with this is the last enemy. If Christ is not risen the gospel loses its glory, and the claims of Christianity fall to the ground. Gloom and despair fill the heart as outlined for us by the Spirit in verses 12-19. The tragedy of a dead Christ has four dreadful conclusions: We have a Christ whose work has no value (vv. 13-14). We have messengers whose message has no meaning (v. 15). We have Christians whose faith has no object (v. 17) and we have a future that has no hope (vv. 18-19). *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”* (v. 20).

Gloom and despair disappear and horizons of bliss and glory open up before the soul’s vision. The glory of the gospel is that it proclaims a risen Christ—a Saviour who has triumphed gloriously, and who, by virtue of His atonement and His exalted station on high, will put all enemies under His feet. *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (v. 26). That is the pledge of our resurrection. That which holds the bodies of

the saints in the grave must yield its grip. The empty tomb of our risen Lord demands that they shall rise again. In complete conformity to His own glorious body we shall share with Him the joy of scenes where sin and death will never raise their ugly specters again. In that day our Lord will stand preeminent among the redeemed of all ages.

His own resurrection must be first in time (Acts 13:30, 31), first in rank (Col. 1:18), and first in pattern (1 Cor. 15:23). And as Firstborn from among the dead, and Firstborn among many brethren, He will display the trophies of His own redeeming grace in these words, *“Behold I and the children which God has given me”* (Heb. 2:13).

“His gracious hand shall wipe the tears
From every weeping eye,
And pains and groans and griefs
and fears,
And death itself shall die.
For we shall stand before the Lamb
When earth and sea are fled,
And hear the Lord pronounce
our name
With blessings on our head.”

**The Glory of the
Saints’ Resurrection (vv. 29-49)**

Linked with this is the last Adam. This section is the answer to the questions, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” God is a God of variety, and that variety is maintained in resurrection (vv. 39-42). That which is sown in the death of the old body produces the seed from which the new body will come after its own likeness, yet void of all the sinful traits and infirmities that marked the old body (vv. 37-38).

We are now given a sevenfold contrast between that which is sown,



and that which will be raised (vv. 42-50). Corruption gives place to incorruption; dishonour changes for glory; weakness now is power; the natural is replaced by the spiritual; the infirm body (related to the first Adam) is amazingly transformed to the perfect body (related to the last Adam); the image of the earthy flees before the image of the heavenly; and grievous mortality bows before glorious immortality. Who can bring about such a change?

When Peter declared with conviction that Jesus was *"the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"* the Saviour replied: *"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven"* (Matt. 16:16-17). It is true—flesh and blood cannot compass the Divine revelation. Neither can it attain to the incorruptible inheritance of the saints (v. 50). The last Adam—the Lord from heaven—alone can accomplish that. He is the quickening Spirit. He quickened us through conversion to salvation (Eph. 2:1); He quickens us through His Word unto sanctification (Ps. 119:40); and He will yet quicken us in resurrection unto glorification. *"Saved by grace alone!"* What familiar words to the Christian ear. But never will they be more heartily sung than when he stands on the golden strand, and reviews life's chequered way. It was grace that justified (Rom. 3:24), that sanctified (Titus 2:11-12), that satisfied (2 Cor. 12:9), and now has glorified (1 Pet. 1:13). Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

*"Divine Deliverer! Thou alone Thy people from the deep couldst bring;
The glorious triumph all Thine own:*

Thy Name, Thy Might, Thy Grace we sing."

The Final Triumph of the Risen Christ (vv. 50-58)

Linked with this is the last trump. Soon the church militant will be the church at rest. The promise of her Lord will then be fulfilled *"...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Down the stream of time, the great organizations of men are sailing, only to be broken one by one at the gates of hell. Over all, those gates prevail. Beyond there is no recognition. The unseen world knows them not. But the church redeemed by the blood of the Lamb survives the shock of death, and rises by the power of her victorious Lord to companionship with Him forever. The church is

If Christ is not risen the gospel loses its glory, and the claims of Christianity fall to the ground.

the gift of the Father to the Son, and concerning it He says, *"I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."*

View the seven enemies (vv. 51-55) before which the first Adam fell, and over which the last Adam (and we in Him) triumphs—sin, death, the grave, corruption, mortality, dishonour and weakness. Listen to the song of the victorious church in the heaven, *"O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin...but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (vv. 55-57).

