Whom Shall I Send?



Watchman Nee

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WATCHMAN NEE

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Does God work alone or does He work with man? Let us see that aside from the work of creation which He performs alone, God always works with man and works in man. If He does not obtain the man He looks for, He will not do the work He plans but will wait until He does obtain His man, and then His work shall be done. Such knowledge reveals the unspeakable love of God towards man, but it also places upon man a tremendous responsibility.

Throughout the various chapters of this present volume,

Watchman Nee—and his close associate Dr. C. H. Yu (in Chapter 2)—present God's need of man conclusively. Although it is God himself who indeed does the work, nevertheless He will not work without the cooperation of man. He will

first work in man and then work through man. So that what the author discusses in the book at the very outset is the *kind* of man whom God can use in His service: one who is redeemed and fully yielded, one who knows his absolute incompetency, and who has only one desire of pleasing the Lord.

Then is explained the nature of service: how the man of God must serve the Lord in the spirit, how his service needs to be towards the increase of spiritual value, and how his service today is but a preparation for the service in eternity. Finally, two illustrations from the Old Testament are presented for the purpose on the one hand of exhorting the man of God to keep always the "freshness" of the spirit through constant communion with the Lord and on the other hand of instructing the servants of God as to the way of corporate guidance in the church.

The cry of the triune God is, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" May our response be, "Here am I; send me" (Is. 6.8).

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Being a collection of messages given on various

occasions by Watchman Nee, together with one

message (Chapter 2) given by his close associate Dr.

C. H. Yu. Because of the relatedness of their content,

these messages are now being translated and published

as a single volume.

Scripture quotations are from the American

Standard Version of the Bible (1901), unless

otherwise indicated.

1

1 Whom Shall I Send?

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I

send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am 1;

send me. (Is. 6.8)

She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto

Jehovah, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. (1 Sam. 1.10-11)

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.

(John 7.17)

One

We may clearly notice in the Bible that God needs man, since He needs his cooperation in order to accomplish His eternal plan. In the six days of creation, man is the center of God’s work. After God has created man He rests; for without man, He cannot rest. Although man afterwards falls, God’s purpose

concerning him is not changed. He still wants to apprehend him. Man's salvation, man's edification, and man's spiritual maturity in life are all for the sake of satisfying God's need. In His work God has a great need, which is, that He needs man's cooperation. It may be said that in God's work there is no place nor time when man does not participate. Man is called to work together with God; He must have man. (The work of God mentioned here does not, of course, include the six days of creative work because the six days of creation were obviously undertaken by God alone, man having had no part in it.)

We may trace from Genesis to Revelation and see that God is always seeking, always apprehending, always leading and using man *8*

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as the channel of His working. Before He does a thing, He first gets hold of man. And if He cannot obtain His man, He cannot do His work. Let us look at some illustrations of this fact.

In the story of Noah and the ark it is evident that during the time of Noah the Lord desired to save men. But if He could not find Noah, He had no way to accomplish His will. Hence God must find a Noah—He must find a person who would be in one mind with Him and who walked with Him. And through this person He would be able to fulfill His purpose. Desirous of having an ark, God must find one whose heart was toward Him and who would cooperate with Him so that He could use him to build the ark. And after God had found in Noah a man who was in one accord with Him, He began to work. Hence let us see that unless the Lord had obtained the man, He could not have worked. In order for God to have set in motion in the universe the events surrounding the story of the ark, He needed first to have apprehended Noah. Now this He did. And such is the walking and working together of man with God and God with man.

Look also at the story of Moses. God had the thought of delivering the children of Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, but He initially must apprehend Moses. Without Moses, God has no way to save the children of Israel. Yes, God is almighty and He is full of power; nevertheless, if He does not have a Moses there would seem to be no way for God to rescue the children of Israel. Should Moses refuse to be used by the Lord, the latter must wait till He can find the man whom He *can* use before He is able to deliver Israel. Hence in this incident of Moses having been used by the Lord to save the children of Israel, we notice

again how God needs the cooperation of man.

The principle involved is made abundantly clear.

Or consider another instance from the Old Testament. When the people of Israel came to Mount Sinai, God was intent upon building a tabernacle for them so that He might fill it with His glory and by its means dwell among men. In order to build such a tabernacle the Lord

must lay hold of a group of people to construct it. Now if God had not found Moses or this group of people to erect the tabernacle, He would not have been able to manifest himself to the children of Israel nor could He have dwelt among men.

With respect to the New Testament period, we see that at the coming of the Lord Jesus the cooperation between man and God finds its purest expression. Who is the Lord Jesus? He is God becoming flesh. Since no man in the entire universe can meet God's demand, God himself comes to be a man. Though the Lord Jesus is far superior to men, yet during His days on earth He always stands on the ground of a man. Though He is God, the Son of God, He nonetheless does everything from the position of man.

When, for example, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness, Satan declares to Him time and again that if He is the Son of God, He can do this and that. Satan attempts to lure Christ away from His standing as a man to get Him onto the ground of God. But the answer of our Lord Jesus is this: "*Man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4.4). By this He means to say: I am here to be a man, I am today being tempted because I am the Word that has become the flesh of man; I am Jesus of Nazareth. Later on, when He casts out demons, they cry out: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God"; but he forbids them

to speak out (Mark 1.23-26). For in Christ's coming to this world, the emphasis of His life is to be on the human side: "For the Son of man," He declares, is come "to seek and to save that which was lost"

(Luke 19.10). Recall, too, that when Nathanael comes to see the Messiah he exclaims: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel”; to which the Lord Jesus replies: “Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1.49-51).

The Lord Jesus always speaks about “the Son of man” doing such and such, fully indicating that while He is on earth He always stands *10*

on the ground of the Son of man. This is because God must

accomplish His work through man. But finding that man in general could not answer His demand, God sent His beloved Son to this world to be a man in order to answer His demand and accomplish His work. Some time afterward we see the Lord Jesus sending out the Twelve, and then the Seventy (Luke 9.1-2, 10.1). By this we can

learn that for God to have His work done, He must always apprehend a people. From Genesis to Revelation we discover that all the works which God has done among men are done by the hands of men.

Without men God cannot finish His work.

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” asks God. The reason why many people are not being drawn into the kingdom is not because God has no desire to have the gospel preached, nor because He has no intention to save men, but because He does not have the man or men whom He can use. Many believers are possessed by vainglory; many Christians are engrossed in enjoyment; many are too occupied with their families; many are enslaved to comfort. These people care only for their own interests. They have no heart for preaching the gospel or doing God’s work. Many people remain unsaved not because God has no will to save but because we do not cooperate with Him—Oh! if every brother or sister were willing to cooperate with God, who could count the number of people He would save? The reason God’s work is held back is because He does not have His man. Do let us realize that the Lord must have you and me before He can perform what He wants to do.

Two

In the Scriptures is to be found one particularly precious fact—

that God treasures especially a heart which inclines towards Him.

The story of Moses beautifully illustrates to us how a man had a heart desire to save the children of Israel for God's sake. Although he was not used by the Lord until he was eighty years old, Moses' heart

desire began at forty, not later at eighty. After forty long years had elapsed, God still had not forgotten the desire of this man's heart. So He sought after Moses, the man of God.

This was not only true with Moses; it was also true of Samuel.

Hannah his mother prayed to the Lord and vowed a vow, saying: "If thou wilt indeed . . . give thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life" (1 Sam. 1.11). Because

Samuel's mother had this desire of her heart towards God, Samuel was afterwards called and used by the Lord to accomplish His plan for that particular dispensation. Whenever the Lord sees a heart desire towards Him, He treasures it.

If you read the Bible carefully, you will discover that God gives His spiritual riches, life, and light to only one class of people. Who are among this class of people? Those who yearn to be used by the Lord. The same holds true with respect to spiritual power; for spiritual power is not merely something external; it comes from your heart desire for God and your consecration towards Him. Real power is based on the measure of your heart towards God. Real power is based on how much you love the Lord.

Let us recall a man in the Old Testament by the name of Samson.

Here was a man who was full of power. The Philistines did not know where his power came from, but they found out the secret of his power through the woman Delilah. The source of his power, they learned, was in his hair. And as soon as

his hair was shaved, Samson's power was lost (Judges 16.16-17). What was there about

his hair to make him powerful? This hair of Samson's, we must remember, was the hair of a Nazarite. And a Nazarite in Bible times was one who was fully consecrated to God. And hence all real spiritual powers derive from the measure of one's consecration to the Lord. If our consecration is superficial, we shall be like a paralyzed person who has no power. But if our consecration to God is absolute, we will find the power. Therefore, no matter how and where we seek,

we must be mindful continually that power is conditional upon man's consecration.

Suppose, for example, that God has touched a certain matter in a sister's life. She struggles with Him for a long time and will not submit to Him. Although she likes to pray with people, her prayer is of no avail because she has not yet consented to God's demand on her. When she tries to help others, she finds she cannot do so in spite of her great effort. But one day the love of Christ so constrains this sister that she yields with tears to God. And after having thus answered God's demand, she now goes out to help people and they are truly moved. This shows that spiritual power comes from consecration. In the measure of your consecration will be the measure of the power which God gives you.

Someone may ask: Why is it that other people have light but I do not? Why cannot I see too? In the story of Samson we are shown that when his hair was shaved his power was lost and his eyes were

plucked out (Judges 16.20-21). We do not have light and we do not see because we are not wholly consecrated. "Where thy treasure is,"

said the Lord Jesus, "there will thy heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye ... But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. 6.21-23) Hence to the degree that our heart is towards God, to that degree shall our spiritual eyes be opened. The reason why we as the children of God have no light is because we have no heart for the Lord. The reason for the lack of power among us is due to our inadequate consecration. In view of the insufficiency of

our heart towards God, the inadequacy of our consecration, and our insubordination to God's demand, God is not able to get through in us. Were our consecration more thorough, we would bring in spiritual riches and spiritual blessing. I sincerely believe that if brothers and sisters were totally consecrated to God we would see the gospel preached with more effectiveness and heavenly blessings more in abundance everywhere.

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If we look for real power and light—if we wish to bring down heavenly riches—there is no other way but to fulfill God's demands.

As much as our consecration is towards God, just as much will be the power He will give to us. May we not block God's way. We must allow Him to have a way through us. We must turn our heart to Him, and we must answer His demand. Otherwise, we will hinder Him.

All that God requires of us is for us to turn our heart towards Him and to respond to His demand. For in the work of the Lord, He must apprehend man. But in case *we* do not fulfill His demand, He will find *someone else* who *will* respond to Him and make good His will.

May God strengthen our heart desire towards Him and may His will have a way out through us.

2

2 Work the Works of God∗

They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that

we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said

unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6.28-29)

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for

good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2.10)

I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1.11-12)

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood. (Gal. 1.16)

We are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3.9-15)

Man Cannot Do God's Work

In John 6.28 a group of people are found posing a question to the

Lord Jesus: "What must we do, that we may work the works of

∗ A message given by Dr. C. H. Yu, a close associate of Watchman Nee.—*Translator 16*

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God?" These questioners had zeal towards God, and they wanted to do His work: but they had a problem, in that they did not know what they must do in order to work the works of God. These people thought that if they only knew *what* to do, they could then do it. If the question of "what must we do" were answered, they could go ahead and work the works of God. To them, whether or not they were *able* seemed to be no problem at all so long as they knew what to

do. Here, then, were a people who thought of doing the works of God. They felt they could do His work and considered themselves capable enough to perform it.