Draw your encouragement, dear saints of God, from the final outcome of the struggle between light and darkness. The issue is not in doubt. *"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (v. 58).

Remember that your cause is the cause of truth, your Captain is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, your armor is impervious, and all that you need in the field of battle is abundantly supplied (Ps. 23:5). Your victory is certain, and your reward is sure. Paul's final word to the militant church is, *"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with love"* (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

Hosanna to the King of kings!
The great incarnate Word!
Ten thousand songs and glories wait
The coming of our Lord!
Thy vict'ries and Thine endless fame
Through the wide world shall run,
And everlasting ages sing
The triumphs Thou has won.

—Isaac Watts

Robert McClurkin

Mr. McClurkin was the founding editor of Counsel Magazine which he began in 1971 published under the title 'Words of Counsel'.

*And in the midst of the
seven candlesticks...*

(Rev. 1:13)

*...in the midst of
the throne...*

(Rev. 5:6)

*For where two or three
are gathered together
in my name, there am
I in the midst of them.*

(Matt. 18:20)

And in the Midst of the Seven Candlesticks

Our Lord Jesus Christ who, in His superiority moves among the assemblies, as the Lamb of God wields ultimate authority in the universe, now and eternally. It is He who presences Himself in the midst of His people gathered in His blessed name. What dignity! What a privilege to meet, assured by these promises! —Garry W. Seale

Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
Thy present smile a Heaven imparts;
O lift the veil, if veil there be,
Let every saint Thy beauties see.

**Its Time
to Renew!**
**We need to
hear from you.**

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Distinguishing Between Israel and the Church

Distinguishing things that differ is essential in the interpretation of Scripture and failure to do so results in doctrinal and practical consequences. This is true in all of Scripture. Church history will show that those who were cavalier concerning subtle and important theological differences have brought great harm to the church. The failure to distinguish between justification and sanctification damages the doctrine of grace. The failure to distinguish between law and grace muddies our understanding of salvation by grace through faith alone. So too, the failure to distinguish Israel from the Church will lead to grave consequences. Reluctance to distinguish Israel from the Church has caused some to return to barren liturgical ritual, the unbiblical separation of the clergy and the laity, and the use of military might to accomplish the will of God. Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) serves as an illustration of the necessity of right thinking in this area.

Oliver Cromwell was a soldier and Puritan statesman, and later as Lord Protector, ruled Great Britain with an iron fist. His army, called "Ironsides", never lost a battle and was greatly feared. They fought like no other army since the days of King David in Israel. They would enter battle singing psalms of David and reciting the Westminster Confession. As a father, Cromwell was gentle with his children, but on the battlefield, he was a ruthless

warrior. In August, 1649, Cromwell and 12,000 soldiers arrived in Ireland. During the next ten years of bloodshed, it is estimated that about a third of the population was either killed or died of starvation. The majority of Roman Catholics who owned land had it taken away from them, and they were removed to the barren province of Connacht. Catholic boys and girls were shipped to Barbados and sold to the planters as slaves. The land taken from the

ing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He did not make a sufficient distinction between the old and the new covenant, between the Old and New Testament. The terrible judgments inflicted by God's command on the unbelieving nations in the times of the judges and kings of Israel, appeared to him not only to authorize but to necessitate, similar judgments. He thought that, like Moses and Joshua, he might slay Balaam with the sword. It may

There are enormous practical consequences at stake when we fail to distinguish the differences between Israel of old and the New Testament Church.

Catholics by Cromwell was given to the Protestant soldiers who had taken part in the campaign. Before the rebellion in 1641, Catholics owned 59% of the land in Ireland. By the time Cromwell left in 1650, the proportion had shrunk to 22%. Many have wondered how Cromwell, as a Christian, could be so devoted to Christ on one hand, and at the same time be so cruel, violent, and ruthless in battle.

Concerning this paradox Christian historian J. H. Merle D'Aubigne writes: "The great man shared in the error which the Papacy had held during the Middle ages, and which most of the Reformers entertained dur-

be that he did not follow this out explicitly; but it was with this prejudice and under this impulse that he usually acted. This was wrong. The Jewish theocracy existed no longer; and its rules of conduct had been abolished with it. The precepts which ought to direct the life of a Christian are contained in our Savior's Sermon on the Mount and in other discourses, as well as in the writings of the Apostles."¹

Oliver Cromwell acted as he did because he failed to see vital distinctions between Israel and the Church. He was the Church's King David, vanquishing the kingdom of its enemies. He was England's Joshua fighting the

adversaries of God. There are enormous practical consequences at stake when we fail to distinguish the differences between Israel of old and the New Testament Church.

The Reformed View of Israel and the Church

There are Christians today who resist broad distinctions between Israel and the Church. Today, as with its Puritan forefathers, Reformed theology teaches that Israel and the Church are not to be distinguished.

all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6) are used as support of this position. Reformed writers teach that natural, national Israel has been set aside by God and does not receive the promises of God. However, believing Israel, the faithful remnant of the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham, was the initial phase of what would eventually be called the "Church". It is spiritual, or true Israel, and not National Israel, that is to be identified with the Church. Reformed author Keith Mathison explains,

for Israel, and this plan involves both the believing and unbelieving parts of the nation. Yes, God has always had a remnant of believers in Israel throughout history, but it must also be said that He has not cast away the unbelieving in Israel.

How does Scripture define the composition of what is called Israel? Notice what Peter states while preaching to the Jews near Solomon's porch in Jerusalem in Acts chapter three. *"I know that ye through ignorance did it...Ye are the children of*

God has always had a remnant of believers in Israel throughout history, but ... He has not cast away the unbelieving in Israel.

Rather Israel and the Church, the two peoples of God, are both an organic, unified body under the headship of Christ. According to this view, to separate them is to do great theological harm to the teaching of the covenants, the unity of the Church and Israel, and the importance of the law. Reformed theology argues that the term Israel does not represent a national people, but the spiritual people of God. Therefore, the members of the Church are considered to be New Israel. Spiritual Israel of the Old Testament has now entered a new phase of her history and lives on as the Church. The prophecies concerning the nation of Israel are, for the most part, now applied to the Church.

How do Reformed teachers justify their position from the Scriptures? Reformed writers will indeed agree that there are some differences between Israel and the Church, but they would counter that there are many unifying links between these two peoples of God. Scriptures such as *"But he is a Jew which is one inwardly"* (Rom. 2:29); and *"For they are not*

*"We must first note that if Israel is defined as natural, national, or unbelieving Israel, then obviously Israel is not the church... If, however, we define Israel as true Israel or Old Testament believers, we discover a different relationship. There is an organic, living relationship between Old Testament believers and New Testament believers. They are one body joined together under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ."*²

An Examination of the Reformed View

Is it, indeed, true that Scripture considers only believing Israel to be true Israel? Does Scripture teach that only believing Israel is the true possessor of the covenant promises? Is this true Israel of the Old Testament the beginning of what is now the New Testament Church? Let us examine this Reformed view in light of the Word of God. All sincere students of Scripture will admit that there are similarities between Israel and the Church. But at the same time, they will also agree that there are great differences. The careful study of Scripture reveals that God has a plan

the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed'" (Acts 3:17,25). Peter begins by saying you—the unbelieving Jewish people—although through ignorance, are responsible for the death of Christ. He then turns to the subject of who are the possessors of the promises of the covenant. Who are the "seed" through which all the nations would be blessed? Peter unequivocally states that it is those who crucified Christ, the unbelieving Israel, who are possessors of the covenant, who are "Israel".

This leads us to another consideration: who among the Jewish people are "elect Israel", national Israel or believing Israel? Paul writes and explains to the Romans that it is unbelieving Israel, the *"enemies of the gospel"* who are elect. Paul writes, *"As concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"* (Rom. 11:28-29). God has not cast off the unbelieving in Israel.

They are an integral part of God's divine plan for Israel. So it, again, is both the believing and unbelieving who are considered elect Israel.