How totally different was the Lord's answer to these men's question. "This is the work of God," said Jesus, "that ye believe on

him whom he hath sent" (v.29). Men declare that they can do the work, but the Lord replies that men should believe. "What must we do" expresses the confidence of man's ability; "ye should believe"

reveals the inability of man. To believe is to receive (see John 1.12).

To believe on Him whom God has sent is to believe on the Lord Jesus. But in believing, neither man's merit nor his ability is considered. Not what man *can do*, but what God has *done*. All that is required of man is to receive. He needs only to stretch out his hand and receive the Son of God. "Believe" simply means that God has done the work, that He has given His only begotten Son, that man needs to do nothing but accept Him whom God has given.

God Has Done the Work

"This is the work of God," proclaimed the Lord. Man in his ignorance deems himself capable of doing God's work. And thus he becomes zealous and in tends to do it. The Lord answers, however, that the work of God is for man to believe on Him whom God has sent. This is the work *of God*: not a matter of man doing God's work, but that of God himself doing the work. It is God's work, not man's.

For man to believe in the Lord Jesus is the work of God. Only God

can do God's work, man cannot do it. Man has no part in the work of God.

The story of Martha and Mary in their house at Bethany is a very good illustration. Martha was busily serving the Lord. She did a lot of work. She became so busy that she asked the Lord to order her sister to help her. Martha might have thought that having spent so much energy for the Lord, having paid a great price and having suffered quite a lot, she surely could say that she had

served and worked for the Lord very much. Yet Jesus did not praise her; instead, He said this: “Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (see Luke 10.38-42).

What had Mary done? The Bible records that Mary sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus and listened to His word. Sitting there and hearing the word, she did nothing. Unlike her sister who busily worked about the house, Mary sat quietly at Jesus’ feet having communion with the Lord. Hearing the word was receiving the word of the Lord. Now the

word of the Lord is spirit and life (cf. John 6.63b), for the Lord gives

life to man through His word. And there Mary sat, receiving the Lord’s word. She gave opportunity to the Lord to work in her, to communicate himself to her through the word. She was but a receiving vessel. From this we can readily see that the one who is at work is not Mary but the Lord. Mary, it can be said, is the Lord’s work: she is the object of the work of the Lord. In this the Scriptures agree: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus” (Eph.

2.10). Thank the Lord, we are not man’s workmanship but we are God’s. And the workmanship of God is absolutely dependable. Oh what a glorious fact that we are God’s workmanship!

Man Works with God

If such be the case, does this not indicate that man has no place in God’s work? Yet why did Paul say that “we are God’s fellow-18

workers” (1 Cor. 3.9)? Why did he also tell the saints at Corinth:

“Are not ye my work in the Lord?” (1 Cor. 9.1) We need to see

precisely how Paul worked together with God. From 1 Corinthians 3

we may notice that God is the Lord of work while all others who work are under His management.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul informs us that the gospel which he preached came by way of revelation, for it pleased God to reveal

His Son in him (1.12,15-16). Having come into such a real and spiritual knowledge of Christ through revelation, he did not confer with flesh and blood. He was able to preach to the Gentiles the Christ whom he knew by revelation. So that the reason he was able to work at all was because he first allowed God to work upon him and work within him. God first revealed His Son in Paul by the Holy Spirit so that the Christ he knew was not known according to flesh but known

in spiritual reality (cf. 2 Cor. 5.16). Because he already possessed

Christ within, he could preach Him to the people without. Paul was not preaching an objective Christ, a Christ who was abstract. No, he preached a Christ whom he had known through subjective

experience. Christ to him was as real as his own self. Christ was in him, and he also dwelt in Christ. Christ was in his thought and word and action. Christ was Lord within, and thus he expressed Christ without. If you were to say he is Paul, he truly is Paul. But if you were also to say you meet Christ in him, this would likewise be true, since indeed, for him to live is Christ because he is fully apprehended

by Christ (Phil. 1.21, 3.12). What Paul preached was based on what he had possessed. As much as he knew Christ, that much could he preach Christ.

Hence working with God is not a matter of our proceeding to work for Him; rather, it is our allowing God to first work Christ in us and then our going out to tell people of the Christ whom we know through revelation. The work is actually done by God, with man merely reporting what God has done. So that when Paul declared to the saints at Corinth, “Are not ye my work in the Lord?”, he meant

that because he had preached to them the Christ whom he knew, they accordingly now possessed Him and were in Him.

What did Paul preach among the Corinthians? “I determined not to know anything among you,” he said, “save Jesus Christ, and him

crucified” (1 Cor. 2.2). This was the central message which he preached. Today the Holy Spirit still works along these same two lines: on the negative side, He eliminates the old creation in the believer by means of the cross; and on the positive side, He establishes the new creation in the believer by incorporating Christ in him through revelation. What Paul preached at the beginning is the same that the Holy Spirit reveals in the believer today. As in the early days the Holy Spirit gave revelation to Paul, causing him to know Christ and His crucifixion, so also today the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in us for us to know Him and His crucifixion. Let us reiterate this truth: that the work is performed by God, man merely reporting the work which God has already done in him.

The Foundation of Work

For this reason, Paul declares that Jesus Christ is *the* foundation of God’s work, and that no man can lay other foundations. He also announces that we are God’s husbandry and God’s building. As the seed that is sown to the field is Christ, so the future harvest must also be Christ. The foundation of the building is Christ, and hence the building thereafter must also be based on Christ. At the time we are born again, God puts the life of Christ in us. We thus obtain a life which we never had before. The life we obtain at regeneration is an additional life for it is something which we did not have and is now added to us. This is the work of God. From then on, all the works of God in a man are based exclusively on this added life: and this life is

none other than Christ (Col. 3.4), who is the foundation of God’s work. In this ongoing work of God man’s hand, again, has no part; even the “best” of man cannot enter in here. The highest

responsibility of man is simply to cooperate with God, not to hinder His working. And hence the work of sanctification is but the continuation of this life, and victory is this life overcoming sin, flesh, the world and Satan. When this life (which is Christ) gains full control in man, that life is matured.

Thus the life which a believer receives at regeneration marks the beginning of God's working. And this same life governs the continuation and completion of God's work. Such being the case, the children of God—especially those who are called to labor for the Lord—must take special note of this. If such ones really want to labor with God, the work they do must be so pure. How we all need to be in fear and trembling and to resist all which comes from our

"best" so that God's work might not be contaminated. Let us recognize that we cannot do God's work if we have no revelation of the Holy Spirit nor have seen or experienced spiritual reality.

Only a born-again person can testify how the Lord saved him.

Without such experience of new birth, no one can do this work. Yet the same rule applies to victory, sanctification, fullness of the Spirit, Christ reigning within, and so forth. Only those who have received grace and actually experienced these things can be witnesses of them.

And even at the time of witnessing, there is the further need of doing so in the Holy Spirit. Unless all is done in the Holy Spirit, the anointing of the Lord will not be present. In spiritual work we must depend on the Holy Spirit, for except the Spirit of the Lord work, man shall labor in vain.

Always remember that the work of God is your letting God first work in you and then letting Him work through you in the Holy Spirit. This alone will build the church.

Work the Works of God

21

Materials of the Works

1 Corinthians 3.12 tells us that the working materials of some people are gold, silver and costly stones while those of other people are wood, hay and stubble. One day fire shall appear to test each man's work as to what sort it is. We all know that wood, hay and stubble are readily consumed, but gold, silver and costly stones cannot be. Gold stands for that which comes from God; it is God's work. Silver signifies redemption; it is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. And costly stones represent the work of the Holy Spirit since He will incorporate

the life of God in us by means of revelation so that God and man can become one. This constitutes today's subjective experience of ours. A costly stone is a compound which is formed in high-degree heat. Later, it is carved by human hands to make it into a lustrous stone. So, too, is God's work of incorporation in the life of a believer. On the one hand, God will use all kinds of environment as fierce fire to "burn" the believer as it were in the crucible of experience; and on the other hand, He will shape that believer with His own hand that through the revelation of the Holy Spirit he might get rid of the unwanted elements while keeping the desired ones. Thus shall a believer shine in lustre to the glory of God.

Such people who come forth as costly stones are God's

masterpieces in Christ. They are a people whom the Lord can trust.

For example, the words in 1 Corinthians 7.25-40 are plainly spoken

by Paul himself, for he does not have the commandment of the Lord; yet at the end of that same passage it is recorded that he thinks he also is inspired by the Spirit of God. Note, too, that at a certain period in the life of Madame Guyon, whenever she purposed a thing in her heart, it was then done outwardly. This is because her purpose was God's purpose. Though the words and works that such as these spoke and performed came from themselves, nevertheless God acknowledged their words and works as being from Him. God was not afraid to be joined together with them. Those believers who have lost themselves in God are like a drop of water which loses itself in *22*

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the mighty ocean to the end that that drop of water and the ocean become inseparable. Such people are costly stones, the work of the Holy Spirit—to the glory of God.

Consequently, how humbly we must prostrate ourselves before God—letting Him work in our lives to incorporate the life of Christ into us. Only thus shall we be able to help other people and cause them themselves to see and experience the incorporating work of the Holy Spirit. Such kind of work is work done with costly stones.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Now let us consider for a few moments how the Holy Spirit works in man.

1. The commencement of the work—Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit—the Worker—comes to earth to work: convicting people of sin and convincing them into believing the Lord Jesus. He then dwells in the believer and continues to work in him, causing the believer to grow in spiritual stature until his life is fully matured.

2. The location of the work—man's spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the spirit of the born-again person. This renewed spirit becomes the headquarters of His work. All spiritual works originate from there.

The Holy Spirit works both directly and indirectly. In working directly He reveals the mind of God in man's spirit and then enlightens the soul of man by giving understanding to man's mind so that man may direct his body to execute God's will. In working indirectly, He engineers all kinds of environments through which to speak to man. Sometimes He uses the Bible, sometimes an angel, sometimes another person or a thing or an affair. For instance, God spoke to brother Lawrence through the withered tree in the winter,

leading him into believing God's power of resurrection. The all-wise God has many ways to speak to man. Yet one thing is certain, which is, that the word God speaks must enter man's spirit; otherwise, it will produce no real relationship with man's spiritual life.

3. The direction of the work—from the center to the

circumference. The work of God moves from the center to the circumference. God reveals at man's center—the spirit, then reaches the soul of his understanding, which finally brings about the engaging of man's body to execute His will. To illustrate: in the case of holiness, the God who is known in the spirit is absolutely holy, and this holy God is joined to my spirit through the Holy Spirit (". . .

he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit"—1 Cor. 6.17). God then

enlightens my mind with this light that is in my spirit so that my mind begins to understand. As soon as I understand, this power of holiness commences to have its effect in my mind in that I will forbid all unholy thoughts to enter and instantly reject anything that is unsuitable to God. Thus shall my soul become holy. And ultimately, this effect reaches even to my body—especially the eyes; so much so that the power of holiness within will control the eyes to see only what is agreeable to holiness and not to see anything that is unholy.