Finally, to whom does the term "Israel" apply? Is it the unbelieving Israel, national Israel, or "New Israel"—the Church? Paul answers this very question in Romans 9: "My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promise..." (Rom. 9:3-5). In these verses Paul answers two questions: firstly, who is Israel, and secondly to whom belong the promises of God? Although the book of Romans was written many years after the formation of the church, yet Paul states that the adoption, the covenants, the promise still are the possession of Israel. Paul uses the present tense throughout this verse to first define an "Israelite," and later to show who possesses the promises of God. He writes, "Who are Israelites ... adoption, service to God ... whose are the fathers." If the promises of God to Israel are now applied to the Church, one would expect that after sixty years New Testament writers would clearly set forth this fact in the Word of God. It seems, however, that the promises to Israel still apply to Israel and the definition of "Israel" has not changed. Let none misunderstand. Scripture does not teach that literal, national Israel comes into rich blessing from God simply because they are Jews. Jesus said to the Jews, "Think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father: For I say unto you God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham"..."If you were Abraham's children you would do the works of Abraham" (Matt. 3:9, John 8:39). God has never given His prom-

ises to Israel merely because they were Israelites after the flesh. The fulfillment of the promises of God in the coming Kingdom are only for those who, through faith, have come to Christ. When and how will this take place? National Israel and believing Israel will both enter into the millennial promises of God at the appearing of Christ, when in the words of Paul, "So all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come a Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). German theologian Erich Sauer explains,

"Through the conversion of the Jews at the appearing of Messiah, the faith of the little remnant extends to the whole body. The literal Israel has thus become spiritual Israel. Abraham's descendants according to the flesh have by conversion and regeneration become true sons of the patriarch, and thus at the same time, Israel according to the

The relationship God has with Israel is timeless and unique.

spirit (Gal. 3:9). Thenceforth, the national is identical with the spiritual. The remnant has become the whole people, and the saved national people are at the same time both literal descendants of Abraham and also his spiritual seed."³

While much of the New Testament is taken up with God's purposes with the church, nevertheless, we must never forget that Israel, as a nation and people, is important, beloved, and integral in the plans of God. Some Reformed scholars have suggested that God is finished with Israel and His purposes are now centered solely in the church. However,

the Bible describes for us a very different picture. Seventy percent of all the pages of Scripture are taken up in recounting the history of the nation of Israel. In the passages of the Bible that concern the "last days" of biblical history, there are hundreds of prophecies related to the role of Israel in God's program.

Unquestionably, Israel is a major subject of God's Word. To be wrong about Israel is to be moving in the wrong direction about almost everything in the Bible. The God of all the earth is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the Bible, God is called the "God of Israel" 203 times. He is called the "God of Jacob" 28 times. He is called the "God of Abraham" 17 times. And finally, He is called the "God of Isaac" 13 times. These designations are foundational to what the Bible teaches about the sovereign purposes of God for Israel. The relationship God has with Israel is timeless and unique. For He reminds Moses, "Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you ... The Lord God of your fathers ... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent Me to you: this is My name for ever and this is My memorial unto all generations'" (Ex. 3:15). Therefore, any sound theology of Scripture should set forth the unique programs God has for both the church and Israel, while emphasizing the unalterable purposes of God for Israel.

Endnotes

- 1 J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *The Protector: A Vindication*, (New York, NY: Robert Carter, 1947), p. 106-107.
- 2 Keith Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Wrongly Dividing the People of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1995), p. 38, 39.
- 3 Erich Sauer, *Eternity to Eternity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979,) p. 160-161

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“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds (lit. ages) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

—Hebrews 11:1-3

THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH

This great chapter of Hebrews 11 has been variously called “God’s Honour Roll of Old Testament Saints” and “God’s Hall of Fame of Faith.” In Hebrews 10:22-25 believers are exhorted toward faith, hope and love, while in chapters 11, 12 and 13 each of these virtues is enlarged upon. Chapter 11 is an expansion of 10:38 and 39—the great danger of these Jewish believers to whom Hebrews was written was the temptation to live by sight, not by faith (see 2 Cor. 5:7). This same great danger faces all believers today.

Referring to Hebrews 11, Herschel H. Hobbs has written, “the author showed how others of God’s people had found faith a source of strength to enable them to fulfill their God-given purpose in their lives. And upon this basis he exhorted his readers to be faithful in their part in God’s plan and purpose.”¹

Notice three things regarding faith in this introduction to this classic chapter.

ITS DESCRIPTION (11:1)

The Greek verb for faith in Hebrews (*pisteuo*) is found only in 4:3 and 11:6, but the noun (*pistis*) is used 32 times, 24 of them in chapter 11. It is important to remember that faith in Hebrews 11 is not the

faith by which one lays hold of salvation, but “faith by which to live a full and effective life in the will of God.”² The writer of this letter is not so much defining faith in his introduction, but describing something of faith’s characteristics and effects. It is the foundation of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. Faith’s foundation is the Word

“When reason falters, faith can lead one on to great achievements.”