Accordingly, when people who have truly known holiness in such a way are used by the Holy Spirit to speak, they are able to tell others the holiness which they have seen and experienced. And such a word will produce results in others.

4. The way of the work—revelation. Revelation is God's way of working. Since revelation occurs in man's regenerated spirit, the spirit, and not the mind, occupies the first place. Spirit and life precede mind and brain. Oh how many people use their mind and brain when seeking to know God's will! How their thoughts are troubled! They cannot know the will of God because they have taken the wrong course. God wants us to wait for His revelation in our spirit; then He will enlighten our mind and cause us to understand His will. We must therefore realize that in spiritual matters the mind *24*

comes into play second, not first. This is not to suggest that in spiritual things we should never use the mind, but it *is* meant to intimate that we should use the mind in the second instance, not in the first.

Here we wish to enunciate what are the factors which constitute a spiritual seeing. Judging from the word of God, there are at least three essential factors. *First* is revelation. Revelation means an opening up or an unveiling. For example, a book hidden in a chest is not visible because the door to the chest is closed. The door must be opened before you can see. *Second* is light. Suppose there is no light in the house; if so, you are not able to see a thing even if it is placed before you. *Third* is an opened eye. Suppose that neither the book is covered nor the light is absent; yet if your eyes are closed, you still cannot see the book. Let us realize that the Holy Spirit unveils the reality of Christ to man through revelation, and He equally enlightens the mind of man's soul. The mind is the eye of the heart. If a person's eyes are not like that of the Laodiceans (see Rev. 3.14ff.),

he will no doubt see. The Laodiceans could not see because they felt they had everything—they reckoned themselves as already “having”.

All such self-conceited “having” becomes the veil on the inner eyes.

Hence blessed are the poor in spirit.

5. The course of the work. The course of God’s work is twofold: Negatively, God makes man know himself by revelation so that in the power of the Holy Spirit and by the cross he may rid from his life those things of sin, the flesh and the world. Positively, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in man’s spirit and continues to communicate Christ to man that he may receive Christ by faith, may abide in Christ, and may let the life of Christ be incorporated into him. The measure of the knowledge of Christ by revelation will determine the stature of the man’s spiritual life. The end of the course is the complete elimination of the self life that Christ may wholly possess the man.

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6. The pattern and goal of the work. When Moses built the tabernacle, he was given the pattern by God on the mount and was warned not to make any change but to do everything according to the pattern shown to him. Today the Holy Spirit builds in us according to the pattern of Christ; therefore nothing outside of Christ may be brought in. The work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely pure. He will work to make man as pure as is the Lord (cf. 1 John 3.3).

The Proper Attitude for Those Worked On

From the life of Mary we may learn how very good her attitude is.

In analyzing her life we discover it includes at least the following four points.

(1) She sits at the *Lord’s* feet, not at anybody else’s. Mary is there communing with the Lord. This is the shortest and quickest way to grow in life. Draw near to the Lord moment by moment, love Him and worship Him, hold communion with Him incessantly and abide continually in His presence. There is no way better than this. Many in the past who knew God deeply have found this way. Madame Guyon, for example, once said that “drawing near to God includes all the

services"; and Paul the apostle instructed us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5.17). If people will, with unveiled face, hold uninterrupted communion with the Christ who abides in them, they will be transformed into the image of the Lord (see 2 Cor. 3.18).

(2) She sits at the Lord's *feet*. This indicates that Mary takes a most humble position. Humility is the most important attitude for obtaining God's blessing: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5.5). Humility is not looking less at oneself; humility is not looking at oneself at all. Humility may be described as being selfless or reckoning oneself as nothing. If we always draw near to God in deep humility, we will no doubt receive God's grace.

(3) She *sits* at the Lord's feet. Mary is not like her sister Martha disturbed with many things. Stillness frequently is spiritual power.

One of the great difficulties with man is that he cannot be quiet before God. He is often led to the outside world by his eyes and mind. We know that among the members of the physical body the eyes .are the busiest; and within the soul, the mind is the most active element. A disquieted person has the most difficulty in receiving revelation. A wandering mind and uncontrolled thoughts are like waves on the face of a lake whose waters move unceasingly, thus blurring the reflection on its surface of the trees and flowers along its banks. If one desires to have the image of the Lord so impressed within him that he might be transformed according to the same image, he must be still.

(4) She is there *hearing the word of the Lord*. As we have said earlier, the word which the Lord speaks is spirit and life. Through that word He gives himself to man. Mary's listening to the word gives opportunity to the Lord to communicate himself to her that she might gain Him and be like Him. She is always there as one who receives the Lord himself. What she hears is not mere sound; she is there meeting the Lord. How regrettable it is if, in listening to the word being preached, one only hears a human voice without meeting the Christ within the word.

Those Who Deliver God's Word

When a servant of the Lord delivers the word of God he must pay attention to the following points.

(1) Speak in the Holy Spirit. On the one hand always be fearful and trembling for oneself, on the other hand always be tightly controlled and managed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. If spiritual things are not spoken in the Holy Spirit, they give great discomfort to the hearers. Your inward feeling, that is to say, your spiritual sensitivity, will tell you that your word is right but the source is

wrong or that the letter is correct but the man is wrong. With the result that God is not able to endorse the word spoken. If I may use a figure of speech, it probably is like putting a gold ring on a pig's nose: they are totally incompatible.

(2) One cannot speak in a fleshly atmosphere. When people are joking and laughing so much that you cannot touch any spiritual atmosphere, you are not able to speak. This will be like expecting an egg in an ice box to hatch into a chick.

(3) Deliver spiritual reality to people. What God reveals is spiritual reality. It is as real as things in the physical realm. For example, a tea cup is a material thing, and so is a chair. They are real physical items. But spiritual things are just as real. They are not mere theories or vain philosophies. Hence in the course of delivery one must present the real thing.

(4) While speaking, ask the Lord to give you suitable spiritual words to explain spiritual things. We know, for example, that in spiritual experience, self examination (or introspection) is bad; it is not good to turn inside and look at oneself. Now concerning this matter, brother Lawrence once observed that self-examination betrays the fact that the ashes of self-love have not been completely disposed of, that it is the action of self-love pursuing self-perfection under the mask of zealousness. We thus see that brother Lawrence is able to use spiritual words to explain spiritual things. It is what is meant in Scripture by "combining spiritual things with spiritual

words" (1 Cor. 2.13).

(5) Only the spiritual man knows spiritual things; the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2.14). Why?

Because there is no spiritual thing in the natural man, hence he cannot understand; whereas the spiritual man *can* know because he has spiritual things in him.

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Let me illustrate. Suppose you meet a person who has never seen a watch. You, try to tell him about the watch. Yet no matter how clearly you describe, it is still inconceivable to him. But if you show him the watch first and then tell him that this item in your hand is a watch and is made for a certain purpose, he will readily understand.

By having seen the watch first, he can then understand a description of it. It is equally true in the spiritual realm. For instance, regeneration is a Christian's first experience. Some people may have heard the truth for many years but are still not regenerated. If you try to share with them the experience of regeneration it is like telling a man born blind about the sun which to him is totally

incomprehensible. Like the blind man who is told about the sun that he has never experienced seeing, there is no such conception of regeneration in them and therefore they cannot comprehend it. But if one of them is saved, he has the experience of regeneration. Yet due to an unclear presentation of the gospel which he heard, he may not know that he is now a born-again person. He may still be *expecting* to become a saved person later. But when the truth of regeneration is clearly presented to such an individual he then can easily grasp it because he already has in his experience the fact of regeneration.

Therefore, whoever delivers the word of God must first show the thing to people and then use appropriate words to describe it. Thus shall the hearers gain spiritual knowledge as well as spiritual experience. And if such is the case in the matter of regeneration, such shall be the case with all subsequent spiritual experiences. The more revelation a believer receives, the greater the progress in spiritual life. If there are spiritual words capable of pointing out the thing which people have received, this will help them to know what this thing which they have seen or experienced is. The church will truly be edified with the kind of

delivery of God’s word such as this.

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The Hearers

The hearers also should be attentive to certain points, such as the following.

(1) Do not plan on hearing beautiful teaching; rather, prepare to meet Christ. Listening to a message is not for the satisfaction of your mind, but for the supply of your life. Some preaching is quite thoughtful, clear and stirring, yet it has no spiritual effect. You must not admire this kind of speaking. The kind of preaching of the word of God you need to hear is that by which you may meet spiritual things and encounter Christ. Such a word comes forth in spiritual power to transform you spiritually and add to your stature of life. Let us all ask the Lord for grace that we may be given spiritual discernment in making accurate spiritual pursuit.

(2) When you hear some teaching which you do not understand, be humble and wait for God’s time, because spiritual comprehension is related to spiritual age. What you do not know now you may understand after a few more weeks, months or years. Do not carelessly criticize the thing which you do not know, lest you be hurt.

Neither regard spiritual things as easy, considering yourself as knowing all. Let it be recognized that some have to spend years to learn a lesson before they have a word to preach.

(3) Beware of misinterpreting with substitutes. Such kind of mental activity can be likened to the hearer who takes for a horse what a speaker has said about a deer. These two obviously have no resemblance, yet such misunderstanding can occur. For instance, in speaking of “reality”, the reality which we talk about denotes the thing in Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit; but many people—

even some who have labored for the Lord for many years—take action to be reality. But if action were reality, then the one spoken of

in 1 Corinthians 13.3 has far more reality. Yet we know that in the sight of God

he has no reality at all. (Of course, people *with* reality *30*

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do engage in action as well.) Or for instance, in our speaking of

“light”, to some of those who hear, the matter of seeing light refers to obtaining a new thought or having a new view in his mind. But because the source of such thought or view is the mind and not the Spirit, it carries no power. To another who hears, it may mean seeing a ray of light by his physical eyes. Neither of these two concepts is right; they are misunderstandings and substitutes. The true light of life originates from the revelation of the Holy Spirit which causes the mind to understand. What is seen is the real thing. The Holy Spirit makes one see the spiritual reality, which then carries with it power—it implements a change in life.

This that I am saying can be illustrated further in this way: At the time a person is saved, the Holy Spirit enlightens him, causing him to see his sins. Then and there he is convicted of the vileness of sin. He has no place to hide himself, and he truly hates sin. The sin which one recognizes under the light of the Holy Spirit far exceeds that which is known in the mind. This is called the light of life. How sad that people always have their substitutes so that they are unable to see the reality being spoken about. We need, therefore, to be humble.

Let us never consider ourselves as knowing all.

(4) Intercession. Let him who is a hearer really humble himself before God and pray for the speaker that God may release the word of life. He should pray also for the audience and his own self that the word which is heard may enter deeply and become revelation and light, to the end that the church may increase in the stature of Christ.

Such intercessory activity may be viewed as the cooperation between the hearer and the speaker.

Finally, may God be especially gracious to us that we may clearly understand that only God himself can do the work, since all we do is to describe the thing seen or experienced through revelation. Let us learn to cooperate with God, not to hinder Him. Let us not attempt to alter the pattern on the mount. Let us rely on the light of God to so

purify us that there remains no impurity in us. Oh how we need to wait and depend on the Lord constantly, always confessing with fear and trembling that "we are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17.10).

3

3 To Please the Lord

I marvel that you are so quickly removing from him

that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach

unto you any gospel other than that we preached unto

you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ. (Gal. 1.6-

10)

But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts. (1 Thess. 2.4)

Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or

absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. (2 Cor. 5.9)

One Basic Attitude

A true servant of God has a basic attitude, which is to please the Lord. In Galatians Paul declared, "Am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing

men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (1.10).

When Paul spoke this word, on the one hand he was so heartbroken at the quick removal of the Galatian believers from the gospel which they had heard him preach, and on the other hand he most solemnly expressed his attitude towards the Lord.

At the time he first went to Galatia to preach the gospel, he told the people that men are saved by the grace of the Lord and through faith, not by keeping the law. During those days many believed on the Lord. Those who believed also loved Paul, and to such degree that they were willing to have their eyes plucked out to give to him

(see 4.15). Later on, some people came and told the Galatians that

faith and grace alone was not enough since they would need the law

to perfect them (see 3.1-14). For this reason, Paul most seriously warned them: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (1.8). Nevertheless, the Galatians were so deeply seduced by this people that they were not happy with Paul when he contended earnestly for the truth of the gospel. So Paul wrote: "Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? ... Am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? " (1.10, 4.16).

Anyone who is God's servant must have this basic attitude of pleasing the Lord. If Paul had just compromised a little and not have been so serious about the gospel of the Lord, if he had said salvation was indeed by faith but it *also* depended on the works of the law as well, he could have exchanged the truth for the pleasure and welcome of the Galatians. There would have been no need for him to have to pay any cost. But Paul could not, and he would not sacrifice the truth. He must be loyal to the Lord. Disregarding the favor of men, he sharply reprimanded them: "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? ... Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (3.1, 5.4).

Such an attitude in Paul ought to be the attitude of every servant of God also. Who, then, are the servants of God? Many think that only those who preach the

gospel and deliver the word of truth are God's servants, and that the rest of the believers are not His servants.

Let us consider what the Bible says. It tells us that all the redeemed children of God are His servants: "For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God" (Lev. 25.55). How plainly it

is stated here that as long as a person is an Israelite who was brought forth by God out of Egypt, he is His servant. Not only Moses and not only Joshua are servants of God, but all the children of Israel whom

God brought out of Egypt were to be His servants as well. If you are a saved person, a child of God, you too are His servant.

Our knowledge of the Lord Jesus and of His blood is twofold: The blood of the Lord not only cleanses us from our sins, it also purchases us to be the Lord's. The Lord Jesus is not only our Saviour, He is also our Lord. How each of us needs to see that Jesus is my Lord and I am His servant, for He has purchased me with his blood. We should thoroughly understand the authority of the Lord over us that we may live for Him. He who has really seen the love of the cross has in him more or less a heart of love towards the Lord.

But he will also have about him a concrete expression—that of pleasing the Lord.

The Glory of God v. the Glory of Men

Why is it that some Christians cannot please the Lord? There is a major reason for it: they love the glory of men more than the glory of

God. John 12 tells that there were many of the Jewish rulers who believed on the Lord Jesus; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it lest they should be put out of the synagogues (v.42). They

dared not be open Christians. Their defect was in loving the glory of men more

than the glory of God (v.43).

Let me ask, Do we have the same propensity? Do we love men's glory more than God's? Some Christians do not dare to confess openly the name of the Lord Jesus. They are afraid to confess before men that they are Christians. They dare not give thanks publicly at meals. They even cease to have a prayer and study life. They stop attending meetings. Why? Often, it is because they are afraid that people might ridicule them, accusing them of being superstitious.

They love the glory of men rather than the glory of God. Allow me to say that if you really loved the Lord you would be determined to please Him, and that if you truly wanted to please the Lord you could never love the glory of men more than the glory of God.

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A Christian who pleases the Lord and is loyal to Him must also be faithful towards the truth of the Lord. For the sake of maintaining the truth Paul was unmindful of the opposition of men. Said the apostle:

"Am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? " (4.16) He

would rather have himself antagonized than to compromise the truth.

He would rather sacrifice himself than to sacrifice the truth. He preferred to suffer loss himself than to let the truth suffer any loss.

In the past, numberless Christians have paid tremendous costs for the sake of pleasing the Lord. They have desired to follow the Bible in all things. Whatever is in the Bible they would accept; whatever is not in the Bible they would reject. And for this, they have paid a dear price. It is quite true that if you are a little liberal about the truth by lowering its standard, you can escape many attacks and much scorn.

But let it be known that if you would stand firm for the truth, you will not be able to avoid persecution and you cannot be afraid of paying a price.

Once there was a brother who upon seeing the meaning of baptism in the

Scriptures wished to be immersed. But his father did not approve of it. The son therefore experienced a great struggle in his heart at the time. His dilemma was that if he were immersed he would hurt his father's heart; but if he were not immersed he would be disloyal to the Lord's word. As he was struggling in his heart over the issue, he was given a word by the Lord: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10.37). Here he

encountered this matter of cost. Would he please his parents or would he please the Lord? Thank God, the love of Christ captured him, so that he finally was baptized by immersion.

The story of this brother illustrates one critical thing: if you want to please the Lord, you must be absolutely obedient to the truth of the Lord. Had Paul in his day compromised even a little with the Galatian believers by not being so serious about the truth or by uttering some ambiguous words, he would have retained the

welcome and friendship of the Galatians. But he had already counted his cost. Come what may, he could not please men but must please God; otherwise, he would not be a servant of God. He would rather be taken as their enemy than not to tell the truth.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not; yea, wisdom, and instruction, and

understanding" (Prov. 23.23). Truth needs to be bought: it requires the paying of a price. If you mean to please the Lord and stand for the truth, you will have to pay the price. If you see the truth accurately, you must obey it to the end. Alas, that for the sake of pleasing men and being unwilling to pay the cost many Christians have made detours concerning truth. Yet the truth can only be *bought*, it is never for sale. Truth does not permit any change. It is

like the pillar of a house (cf. Rev. 3.12). A pillar is, not like a

window or a door which can be altered in dimension. It is

immovable; it cannot be lengthened or shortened at will. In other words, the

truth is absolutely unchangeable. In the event we are unable to pay the cost of and be obedient to some truth, then let us judge ourselves by confessing our weakness. We must not lower the truth because we cannot keep it or because it will affect us too much.

Otherwise, we will incur serious consequences before God.

Now we have already seen from the Scriptures that all the children of God are His servants. Furthermore, the word of God's Son informs us that a servant is not greater than his Lord (John 15.20).

The path that our Lord trod on earth is the path that we too must tread. What He received on earth must also be what we receive. If we confess ourselves as the Lord's servants, we should have this fundamental attitude of wanting to please the Lord. If this issue is not solved, we will sooner or later drop out of this course before us.

Countless people have fallen away from this path because they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

Oh how deeply ingrained in us is this issue of the glory of men.

Only after many dealings and much learning can it be removed from

the marrow of our souls. Ever since man ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the glory of men has become a basic problem in the soul of man. Each one of us has his own throne, and this throne is built on the glory of men. Yet if we would desire to be faithful servants of the Lord, we must come down from our thrones.

Otherwise, we will not be able to serve our Lord. Hebrews 12.2 tells

us that our Lord Jesus endured the cross, despising shame. He willingly chose the cross. And the cross is not only death, it is also shame. If you have ever truly been broken by the cross, there will be for you a clear experience of having despised shame. The failure of many Christians is caused by the fear of shame. Out of love for the glory of men they are not willing to forsake their own thrones.

Do not think that we are born with humility and gentleness. We do not realize just how proud we are. Who knows how much the grace of God must work in us before we will come down from our thrones and be delivered from the enticement of the glory of men. May God be gracious to us in causing us to have a heart to please the Lord, that by His grace we may be faithful servants. May we look forward to that day when all of us shall settle accounts at the judgment seat of Christ to hear Him say to us: “Well done, good and faithful servant”

(Matt. 25.21).

4

4 Serving God in the Spirit

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship in

spirit and truth. (John 4.23-24 mg.)

For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my

prayers. (Rom. 1.9)

For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. (Rom. 8.6)

One

Among the children of God, there are many who have a desire to serve the Lord but they unfortunately have not found the way to do so. They seem to be all right in doctrine and conduct, yet are greatly mistaken in the way of serving God. How can this situation be explained? Wherein lies the problem? The real issue, I believe, is whether such service comes from our mind or from deep down within us—that is to say, from within our spirit. In the matter of serving God, everything must originate from the inner feeling (and such inner feeling, let it be understood, does not refer to the fleshly feeling of our soul life but to the feeling

in our spirit). In prayer or in reading the Bible, in preaching the word of God or in any other spiritual pursuit, all must proceed from that inner feeling. Even in knowing people, we need to know them by that same feeling. If our life and our work are but the product of our thoughts, we have no way through in the spiritual realm. We may find our mind competent in other realms, but in the service of God everything must come out of the spirit. Let us truly recognize that in spiritual matters the first and foremost thing is for us to have feeling in our spirit; the mind is secondary here.

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Two

In our serving God we cannot serve according to our thought but we must serve according to our inner feeling. We must not only do the right thing but also have the right source. For example, preaching, praying, and reading the Bible are right activities, but if you preach and pray and read according to your own thoughts, and even though you do the right things, the source of your doing them is wrong. And thus you have traveled the wrong course. Instead, you should preach and pray and read according to your inner feeling.

A most precious experience to a child of God is that he may live and work according to his inner feeling. He may possibly have quite a few weaknesses; nonetheless his source is right, his way is correct; and eventually he will be brought to the place of his service being accepted by God. Consequently, in this area of service the first thing to be noticed is not the service itself but the source. Not so much the doing but the how to do it. All services for God must come from the spirit.

In reading books we may rely totally on our brain. But in touching God we use the wrong organ if we depend on the brain. It is with our spirit that we contact God. To illustrate: Here is electricity. If you touch it with a wooden rod, the wood does not conduct the

electricity. But if you touch electricity with a copper wire, immediately that copper wire will conduct it. Likewise, your prayer and Bible reading and preaching can be like a wooden rod making contact with electricity. They, like the wooden rod, will not be effective because you are using the wrong rod. In

spiritual matters you and I need to look to God and use what He has impressed upon our spirit. There is where we should pay attention. If our mind begins to turn as soon as we meet a problem in the spiritual realm, all our decisions will only come from our mind. And none is of any spiritual value before God.

Here, then, are two ways: one way is the thought, the other is the inner feeling. That which comes out of the thought will not help people in meeting God; only that which comes out of the inner feeling of our spirit will cause people to meet Him. When we stand up to speak a few words among the brothers and sisters, we need to be careful lest we initiate with our mind. Before we stand up, let us ask God to cleanse us from all uncleanness with the blood of His Son, and also ask Him to anoint us. We shall speak whatever our inner feeling moves us to speak. Even if the words are not fluent and are rather fragmentary, they nevertheless will profit people. But if these words come from the mind—and no matter how logical they may sound—they are of no avail.