—Hobbs

of God. An anonymous writer has stated verse 1 as “Faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.” In certain papyri unearthed in Egypt many years ago, the Greek word translated “*substance*” is found in the technical sense of “title deed,” the root idea being that they “stand under” the claim to the property to support its validity.³

It is readily seen throughout

Hebrews 11 that faith is active, not passive, virtually all of the illustrations centering on “things hoped for” or “things not seen.”

Hobbs has helpfully pointed out that “faith is basic in every area of life. It is the support which stabilizes every element of society. Even scientific research begins with faith that truth not yet known can be discovered. Certainly faith is a vital element in one’s spiritual life. When reason falters, faith can lead one on to great achievements. It can bridge the chasm between what is and what can be. The readers of this epistle then and now, need this title-deed and conviction.”⁴

George Muller said, “Difficulties are food for faith to feed on.” Another has anonymously written:

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, “It shall be done.”

ITS DEMONSTRATION (11:2)

“Elders” in this verse refers to all the Old Testament faithful who had preceded the readers of Hebrews. The term has the sense of “fathers” or forefathers who had gone before and had received God’s approval. The balance of the chapter is an illustration of how God has borne witness to them.

W. H. Griffith Thomas asserted that the “elders” of verse 2 are the “cloud of witnesses” in 12:1, some of whom are mentioned in detail in chapter 11 with reference to their faith.⁶

Illustrations are like windows—they let in light. Thus the illustrations of Hebrews 11 instructively flesh out the reality of living faith.

ITS DISCERNMENT (11:3)

The world says, “Seeing is believ-

ing.” God says, “believing is seeing” (John 11:40). By faith Christians understand that the “worlds” (i.e., ages) were created by God. He spoke and by the word of His power matter and the universe came into existence, and this, by His Son who holds all things together (see Gen. 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). The writer of Hebrews clearly denies the eternity of matter.

The term age or eon refers to both the physical creation and the time

the men and women whose names are listed in ‘The Hall of Fame of Faith’ had to deal with their emotions (did you ever walk through a sea?), their circumstances (did you ever fight an army?), and the consequences of their decisions (did you ever say no to a powerful ruler?). They did not deny their feelings; they could not change their circumstances; they could not predict the consequences. But they trusted God, and He saw them through.”⁸

“According to the Bible, true faith is obeying God in spite of feelings, circumstances or consequences.”

— W. W. Wiersbe

factor. Of this word, Thomas has stated that “it seems to refer to what may be called time-worlds, the idea being that the various ages or dispensations were planned by God with reference to a goal, toward which all are moving. Perhaps, therefore, the verse suggests both Creation and Providence, especially as the word “framed” means adjusted. This verse is thought to give the secret of the faith of the elders (v. 21) who did not judge by appearances but understood that the dispensations were prepared by God, and consequently they believed He would overrule everything for the accomplishment of His purposes.”⁷

Here, then, in these opening three verses of Hebrews 11, we have faith’s description, demonstration and discernment.

In defining faith, Warren W. Wiersbe has helpfully stated that, “According to the Bible, true faith is obeying God in spite of feelings, circumstances or consequences. All of

These three verses, therefore, set the stage for the roll call of the faithful commencing with verse 4 of Hebrews 11.

Endnotes

- 1 Herschel H. Hobbs, *Hebrews*, p. 110
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 110
- 3 W.H. Griffith Thomas, “*Let Us Go On*,” p. 141
- 4 Hobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 111
- 5 Warren W. Wiersbe, *Run with the Winners*, p. 14
- 6 Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 142
- 7 *Loc. Cit.*
- 8 Wiersbe, *op. cit.*, p. 13

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The Priesthood of New Testament Believers

Part 3

The Sacrifice of Giving (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16)

A preacher said to a farmer, “If you had two farms would you give one to the Lord’s work?” The farmer said, “Yes, of course.” The preacher then said, “If you had \$2,000.00 would you give \$1000.00 to the Lord’s work?” “Preacher,” he said, “you know I would.” A third time the preacher said, “If you had two pigs would you give one to the Lord’s work?” The farmer then replied, “Preacher, that isn’t fair, you know I have two pigs.” This little story may be funny but it highlights how hard it is for us to give away what we actually have in our possession. Philippians 4:18 and Hebrews 13:16 tell us that God considers our giving “a sacrifice.” When we give with the right motive God considers it well pleasing.

We can play mind games when it comes to sharing with others what God has given to us. 2 Corinthians 8:2-3 instructs us to give

“according to our ability.” We tend to think that those who have many possessions should be giving more and those who have little don’t need to give anything. After all, we think what little we are able to give wouldn’t help much. So some of us don’t give at all! No matter where we are on the economic scale, the Lord is pleased when we give according to our ability.

believers preparing a collection for the saints in Jerusalem, the principle is still the same. We should give proportionately. The New Testament does not command us to tithe. This form of giving was part of the Mosaic Law and a form of taxation (see Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 12:5-6; 14:22-24, 28, 29). In actuality, if we only give ten percent we end up giving less as one’s earning power increases. For

No matter where we are on the economic scale, the Lord is pleased when we give according to our ability.

“It’s not what you do with a million; if riches should be your lot. It’s what you are doing at the present, with the dollar and quarter you’ve got.”

Second Corinthians 8:3-4,12; 9:5-7 instructs us to give willingly out of love. The greatest motivation for giving is the cross. There “*God gave His Son*” and the “*Son gave Himself*” (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20). I remember many years ago my wife and I were going through a particularly difficult time and our youngest daughter Kristy came to us and said, “Daddy, I can give you my money.” She had a small allowance and was willing to part with it all! Why? Because she loved us she wanted to share with us.

First Corinthians 16:1-3 teaches us to give “*proportionately*.” While the context has to do with the Corinthian

example, we might give ten percent of \$100.00 which meant that we kept \$90.00 for ourselves. If we gave \$20.00 of \$200.00, we would be keeping \$180.00 for ourselves. The best and most responsive way to give is to look at Calvary and give proportionately.

Sympathy to others (Heb. 4:15 cf. Rom. 12:15)

As priests we have the privilege of encouraging others (Heb. 10:25). The Lord Jesus is our Great High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses and He is our example. He wept with Mary and Martha when Lazarus had died (John 11:35); He touched the untouchable leper (Matt. 8:3); He showed compassion on the widow of Nain whose only



son had died (Luke 7:11-15). He is our example.

“Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul,” wrote one sensitive believer. In this world there are incalculable numbers of people lonely, hurting and suffering. In God’s family many are discouraged, sick, lonely and needing someone to come up along side of them and offer words and actions of encouragement. Romans 12:15 is a striking verse. We read, *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”* It is interesting to note that *“rejoicing”* and *“weeping”* are both emotional responses. We are to respond in like manner. Sometimes we respond with intellect to emotion—that is, we resent those who have been blessed and are rejoicing, or criticize those who are weeping as if they should “just snap out of it.” Is this the godly way to respond? No we are to respond with emotion to emotion. When one rejoices, we join with him in rejoicing. If he is weeping, we are to join in his weeping, showing our sympathy for him. The Japanese have a proverb that says, “I can live a whole winter’s night on one compliment.”

We, as priests, can encourage our spouses, our children, our parents, our friends, our leaders, etc. We can

encourage others both verbally and non-verbally. We can call a believer and tell him we are praying for him. We can write a note to our loved ones telling them how much we love them

“Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul.”

and encourage their spiritual growth. There seems no end to ways we can, as a NT priest, show sympathy and encouragement to others.

Sharing the Gospel (Rom. 15:16)

The New American Standard Bible renders this verse as follows. *“To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”* We seldom link the priesthood of believers with evangelism. But this verse tells us they should be taken together! Paul uses priestly language to describe his work of evangelism (Rom. 1:14-16). We should see evangelism as part of our work as a priest. To avoid witnessing is to ignore the priesthood of the believer. Every priest is a witness! Every believer is a missionary! Every church is a church of workers! Devotion to the Lord Jesus is again the great motivator for sharing the gospel with others. Personal evangelism is the fundamental NT method (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21). It is all too easy to depend on gospel preachers and traveling evangelists to do this for us. Weekly gospel meetings have been used greatly of the Lord in winning the lost but along with them come the dan-

ger of “inviting people to gospel meetings” rather than being faithful to witness personally to family, friends and neighbors.