Prayer is but one of various spiritual activities which must be done according to your inner feeling. When you kneel at your bedside to pray, for example, you may sense that there are words deep within you. Pray these words out. The more you pray the more you touch God. But supposing in the midst of your prayer your mind suddenly makes a turn; then you can no longer continue praying because you have no more word. While you pray in spirit and in truth, it is like the contact between electricity and a copper wire: the latter is conductive. But when you pray with your mind, it will be like touching electricity with a wooden rod: it will be entirely useless.

The spiritual person uses his spirit to touch God as well as to touch spiritual things. The natural man, however, lives and is motivated in all his actions according to what he himself thinks.

Therefore, when a thing touches you, it reveals where you are—as to whether you are in the thought of your soul or in the inner feeling of your spirit. If you do a thing because you think it is profitable to you or if you do not act because you reckon it will not be profitable to you, you may appear to be very clever from the human standpoint; but let me say that you have neglected the question of its

source.

How vain it is if your mind turns like the swift rotation of an electric fan or rushes on like an unbridled horse. You should first ask God to *42*

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restrain your thoughts so that you may detect what is being said in your spirit. If your spirit senses something to be right, it does not matter much even though the thing seems to be unexplainable. But if your spirit feels wrong, and no matter how rational or logical the thing is, it should not be done.

Suppose two Christian brothers have a quarrel and later they come to another brother asking him to judge between them as to who is right and who is wrong. If this other brother lives in his mind, he will invariably pay attention to their arguments both pro and con and find it easy to mix his own feelings—both love and hate—into the issue.

After he has finished hearing the quarrel, he will finally give his judgment as to who is right. Yet this is a judgment according to reason and argument. A Christian who lives in the thought realm always reasons, though in actuality his reasoning may not be accurate. For these two brothers have quarrelled because both have tried to argue as to who is right, and thus the third brother renders judgment from his mind according to argument. With the result that they who argue will argue more, they who are not submissive will be less submissive. But if this arbitrating brother should ask God to turn him from thought to spirit—thus enabling him to sense the issue in his spirit—he will be able to help these two quarreling brothers to come out of their reasonings.

We know that thought brings in reason, and reason can easily stir up a man’s emotion. When we touch our thought, we touch our emotion; and as we touch our emotion, we touch the natural.

Accordingly, we will not be able to help our brothers but will instead destroy them. How we need to learn well in this respect. We must ask God to be merciful to us and deliver us from the thought to the spirit so that we may sense in our spirit what we should do and say.

And thus shall we be able to help other people in solving their problems.

Three

In conclusion, let us recognize two very essential points: *the first* being that all who wish to learn to live in the spirit before God must learn to accept the dealing of the cross. For the cross will deal with our natural life, that is to say, our natural mind and emotion. If our natural mind and emotion are not dealt with we can hardly live in the spirit. Let us remember that when we are confronted by that thing which touches us in our mind, the first word we utter will probably be "How unreasonable!"—for we are persons who are inclined to reason. And whoever reasons lives in his thought, and whoever lives in his thought lives also in emotional impulse. But the one who lives in the spirit dares not argue according to his own opinion nor does he dare to speak according to his own emotional feeling. The one who is controlled by the Spirit of God is one who has experienced the dealing of the cross.

The second essential point is the cleansing of the precious blood.

If you learn to live in the consciousness of the spirit, you must always rely on the cleansing of the precious blood. To the extent that you rely upon its cleansing, to that extent shall there be divine light in your walk. If you have a great amount of uncleanness still unwashed by the precious blood, you will be opaque and dark. Only its cleansing will make you shine.

These two elements—the dealing of the cross and the cleansing of the precious blood—must be learned and experienced by all who expect to serve God. The reason why some Christians fail to live in the spirit is mainly due to the fact that their thought and emotion have not been dealt with and their uncleanness has not been washed by the precious blood. Consequently, they live their Christian life foolishly and have not allowed God to turn them to the spirit. Only by accepting the dealing of the cross and the cleansing of the precious blood may any of us see how much he has lived in thought and not turned to the spirit.

Some may say, “I do not have any inward feeling”—to which it may be replied that if anyone makes such a statement it is probably due to the fact that he has not been born again. Were he really born again, his spirit would have been quickened by God’s Spirit and he would thus have some inward feeling. Or else it is possible that he is born again but he is sick inwardly, for some inwardly sick people may lose their inner feeling. Such a person needs to accept the dealing of the cross and the cleansing of the precious blood.

Whoever lives in the spirit is one who is accepted by God. May God be gracious to us and lead us that we may live in the spirit and be among those who serve Him in the spirit.

5

5 Learning How to Serve—I

But now we have been discharged from the law,

having died to that wherein we were held; so that we

serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter. (Rom. 7.6)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of

God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. (Rom. 12.1)

And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. . .

And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water therein, wherewith to wash. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat; when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as Jehovah commanded Moses. (Read Ex.

40.17-33)

One

As we learn to serve God in the church, it is important that we be faithful in all our works; but we should also pay special attention to the increase of spiritual value. The purpose for doing all things well is to impart spiritual reality. If we merely have the business side without having sufficient measure on the spiritual side, we have departed from the original aim of serving God. For He has laid upon us a spiritual responsibility, and it will be a great loss if we only attend to the business side and neglect the life side. If we have lack on the life side, our services will only be activities—we will not be able to meet the needs of God's children, for what can truly meet the needs of His children is life. Therefore, we should strive for real progress in spiritual life before we are in a position to supply life through work and service to the brothers and sisters.

Nothing needs to be said here if we have no intention to serve God; but if we want to learn to serve Him, then we must learn

lessons on the spiritual side. In serving God, we cannot simply *do* the work without learning something of the *how*. we should continually remind ourselves not to concentrate on having a job done but to learn the spiritual lesson during the process. God wants us to learn and to make progress week after week and time after time. And often He will rather let us fail in the doing in order that we might learn a particular lesson; for if we feel we are successful, God may feel impelled—out of a concern for our spiritual well-being—to strike at such success. Let us therefore not lay stress on our success, let us instead attend to our learning. We should work on the one hand and learn on the other. The more thorough we learn our lessons the better; the deeper we learn them the better.

Two

In the Old Testament period, before a priest could enter the holy place to serve he had first to pass by the altar where he would offer sacrifice for his sins. Then he would come to the laver to wash away his uncleanness with water. Only afterwards might he enter the holy place. Now all the things in the holy place were made of gold: they were so shiny that a mere touch by the priest's hand would instantly reveal his finger prints. Now nothing would seem to matter if one had no intention to come to the holy place to serve; but once anyone entered the holy place to serve, his real image would immediately be revealed. He could not help but see his sins and his uncleanness. He had to confess what he really

was, because all that was there was holy. As soon as he stepped into the holy place, his very self was fully exposed. Moreover, no one could undertake to do anything in the holy place according to his own idea. Every action of his was governed by the commandment of God; no deviation was allowed.

Such was the way of priestly service in Old Testament days.

Yet even in our own day under the New Covenant (unless, of course, we do not desire to serve God), we can readily see how in

like manner we who desire to serve as priests to our God also need the blood to cleanse us from our sins and the laver to wash away our uncleanness. We further need to be rid of our old self life by having it dealt with in the holy place of service. Whenever we serve God, our true image will be exposed. To really know our self we need to know it in our service to God. The more awareness we have of our self life in the performance of divine service the more assurance we will have that we are those who serve God and that the work we do is truly service to Him. Whoever has such consciousness as this is one who truly serves God. But whoever does not have this consciousness, either his person is not right or the thing he does is not what God wants him to do. If he has no consciousness of the weaknesses and failings of his self, it is proven beyond doubt that he is not a person who serves God and that the work he does is not service to Him. The person who really serves the Lord is full of such feelings whenever he touches service. Like the priest in the tabernacle of old who served God he will have his sins exposed at the altar, his uncleanness disclosed at the laver, and his own self revealed in the holy place.

When you serve God and see your sins, you require the cleansing of the blood. When you perceive how you are defiled with uncleanness, you will need the washing of the water. And when you enter even further into the holy place of service you will clearly recognize how you as a person cannot touch that which is holy, and hence must have your self radically dealt with. These are the kinds of deep feelings you must have if you would truly serve the Lord.

We may not have very much feeling when we *eat* with people, but when we *serve God* among people we will have feelings. When, for example, we copy

ordinary lecture notes we perhaps feel nothing; but when as a matter of service we copy notes on spiritual subjects, we will feel something like this: “O Lord, man such as I am is unworthy to do Your work. O Lord, do cleanse me with the precious blood.” If you are a person who is frivolous, senseless and without inward feeling while touching service, you are definitely not one who is serving God. Suppose, for example, that you visit someone and are *48*

told by him that he does not come to the meetings because he is so quick-tempered. If upon hearing this you hastily reprimand him with very strong words, failing to be conscious of your own quick temperament, your service to God has little spiritual value. But if what you are engaged in today is true spiritual service, you will doubtless have some such inward sense as this: “Oh, today I still have things needing to be laid aside, I still have my own flesh in me too, I too have not obeyed God as I ought, and I still have discord with brothers and sisters.”

Let us never imagine that spiritual worth lies in the realm of excitement and enthusiasm. No, spiritual value lies in the manifestation of holiness while serving because there is the presence of God. Many brothers and sisters can testify that when they serve in the church they are like the priests of old entering the holy place. By the blood of the Lamb sins are cleansed; by the renewal of the Holy Spirit uncleanness is washed away; and by the “Holiness” of the holy place the self life is eliminated. Each time we serve God we should have such a consciousness and such an expression. But if there be no inward awareness of sin, uncleanness and self about us, I am afraid there is little of the presence of the Lord.

If in a locality there is the holy assembly of God, the brothers and sisters should at least see their sins, their uncleanness and their self life. And if this be the case, then such consciousness proves that God is present. Because this is holy ground, people who come will be made conscious of their own sins, uncleanness, and self. This kind of feeling will drive them to the Lord and to cry out to Him for deliverance and cleansing. Then, they will make progress spiritually.

Time and again by such encounter, we all will be shown our actual condition, and thus once more our life will be able to grow.

In the area of serving God, then, we must encounter again and again this thing called “holiness”. In such repeated encounters we learn and grow before God. We become useful, and God has an

Learning How to Serve—I

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outlet in us. Let us therefore reiterate what was said at the beginning, that our service must not be merely in doing a job—even quite successfully—without there also having been some spiritual value, some lesson in spiritual growth, learned in the process. Indeed, may this latter aspect continually take preeminence over the former in our service to the Lord. May God have mercy on us in this particular matter.

6

6 Learning How to Serve—II

Now after a long time the Lord of those servants

cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that

received the five talents came and brought other five

talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five

talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou

hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of the lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lo[rd. (Matt. 25.19-23)]

Service in Time and Eternity

In spiritual matters we should recognize the fact that “time” is for

“eternity”; that the service we render in time is preparation for the service in eternity. God places us in the here and now for the purpose of training us to be useful in eternity. Time is like a school in which we receive spiritual training and education. Whatever spiritual training and education we receive in time makes us truly fit for God’s use in eternity. Consequently, the service performed today prepares us for the service in the hereafter.