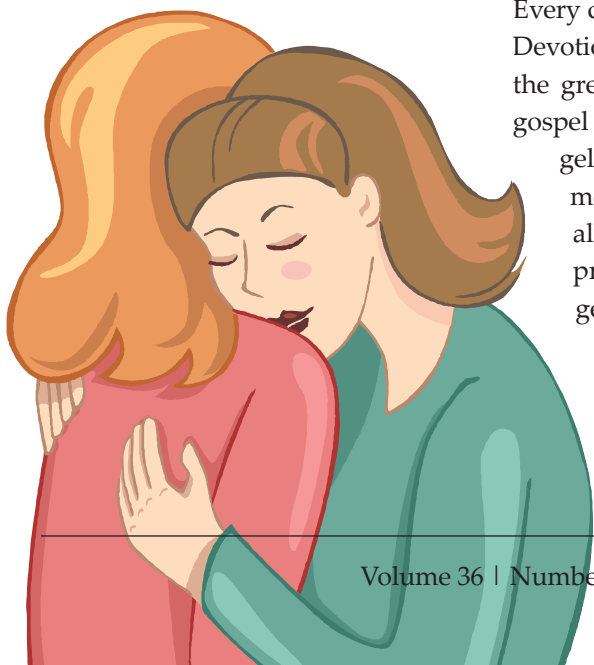
All of us have our own extended family. That is, a certain circle of unsaved people whom we have contact with on a regular basis. Some of these we may see every day or there may be others we have regular contact with by telephone. The latter is especially true of family. This gives us great opportunity to pray for and witness to them. The NT Priest is a witness!

Showing Forth His Praise (1 Pet. 2:9)

His “praises” refers to His “excellencies, gracious dealings and glorious attributes.”¹ Some can do this privately and other’s publicly. The Scriptures (see the Psalms) is our handbook for praise. We can praise Him for His Person, His creation, His Son and His salvation. An important distinction should be mentioned here. We must not confuse priesthood and ministry. The fact that a person is a priest does not mean that he has a God-given right to preach in the local assembly. Preaching and teaching should be done by those who are gifted (Rom. 12:4-8). All believers are priests but not all believers are gifted for ministry of the Word. Confusing these two truths can bring discouragement to an assembly.

Prayer (Heb. 4:16)

“The real innermost centre of the New Testament general priesthood of the church and all its members,



however, is the life of prayer.”² Prayer is not an addition to our service but is the main part of it. We follow the example of our Great High Priest (Heb. 7:25). Prayer should be a vital part of our personal lives and of our local church. What a privilege to pray to the God of the Universe through the Name of His Son Jesus Christ (John 14:13)!

We can draw near to Him, we can meet Him in prayer and we can pray to Him about others. This speaks to me of the intimacy of fellowship with God.

The fundamental reason for praying is that we recognize our need of Him. It is interesting that the word “supplication” in Ephesians 6:18 is “a wanting, a need.”³ The idea of this word is that we sense our deep need and express that need in prayer. Could it be that our prayer life is shallow because we do not sense our need of the Lord? A man who is drowning will call for help because he senses that he could drown.

Another striking truth about prayer lies in the meaning of a word for prayer that Paul only uses two times in his letter. In Timothy 2:1 we are instructed to “intercede” for all men. This same word is translated “prayer” in 4:5. A closer look at this word reveals an astounding truth. Again, W. E. Vine defines this word as “a lighting upon, a meeting with.”⁴

Kenneth Wuest says, “The verbal form means ‘to fall in with a person, to draw near so as to converse familiarly.’ Hence...does not mean intercession in the accepted sense of that word, but rather, approach to God in free and familiar prayer.”⁵ We can draw near to Him, we can meet Him in prayer and we can pray to Him about others. This speaks to me of the intimacy of fellowship with God.