Matthew 25 tells us that when the Lord returns, He will say to the faithful servants these words: “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things” (vv.21, 23). If today we

learn well, He will entrust us with many and greater things at His return; at the time of our Lord’s return we shall begin to serve properly. Some brothers and sisters may think that this is only true in the kingdom age, and not in eternity. But Revelation 22 informs us that we will serve God even in eternity. Today the Lord arranges to place us among the children of God in order that we may learn

together with them how to serve and thus prepare us all for our eternal service.

From the day we are saved the Lord puts His life in us and trains us gradually but continually through practical matters that we may learn to cooperate with Him more and more. He is with us to develop His nature in us so that we may become useful in His hand. In the measure of God’s life in us is the measure of our usefulness to Him.

As the measure of God increases, so our usefulness increases too.

The measure of God’s life does not increase only at the time of prayer and Bible reading; God uses also the things in our hand by which to incorporate himself in us. Let us therefore see that in time God has no other purpose than to increase His measure of life in us day by day. Due to the thick impenetrableness of our own self, He is unable to make any perforation through its walls. But after some time of dealing with us, He is able to get through us a little; and after a little more time, He can perforate the shell of resistance somewhat more. Finally, after many years of working further, He will penetrate through us almost completely.

Hence it takes considerable time for God’s life to be organized in us. But this

activity in turn establishes our usefulness. Every spiritual usefulness comes from the incorporation of God's life in us. Our usefulness before the Lord is none else than His nature developed in us. God imparts His life to us, and when this life in us is released, there is to be found our usefulness.

Thus time is when we *learn*, not when we *fully* serve. Today is the time we learn and *practice* serving. God places unbelieving souls before us that we may learn to serve. He also puts many brothers and sisters before us in order that we may learn to serve. Here on earth we are always learning before the Lord, therefore we must not do things according to our will and way. Yet our service today is not aimless, and we learn to do things with other children of God. The difficulty lies in the fact that some people are anxious to work but do

not care to learn, while other people are keen in learning but slow in working. We need to blend these two: learn to work and work to learn.

The Example of Peter

Now in what respect do we need to be attentive in spiritual learning? We find in the Gospels that Peter followed the Lord for over three years. When he followed the Lord, did he work or did he learn? He worked to learn. What exactly did he learn? What the Lord led him to learn was the lesson of having incorporated within him the nature of God. Peter learned to get out of his own thoughts and to get into the thoughts of the Lord. Though we do not find such words in the Gospel records, we nevertheless do see therein such a picture as this before us. Let us take a closer look at the story of Peter.

At the time of Matthew 16—when the Lord Jesus began "to show

unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed"—

Peter took hold of the Lord and began to rebuke Him, saying: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee" (vv.21, 22). How

did the Lord respond? "Get thee behind me, Satan," said Jesus to Peter, "for thou

mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

. . . If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (vv.23-24).

What is this "self" of which the Lord spoke? Where is this "self"

to be found? From this passage of Scripture we can see that "self"

can be found to be expressed through the mind of man. Perhaps some may argue that this manifestation of Peter's self is really good, for does he not truly express here his love for the Lord? Yet please notice that the Lord says that this element of Peter's self has Satan at the back, for this self of his is minding the things of men, and Satan can in this way sometimes make use of man's self to serve the self-centered ends of the Lord's archenemy. Hence to deal with the *54*

influence of Satan one must deny his self The Lord led Peter to learn one lesson here, which is, that in serving Him Peter must come out of the thoughts of men and enter into the thoughts of God. The thought of God was that the Lord Jesus must go to Jerusalem to die, but Peter's expression of his love for the Lord was in reality minding the thoughts of men.

Let us never think that it is enough if we have a little love for the Lord and if we have a little heart to serve Him. From the life of Peter we discover that even man's love of the Lord can be according to the thoughts of men. So far as the Lord is concerned, many of our services are not accountable to Him; nay, they are even reproachable.

For this reason, how we need always to mind the things of God and not the things of men. This is the lesson the Lord wants us to learn. If we come out of the mind of men and enter into the mind of God, we may be reckoned as those who have learned how truly to serve God.

Matthew 17 records the transfiguration of our Lord on the mountain. Again, Peter's thought intervened. "Lord," said Peter, "it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"

(v.4). Who ever told him to build three tabernacles? Certainly not God. Here his own thoughts had plainly come forth. Now just as he was saying these words, God instantly broke in and spoke: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased; hear ye *him*” (v.5). This

meant that the Lord Jesus alone is God’s beloved Son; God does not design to let men uplift Moses and Elijah as they uplift His beloved Son. Instead, He commands: Hear Him and Him alone. Hereafter, Peter, you are not to listen to the law which is represented by Moses nor to the prophets as typified by Elijah, but you are to hear the Son (who sums up both the law and the prophets)!

Had Peter in the four Gospels ever spoken rightly? Certainly he had. Just before the occasion mentioned above wherein the Lord Jesus had begun to prepare His disciples for His coming Passion,

Peter said correctly to the Lord: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God” (Matt. 16.16). But the Lord answered: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven”

(v.17). Yet not long afterwards, as we have seen above, Peter blurted

forth with: “Be it far from thee, Lord” (v.22). All this plainly

indicates that *by himself* Peter could never say one right word. And whatever he did say right was the word which came from God. From this episode we may learn that no matter how profuse are *men’s* opinions and views, they are totally useless in spiritual things.

In Matthew 26 we find that Peter was once again dealt with by the Lord. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus declared: “All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad”; but Peter answered: “If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended”

(vv.31, 33). Here once more Peter’s self flashed forth. Looking at his own self he

felt he was strong and that he was different from all the others. Yet he fell the moment he was questioned by a mere slave girl. How God used environment here to expose Peter's self so as to deal with it for future positive spiritual service.

Now when we read Acts chapter 1 we discern that the Peter there is vastly different from the Peter in the Gospels. For it may be said that by this time he had come out of his own mind, that he really knew the Scriptures, that he understood prophecy and minded the things of God. In spite of the fact that he was still prone to fall, Peter had nevertheless learned quite a lot.

If we therefore want to learn how to serve God we must come out from our own thoughts. Some of us need to learn to come out of our mind even in prayer, and thereby we can enter into the mind of God.

Otherwise, we will not be of much use before the Lord in His service. Let us understand that all services result from God coming into us and then being able unhinderedly to come out from us. With God coming in and then going out of us, there is a true service. But if *56*

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you and I are not the kind of persons who let Him enter in and then come out, we can only make people touch our mind and not our God.

If in our "service" we live and walk so much by our own thought and will, then we have no way for people to meet the Lord. We must learn to come out of our own thoughts before they will touch God in us. By coming out of our mind we enter into the mind of God. And thus shall we experience real learning and perform real service. We will not only walk with the Lord in time, we will also reign with Him in the kingdom and serve even more excellently in eternity. May God have mercy on us.

7

7 The Man of God and the Old

Prophet

And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah

by the word of Jehovah unto Bethel . . . Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel ... And he went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak; and he said

unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of Jehovah, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. And he said unto him, I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spoke unto me by the word of Jehovah, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water ... Thus saith Jehovah, Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient unto the mouth of Jehovah, and hast not kept the commandment which Jehovah thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy body shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.... (Read 1 Kings 13.1-32)

The story recorded in 1 Kings 13 is most solemn and tragic. We see here two men—a man of God and an old prophet. These two men have both been used by God, but their ends are most lamentable. The lesson we may learn from their lives is most sobering.

One

This old prophet in Bethel was a man who in the past had been used by God, but now he was no longer usable. When God wished to warn Jeroboam because of his sin in Bethel, He did not send the old prophet who lived in Bethel to speak for Him; He instead sent a man of God from Judah to speak for Him. This indicates that the old

prophet was no longer serviceable to the Lord. The term “old”

attached to the word prophet reflected neither his spiritual maturity nor rich spiritual experiences; rather, it revealed and described the fact of his being spiritually aged and thus unfit for the Lord’s service.

In speaking to Jeroboam, the Lord could only use the man of God, not the old prophet. The phrase “man of God” denotes that such a one has communion with God, and communion is the basis for light from God. The moment communion stops, at that very moment light ceases. This old prophet once had a spiritual history, for he *was* at one time a prophet; however, he had now lost communion with the Lord. He became an *old* prophet when God could no longer use him.

How grave is this situation.

Many brothers and sisters make no spiritual progress before the Lord. Their spiritual condition today is the same as that of eight or ten years ago. Some with a good mind may appear to have advanced, yet such advance is not spiritual advance. They speak the words which they themselves do not understand. All they have is but mental knowledge; there is no true light. They have learned much spiritual phraseology, nevertheless they do not make any real spiritual progress before the Lord. Ten years ago you might have met someone who had a little light, and you felt then he was in a fairly healthy state before God. But today ten years later you go to find him and discover that he has no new light at all nor has he made any spiritual progress. He is a prophet, but an *old* prophet to whom God is unable to communicate anything. Let us not forget, here, that God is a God who is always at work: “My Father worketh even until

now,” says the Lord Jesus, “and I work” (John 5.17). The light which

we received twenty years, ten years, or even five years ago is no longer adequate to guide us today. If we stay with past, experiences, we have no future.

In view of this, we must attend to a very important issue in our Christian walk—namely, how not to be set aside by God, how not to be rejected or remain unused. Our freshness before the Lord is a most

vital habit to be established or maintained. Yet how often we are too old and too poor spiritually.

Two

As the story shows, the old prophet lived in Bethel. What was the condition there at that time? At Bethel, Jeroboam offered sacrifice to the calf he had himself molded. He ordained people as priests who were not Levites and he arbitrarily set the months and days for the

burning of incense on the altar (see 1 Kings 12.28-33). Furthermore, he established places of worship other than that prescribed by God to be at Jerusalem because he was afraid lest his people in the Northern Kingdom would continue going to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the holy temple there, and thus his kingdom be weakened. Although he did not worship other gods but still worshiped the God who had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, he nonetheless worshiped outside Jerusalem from self-will. This was condemned by the Lord. Thus all these actions of his were sins and transgressions against God. Yet he not only sinned himself, he also influenced other kings after him to indulge in the same sin (see, e.g., 1 Kings 16.19,31; 22.52; 2 Kings

13.2). Hence the sins of Jeroboam in Bethel were quite serious.

Now recall again that the old prophet himself lived in Bethel; and what Jeroboam had done and continued to do were things that he did before the very eyes of this old prophet; yet the old prophet failed to recognize their sinful character. Such a condition, it must be acknowledged, was most grave indeed. Now a prophet can speak for God only because he knows the mind of God. Yet here was an old prophet who had no knowledge of God's mind in the slightest, since he who cannot be sent by God to speak for God obviously does not know the mind of God. And so the Lord had to send the man of God instead.

The old prophet failed to perceive that the worship being carried on in Bethel was sinful. This fact proved beyond doubt that

something was already wrong with him. If we see and conclude that everything is all right—that the worship in Jerusalem is good and that the worship in Bethel is also good—it proves that we do not see, and that something is radically wrong with us.

How many are like the old prophet. Their eyes are blurred and defective. They do not see what is sinful in God's sight. They surmise that as long as the Lord is worshiped, what does it matter if the worship is in Bethel? Can anyone honestly

believe that such an attitude is a manifestation of love? Oh, let us not think that to be pleasing to everybody is a sign of love. No such thing. A physician may love his patient and be most sympathetic towards him, but he cannot tell the sick person that he is well. If he should tell the unwell patient that he is not sick, this demonstrates the incompetency of that physician: his eyes cannot see. By the same token, the old prophet—

though he lived right in Bethel—could not see that there was sin in Bethel. Sin appeared before his eyes, yet he had no sensitivity. How incompetent he had grown. And how tragic and how terrible it was.

Three

The condition of the old prophet was truly pathetic, but what was even more pathetic and tragic was the fact that the man of God was himself damaged by the old prophet. The Lord had commanded the man of God: "Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest" (1 Kings 13.17). The man of God remembered this command, and so he rejected the first invitation of the old prophet as well as the invitation of the king. But the man of God was deceived by the words of the old prophet when the latter lied to him by saying: "I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water"

(v.18). The man of God figured that if the old prophet was a prophet he certainly was more experienced than he; therefore, he should obey

him. Accordingly, he returned with the old prophet and ate and drank in the latter's house. The man of God thus violated the Lord's command due to the words of the old prophet. As a result, the man of God was slain by a lion. At the beginning he was perfectly clear on the command of God; but he became confused after hearing the claim, I am also a prophet. From this we can derive a most solemn teaching, which is, that after one who serves the Lord has received God's clear command, he must not listen to any old prophet whose words are not in one accord with God's command.

The words with which Paul enjoined the Galatian believers follow the same principle, namely, that “though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1.8). The gospel

which he preached was not according to man but came from the

revelation of Jesus Christ (see 1.11-12). Yet there came into Galatia some people who tried to pervert the gospel. These men preached another gospel to the Galatian believers. Whereupon Paul advised the Christians there not to be enticed by them. He saw through these seducers as people who would come under the pseudonym of “the servants of God” but would cleverly use seemingly spiritual phraseology to trouble the saints. So that with very strong language he warned the churches in Galatia.

But note that Paul also said “though we”—which meant that even if I Paul should come and preach to you a different gospel from the one I always preached, you should not believe it. You should only believe the gospel which came through the revelation of Jesus Christ; you should not believe such a name as “Paul”; for in case I Paul later on should preach to you a gospel which contradicts the revelation of God I gave you before, you must not believe it. He knew very well that many were easily influenced by the fame of man. How quickly they believed in man’s fame rather than in God’s word. Hence Paul expressed his attitude here that he would stand absolutely on the side of God’s truth and speak, that he would not leave any room either for *62*

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other people or even for himself. He wanted them to believe wholly in God’s truth and not to believe in man’s fame. He strived earnestly for the truth—all for God and nothing for himself. What he maintained was the truth of God; he would not preserve his own fame. He opposed those seducers for no other reason than that they confused the word of the Lord and led believers into error. Thus Paul showed us how we must stand on the side of God’s truth that we may distinguish what word we should accept or reject. If anyone preaches that which is contrary to God’s truth, we must not hear him—no matter who he is.

Paul went on to say, “or an angel from heaven’ , and thus he reminded them that they should not even take the word of an angel for granted. When he spoke of

false apostles in 2 Corinthians 11,

Paul had this to say: “Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”

(vv.13-15). “An angel of light” wears a hypocritical mask which easily lures people from being watchful. How could the Galatian believers, once they had heard the gospel of the Lord, be enticed by these men? Because these men claimed that what they preached was also the “gospel” and that they aimed at keeping the law of God zealously. They had a set of appealing words by which they enticed the Galatians who had earlier heard the truth. Alas, this kind of seducer frequently steals into the church and destroys men’s faith.

Such seducers tempt people to depart from the word of the Lord.

How we need to be watchful and always on guard. The reason they could entice people is because they too can pretend to be spiritual, they too can fake a love for the Lord, and use such language as “the revelation of God” and “the will of God” and so forth. They are able to preach messages with such ambiguity that it is extremely difficult for people to distinguish falsehood from truth.

The Man of God and the Old Prophet

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How we truly need to have a watchful spirit and a discerning power that we may be absolutely faithful to God’s word, keeping the faith once delivered to us. We must resist each and every so-called

“gospel” which tries to confuse the word of the Lord, disregarding who may preach it.

This old prophet had no sensitivity to the great sin which Jeroboam committed, and yet he used the word and title of “prophet”

to deceive other people. He had long ago lost any communion with God, but still he falsely claimed that “an angel spake unto [me] by

the word of Jehovah" (1 Kings 13.18). The failure of the man of God was in not keeping the word which he personally received from God; instead, he was shaken by the pretentious name of the old prophet and accepted the lie this old man uttered. And thus he fell and met such a tragic end.

The old prophet had fallen to such a degree that he would lie to deceive the man sent by God. While they were at the table the word of the Lord came to him. Yet this was not because the old prophet had belatedly become spiritual once again. Not at all. This was simply the way the Lord would deal with the man of God who had disobeyed His command. The Lord had no more demand on the old prophet; He had completely set him aside. And after the man of God was slain by a lion, the old prophet buried him in his own grave. He then charged his sons to bury him with the man of God after he too died. He believed that the word which the man of God had spoken as the word of the Lord against the altar at Bethel would be fulfilled, but he could do nothing except wait to die.

May we learn from this solemn and pathetic story the following points: (1) that as soon as a man loses his communion with God, he becomes old, is no longer fresh, and cannot see; (2) that a person who was once used by God but has now departed from Him should not pass himself off as an "old hand" to deceive other people; (3) that a man who violates the word of the Lord and stays in a place he

ought not to stay in will meet death—spiritual death; and (4) that whatever is announced in spiritual terms must be in accord with the word of God, otherwise it should be firmly rejected—disregarding who speaks it, whether it be an "old" prophet or an angel.

8

8 The Breastplate of Judgment

And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and

purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the skilful workman. It shall have two shoulder-pieces

joined to the two ends thereof, that it may be joined

together. . . And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel . . .

And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial. . . . And thou shalt make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be and double; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be inclosed in gold in their settings. And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. . . . And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before Jehovah continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before Jehovah: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually. (Ex. 28.6,7,9,12,15-21,29-30)

Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? (2 Cor. 11.28-29)

I say it not to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together. (2 Cor. 7.3)

66

Whom Shall I Send?

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you. (Heb. 13.17)

The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of

the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. . .

Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. (1 Peter 5.1-3, 5-6)

One

The people whom God had chosen on earth began with one man, who thereafter brought into being a household, which eventually turned into a nation. The one man was Abraham, the household was the house of Jacob, and the nation was the nation of Israel. When there was only the one man, God appeared to him—giving him revelation and speaking to him. When a household was brought into existence through this one man, God appeared to the head of that household by again giving him revelation and speaking to him. But after the children of Israel were delivered from slavery and came under the name and authority and discipline of the Lord, they became the nation of God. Now the Bible shows us that at that time God changed His way of revelation with them. He no longer appeared or spoke to just one man as He formerly did; instead, He adopted a new and special method by which to reveal himself and to speak to His people.

What was that new method? It was the breastplate of judgment.

Formerly God had spoken to but one person; now, though, He was to

speak to a whole nation via an entirely new mechanism. When there now developed a problem or difficulty among God's people, they were to come to the Lord and ask for His guidance and revelation by means of this breastplate of judgment. So that shortly after the people of God had become a nation, the Lord changed His method of speaking to them. I hope that the children of God today will often recall this change as they live before the Lord. Whenever you and I

find ourselves alone as Abraham of old was alone in following God, the Lord can and will speak and appear to you personally. Yet one day you will inevitably be surrounded by others of God's people, and then you will be merely one among many of them, while the method of God's revelation will have also changed.

Yet what has just been said can never rule out a person's

fellowship with the Lord, nor does it eliminate God's appearing and revelation to an individual. It only signifies the fact that once the individual believer has God's people around him it is important for him to realize that he is no longer by himself but rather has become one with the rest of the people of God, and that therefore the Lord's revelation and speaking will no longer be to him alone but to all His people—that at this juncture His way of speaking to His people and His method of revelation to them has undergone a marked change.

What every child of God must at some point in his Christian experience clearly understand is that he has become one body with all the saints in the presence of God, and that under this circumstance God changes His method of revelation, speaking and appearing. In the event he fails to grasp this fact, and even though his personal fellowship with the Lord may not be interrupted, his service to God is bound to be in error. If a believer desires to serve the Lord and wishes to supply the needs of His people, it is essential for him to see that the way of the Lord's appearing and revelation to a body is different from that to an individual. He must come to understand that God reveals to Abraham in one way and He reveals to the nation of Israel in another—even through the breastplate of judgment.

The breastplate of judgment was something the high priest wore whenever he went before God. It was firmly bound to the ephod which the high priest also wore. This breastplate was foursquare and double and was set with four rows of precious stones. Each row had three different stones, and on these stones were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. In addition, there were two shoulder pieces of the ephod on which were placed two onyx stones with the

names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed thereon as well. The names of the twelve tribes represented the whole nation of Israel, thus representing all the people of God. When the high priest entered into the presence of the Lord, he did not enter alone as one person; he instead bore on his shoulders the twelve tribes of Israel as he came before God. Whenever the high priest entered to serve the Lord, he had to wear the ephod. He had to bear on his shoulders and carry on his heart the entire people of Israel as he came into the presence of God. Now the ancient high priest served as a type of the Lord Jesus who today bears us as the people of God on His shoulders and carries us in His heart of love before the presence of the Father.

Now at those times when the people of Israel were confronted with insoluble problems, the high priest would wear the ephod, bind on the breastplate, and come before the Lord to ask for revelation and the speaking of the Lord. And hence this piece of breastplate came to be called the breastplate of judgment, since men may have their problems solved by means of it. When at one point Moses asked God to appoint a man over the congregation, the Lord answered with these words: “Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit . . . And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah” (Num.

27.18,21). On another occasion, after the Amalekites had struck Ziklag and taken captives of the women and all who were there, David inquired of God by the ephod whether he and his men could pursue and overtake their enemies. The Lord spoke through the

breastplate of judgment by saying: “Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and shalt without fail recover all” (see 1 Sam. 30.1-8,

18-19). These incidents show us that when the people of God turned from being merely one man to being a nation, the Lord began to speak to His people through a different means—that is to say, through the breastplate of judgment.

Now within this breastplate were found the Urim and the

Thummim. In the Hebrew language Urim means “the Lights” and Thummim

means “the perfections”. And thus, whenever the high priest came before God with the breastplate of judgment upon him, the light of God shone and His will was perfectly revealed.