Many years ago an English writ-

er, Sir Hall Caine, wrote a book entitled *The Scapegoat* about a Jewish couple who had no children. Wonderously she eventually gave birth to a beautiful little girl. They named her Naomi. But it was a sad birth. Little Naomi was deaf, dumb and blind. She never heard the voices of her parents, and never saw the faces of her parents. In due course the mother died and the father was left to bring up his little girl who lived in a world of total darkness and silence. The most moving section of this book is when the author tells of how the father would sometimes awaken at night to see a little white-robed figure standing near his bed. Little Naomi had learned how to navigate her way through the home and when she would awaken she got out of bed and made her way to the bedside of her father who loved her so much. The author speculated, “Did she awaken because she had a bad dream?” or “Maybe she was thinking about her mother who had died?” “No,” said Sir Hall Caine, “it was just that she wanted to be near her father.” I was deeply moved when I read this part of the story. I had to ask myself, “Do I love the Lord enough that I want to draw near to Him in prayer?”

He delights in our fellowship and our prayer. What greater privilege could we have as a priest!

End Notes

1. Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Volume II, 1 Peter, Kenneth Wuest, p. 57
2. In the Arena of Faith, Eric Sauer, p. 139.
3. Vines Expository Words in the NT, p. 481
4. Ibid, p. 330
5. Wuest Word Studies, Volume II, p. 39

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Call Upon The Name of the Lord

Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21)

Many people today are asking the same question that was asked by a Philippian jailer when facing the greatest crisis of his life: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The verse we are dealing with in this meditation provides the simple answer.

The Qualification for Salvation

The verse presumes that the person involved is conscious of the need to be saved. Indeed that is the only qualification demanded before one can receive God's salvation. One must be willing to take the humble place and to freely admit that one is a sinner in need of salvation. Some self-righteous Pharisees criticized the Lord Jesus one day, for eating and drinking with sinners, and the Lord's response was "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick" (Luke 5:31).

One must come to the end of one's attempts to gain merit with God through good works, and to realize that these can never save.

The Scope of Salvation

It is also important to notice that the verse applies to a universal audience—the great "whosoever."

God's offer of salvation is not restricted to a particular favoured nation or people, but in its lavish provision, it is available to all. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Condition of Salvation

Because Christ has died for sinners on the cross, does not mean that all of humanity will be saved. God has granted man a free-will, and God will not force Himself, or His salvation, on the unwilling. He leaves the choice with us. Will we receive His salvation, or will we reject it?

For those who are willing to be saved, they are asked to "Call upon the

very important, because the Word of God says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). This means that the Lord Jesus is the source of salvation, to the exclusion of any other.

One must come to the end of one's attempts to gain merit with God through good works, and to realize that these can never save.

name of the Lord." We see this demonstrated as we read through the Gospel records, how that people received the Lord's salvation through calling on His name. Blind Bartimaeus was begging outside the city of Jericho, and when he learned that Jesus was passing by, he began to cry "Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me," and Jesus stopped and gave him his sight. The thief dying on the cross called upon the name of the Lord. He cried, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." The Lord's immediate response was, "Today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). Many more instances could be quoted, but these suffice to establish the basis of receiving God's salvation. Dear unsaved reader, let the Lord hear your call today and be saved instantly, and eternally.

The Source of Salvation

Note that the name upon which we must call is "the Lord." This is

The Assurance of Salvation

The grand result of calling on the name of the Lord is this— "you shall be saved." This is what God has said. We can have the assurance of sins forgiven, deliverance from hell and the lake of fire, and the blessed hope of heaven and home at the end of life's day. We need never again doubt what our eternal destiny will be. The Lord Jesus said, "I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). What assurance, what peace, what joy, we find in these promises of the Lord Jesus.

As we conclude this meditation, it is our earnest hope that someone will "Call upon the name of the Lord, and be saved." For further help email:

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He Leads

The Saviour does not always lead
Beside the waters still.
Sometimes, He leads through darkest night,
Where fearful shadows chill.
But, Oh! The joy when comes His word,
"Stand still" — "just wait" — "be strong."
He'll come and fill your heavy heart
With Heaven's joyful song.

Sometimes we're led through waters deep —
We cannot understand:
'Tis then, dear child remember,
The Saviour holds your hand:
"Just trust Me" — "prove Me" — "Listen,
Whenever you're afraid,"
For, "I will never leave thee,"
This promise He has made.

Do you wonder why the trials? —
Why such battles press the soul?
Does it seem God has forgotten.
As the billows o'er you roll?
Oh! weary, heartsick, child of God,
Temptations will not cease.
But, He who giveth Grace and Power,
Will also give you peace.

— Author Unknown