Three

Obviously, this that has been discussed above is a description of how it was in the Old Testament period; and yet, though there is a difference between the Old and the New Testaments in outward form, nevertheless, according to the principle of God’s operation the New is the same as the Old. For let us keep in mind that the Old Testament is but a shadow while the New Testament is the reality. In matters such as these, the New Testament remains the same as the Old in regard to principle. And hence, the way by which God revealed His will in Israel to His people and the way by which He today reveals His will in the church to His children are along the same line.

If one or more of the believers are truly humble before the Lord and fear Him, what should they do when they discover problems among His children and detect the fact that the truth of the Lord is not being manifested among them? They should learn to do one thing: to bear the children of the Lord on their shoulders and carry them in their bosoms as they go to inquire of the Father. Just as Paul did, who bore on his shoulders all the saints of God and carried in his bosom all the churches of God (see 2 Cor. 11.28-29). Whenever he *70*

went before the Lord with such a breastplate of judgment, how the light of God shone! He clearly saw the one who sinned in the church at Corinth; he knew what words or spiritual mystery should be written to the church at Ephesus.

We need to understand how Paul could write so clearly to the churches on the ways of God. Did light suddenly come to him while he shut himself in a room like a hermit and prayed, without any knowledge of the conditions of God’s children nor any care for their problems? No, he bore the churches of God on his shoulders and he carried all the Lord’s children on his breast. With a godly attitude he approached the throne of grace, and God the Father of all lights

(James 2.17) enlightened him on the specific needs of these churches which he bore on his shoulders and carried in his bosom. And as a result he could write a letter to the church at Corinth which suited the need of that particular church,

and he could write another letter to the church at Ephesus which again met the need of that church.

The principle that lay behind Paul's ability to write clear-sighted letters to the churches of the New Testament period was the same as that which operated with respect to the high priest of the Old Testament era in seeking for God's light through the breastplate of judgment. What fell on Paul's shoulders and was carried in his breast were the affairs of all the churches of God. Never was he

unconcerned with the affairs of these churches. None of his letters was written out of some words which suddenly came to him when he prayed casually for the churches. Paul did not write in such a careless way, neither could the saints who were with him do the same. We must understand and practice this principle of carrying the saints of the Lord to God's presence. We do not know for how many days or weeks Paul might have carried the children of God on his heart as he would look to the Father. But then, one day he saw something in God's light; and with that light he would sit down and write a letter.

On still another day he saw something else in the light of God; and with that light he would write yet another letter.

If we today want to know the will of God for His people and His way in the church, we must have some men and women who will bear on their shoulders and carry in their hearts all the children of God, some men and women who will bring the Lord's children to the Father of lights and read their conditions in His light, and who will then write out the words which they receive from the Father. That is the way by which God will reveal and appear to His children in the church.

Four

Church affairs are to be decided by the principle of the breastplate of judgment. Those among the Lord's people who are matured and godly ought to bear on their shoulders and carry on their breasts all the saints of God. They should come to the Father and read the conditions of His people in His light. and only then should they come to a decision. The affairs of a local assembly are not ordered

by one or two persons. That is not God's way. Yet some may perhaps observe that during the apostolic period did not the church listen to the words of the apostles? To which it must be replied that, yes, this was true; but unlike a pope, who issues orders, the early apostles brought God's people to the Father and sought for revelation from Him.

If the affairs of a local assembly are not to be ordered by one or two persons, are they then to be decided by a show of hands? No, they are not; for that, too, is not God's way. How then should they be decided? The elders of the church should bring the situation of God's children to God himself and inquire of Him. The elders are the matured ones among the saints, yet such maturity is not measured by their age but by their spiritual experience and condition. The elders are pious towards God, and they also are acquainted with the conditions of the brothers and sisters. Whenever something happens in a local assembly and the thing is in doubt, the decision is not made

by one man's arbitrary opinion, nor by the showing of hands, but by the unanimous guidance which the elders seek and receive in the light of the Lord's countenance as they bear and carry the situation of the brothers and sisters to God. Such decision may not be a hundred percent correct, yet it can be said that it is quite difficult under these conditions for such decision to be wrong.

Let all brothers and sisters reflect on the fact that when the people of God become a body, the Lord's way of revelation to them undergoes a change. At that time He will reveal His mind through all His people. God's will is to incorporate himself in His people, and thus His speaking is but the echo of himself having spoken among His own; for before the elders rise to speak, God has already put His thought into the hearts of the brothers and sisters. As the elders carry the brothers and sisters to God, they read in their spirits the condition of these brothers and sisters. As they read and read, they see the God who is in the body and hear the words being transmitted through the body. Such words reveal God's need among His children as well as the current need of the children themselves. By this alone can God be touched and the children themselves be touched. In other words, by this means alone can the God who is in the body be touched.

Hence God reveals himself through all His children. The affairs of the church cannot be decided by a few people, nor can they be decided by a show of hands

among all the people. They are to be decided by the revelations which the elders receive as they come before the Lord with godly fear and carry all the people with them.

This is the way the Lord will lead His children in the church.

Elders of the church ought to learn to understand the conditions of all the saints by always carrying them in their hearts. They should learn to know the mind of God. Whenever there is any problem they should carry all the brothers and sisters to God's light and there read out the mind of God in resolving the problem. All the epistles of the New Testament are written on the basis of this principle. The writers

of these letters know the mind of God as well as the situations in the various local assemblies. They carry on their hearts the affairs of these churches. They write down what they have been enlightened about as they have been before God, and because of this there is not one superfluous word. What is written are the words of the revelation of God.

Whenever we do not decide matters according to this principle we are more than likely to be wrong nine out of ten times. The lights and the truths which the servants of God see are frequently perceived through the brothers and sisters. They receive God's revelation as they fellowship with those among the brethren who come to them.

Oftentimes when there are brothers and sisters with you, you have the word of the Lord; when there are no brothers and sisters with you, you are likely not to have the word of the Lord. All matters in the church of God must be decided according to this principle. So shall the church be kept from error.

Five

Now brethren may think that such discussion as has here been presented is futile. But let it be understood that this is not merely a matter of procedure, because a tremendous spiritual lesson is involved—even the brokenness of the cross. For if we are really to live according to the principle just elucidated, there is no doubt

that we will need the breaking of the cross. Not only the elders need to be broken by the cross, all other brethren in the church need to be broken too.

In a local assembly God has no way to speak to that church except all in the assembly learn to receive the dealing of the cross daily.

Whether elders or apostles, old or young, teachers or those taught—

everyone has to allow the cross to break him or her. Then will God speak to all more distinctly. The elders especially must accept the dealing of the cross, because every action and every word of the

elders exert tremendous influence on the brothers and sisters. Before the elders make any decision they must not only scan the conditions of all the brothers and sisters but also carry their affairs to the Father of all lights for prayers and considerations.

This principle is an awesome one, because it shatters one's personal idea. Not just the elders but even the youngest of the brothers and sisters must observe this principle. For however small a person may be, God is in him; and therefore he can affect God's will among His children either by his manifesting it or by his concealing it. For this reason, each of the brothers and sisters needs to learn to be controlled by God in word and deed—that is to say, to receive brokenness through the cross. If all the brethren in a local assembly learn this principle, how greatly will God be able to speak to them.

Let us realize that in the church no one can despise anybody else.

You cannot even disdain the opinion of a brother who usually bothers you a great deal. If you trample his thought under your feet, you may regret it someday. Take note that this word comes out of the bitter experiences of those of us who have learned. Do not despise anyone, nor hold anybody in contempt. You must carry even their *murmurs and oppositions* to God and carefully read their *complaints*.

You must still bear *them* on your shoulders and inquire of the Lord regarding even such as they. In this respect, consider David, who brought to God even the words of personal reproach spoken by others against himself and read and inquired about *them* before the

Lord (see, e.g., 2 Sam. 16.5-14).

Hence you cannot act arbitrarily, you cannot and must not think that only those who *approve* of you may help you to understand God's will. Frequently, those who *oppose* you cause you to know His will. If you continually look for those things which will guarantee the rightness of your step, no matter from what quarter, that is the principle which will keep you from falling. If you do not want to be provoked into making decisions against God's will and to hurt the

hearts of brothers and sisters, you must live strictly by this principle.

This principle alone will drive away your prejudice and your personal opinion. It will also enable you to read intelligently before God His will among all the brothers and sisters. The word which you read is the very word which God speaks to His children. By this principle the Lord is able to articulate His will through His children and make it known to you. And by the operation of this principle the heart of heaven as well as the heart of earth may be satisfied.

As an illustration of what we have been saying, let us suppose that a matter in the church is decided by a few elders without consulting the rest of the body. Yet suppose, too, that there is a brother in the church who feels differently about the decision. And due to the fear of God in him he is not one ever to say anything lightly. What will be the outcome? The functioning of the body of Christ must

undoubtedly be arrested. How should this matter have been handled in the first place? Let us realize, first of all, that even before anything is ever done, God has already been at work among His children in that church. So that the elders ought to have brought the situation of the brethren before God and to have read it carefully before Him.

And therefore what was read would have been sweet and correct to all.

Church elders should always seek to know the will of God

according to this principle. Otherwise, the decision on a matter will fail to coincide with the movement of God in the rest of His children in the body. The

decision may be made, but the Spirit of God in His other children does not seal it with approval, and neither are the hearts of His children being touched. With the result that the functioning of the body of Christ is checked. But if a decision is made after the condition of the Lord's children is thoroughly read in the light of God, such decision will cause the spirits of the children of God to leap with joy. They will sense the anointing, and they will be stirred inwardly.

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Whom Shall I Send?

How we all must ask God to give us deliverance—that we may not only have the body of Christ as an organism but also see it functioning. Every brother and sister needs to see this principle and to participate in it.

Six

There is one final element in this matter that needs to be mentioned here, which is the question of authority. What is authority? On first appearance, it would seem as if authority is something based on position: whoever occupies a position of leadership has the authority that goes with it. But according to the Scriptures, what is real is quite different from what seems to be. For authority in the Scriptures is not something based on position. Where then does it have its basis? Its basis is in life. The people of Israel recognized the authority of Aaron, for example, because they saw that *Aaron's* rod budded. Authority without resurrection life is useless. Authority in the church is based upon life, not upon position.

It is not because people have elected you that therefore you have authority. No one in the church can boast of having authority on the ground of occupying a certain position. David submitted to the authority of Saul for he feared God, but Saul was rejected by God because he rebelled against Him. Saul had the *position* of a king, but he lacked the *life* of a king. Consequently, since the authority of Saul was positional and not of life, God did not sanction or endorse his authority.

Let us note that to the degree that the resurrection life of God is in you to that degree will be your authority. And to the extent that you lose God's resurrection life in you to that extent will you lose your authority. Let us also note that the Bible stresses the fact that for brothers to be true elders they must not lord it over the flock of God but rather be examples to the flock (see 1 Peter 5.3). Now

example is the result of the resurrection life of God being lived out. True

authority is never established by someone assuming a stern face and declaring, I am an elder and therefore I have authority! Anyone who in such fashion dares to threaten people to submit to his authority will have his authority questioned. In the church all the brothers and sisters must submit to one another in humility. Authority is exemplified in love so that the children of God will obey from their hearts. May God have mercy on us by giving us good examples in His church.

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