

Hebron Messenger

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May 2, 2004

NO 9

FOLLOWING PAUL -4

There is one more matter, in which, according to Philippians 3, we are to be followers of Paul. We have considered the matter of his renunciation (v.7), and his aspiration (v.10), and now there remains what we shall call his concentration, for that, too, is strongly raised in the passage.

WE ARE TO FOLLOW PAUL IN HIS GREATCONCENTRATION. (VS-12-16).

It would seem that it was this matter, particularly, which was uppermost in his mind when he issued his appeal, "Be followers of me". We deduce this from the fact that, in the verses immediately prior to verse seventeen, the Apostle had been making reference to what we call the Christian race, and he had testified that, as far as he was concerned, he was in that race, and, indeed, pressing toward the mark for the prize (v.14). The revised version renders it, "I press toward the goal unto the prize", but, in either case, the emphasis is on intense concentration. Indeed, Paul says, "This one thing I do" (v. 13). Now, it is exactly at that point that Paul says to the Philippians, "Be followers of me", meaning, of course, that he would have them join him in a similar concentration, and a whole hearted pursuit of the prize.

We may notice that this figure of the Christian race is frequently used in Scripture, and we give the following references:

To the Corinthians (world center of the Olympic games!), Paul wrote, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible" (1 Cor.9: 24,25).

Then, towards the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, i.e. a righteous crown), which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim.4: 7,8).

And most of us will be well familiar with that great word to the Hebrews: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb.12: 1,2).

Yes, the Christian life is indeed a race, and, as we know, a race requires very much in the way of concentration. That, we repeat, was the point the Apostle was making when he wrote those words to the Philippians, -"I press toward the mark for the prize". We can be assured, of course, that, in such passages, the idea is never that of competing selfishly or unkindly against our fellow-Christians, or, in any way, seeking personal advantage or glory at their expense, for that would be entirely contrary to the whole teaching of the Lord. Rather is it this simple matter of intense concentration on the part of all as we all press forward to the promised "upward calling in Christ Jesus".

Much has been said and written in connection with this "upward calling", but our single purpose, for the present, is to emphasise this matter of the Apostle's concentration in the Christian race, and his immediate

call to us to be his followers in that regard.

We do well, of course, to recognise that the Word does have much to say about a coming spiritual prize giving; -whatever form that "prize giving" may take. Christ Himself said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt.16: 27).

The Apostle John re-echoes this same truth when he writes in his epistle: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8). And, (very significantly, we would say), the very last chapter of the Bible confronts us, likewise, with the same great matter when the Coming King Himself proclaims: II And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev.22:12).

Detailed expositions of these verses we are not attempting here, but certainly no one can deny that there is a Biblical principle of "Rewards". And that, perhaps, is all we need to know at present!

The simple question we are raising here is, -are we really concentrating in this race? Are we truly following Paul in this regard? Are we pressing toward the mark for the prize? Have we at least got a heart to seek that prize, -whatever it might be? Even if it be nothing more than God's "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt.25: 21), have we got a heart for that? And, should the prize be something more specific, say, sharing the Throne with Christ as promised in Rev.3: 21, -shall we qualify? We know that this can only be by His grace, but the Lord did say, "To him that overcometh will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"(Rev.3: 21). This, too, is a tremendous subject, which we are not embarking upon just here. We simply note the fact that a great "Prize-giving" is surely coming. That day will bring great glory to the Lord, and Paul, for one, was concentrating. No time for fond reminiscences over the past (how fatal in a race!), or, for that matter, for any futile regrets over the same, but simply, "I press toward the mark for the prize".

(To be contd.)

C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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Telephone No.27613066
April 18, 2003

Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious and prevailing Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Praise be to Him Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began. As holy brethren, partakers of heavenly calling, let us consider Him and be committed to Him, to serve Him faithfully in His house (2 Tim.1: 9, 10; Heb.3: 1,2,5).

It is written about the saints in the church at Thessalonica, that the Gospel was given to them, "not...in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost", and they turned from their idols, "to serve the

living and true God" (1 Thess.1: 5,9). We may profitably consider what this service of God means and what it is. If asked what the service of God is, many different answers would be given. Because the conception of Christian service has become so large and general, it has become necessary to reconsider the matter and ask, what is really the divine object in the service of God?

If we look carefully at the Bible as a whole with this question before us, we shall see that there is but one all-inclusive and all-governing answer. The work of God may move along many and various lines and have different aspects, but the object is one. This one object determines whether the work is really the work of God, and also determines the measure of permanence and eternal value of what is done in the Name of the Lord. Even with the best intention of doing God's service, there is very much that misses the mark, and fails of the divine objective.

The one object is Christ. God has committed Himself to fill His Son with all things, and to fill all things with His Son. To bring Christ in and to increase the measure of Christ both extensively and intensively is God's sole object, and co-operation with Him in this is the only true service of God. That "He may fill all things"; that "in all things he might have the preeminence"; that "Christ (may be) all in all", is the only service, which answers to God's heart. This is a statement of fact, and it is also a test of work. In the Old Testament everything points to Christ, and He is implicit in all things there. The significance of Christ governs all. In the New Testament this is explicit. Conversions are not the end and objects in themselves. Every new believer is a vessel of Christ. The fact in every "new birth" is that Christ has come in. But the Scriptures do not leave it there. The greater part of the New Testament is occupied with the increase of Christ in the believers. That is the personal aspect. Beyond this the Church as a whole is brought into view, as that which is to be "the fullness of him". Then local churches are represented as vessels and vehicles of Christ, beyond the individual possibility and capacity. The whole idea of the Holy Spirit is to make the fullness of Christ a reality. All the conflict is related to this, for the adversary knows that his kingdom is weakened and narrowed in proportion to the increase of Christ. The test of all Christian work will be its effectiveness in really enlarging the measure of Christ in this universe.

Now let us consider the nature of the service. In this dispensation Christ is not on this earth physically, but is here only in and by His Spirit. Christ cannot therefore be known in any other way than spiritually. Further, Christ is not seeking in this dispensation, to set up something on the earth as attached to it. He is detaching a people from the world and the nations, and attaching them to Himself in an entirely spiritual way. Their birth is spiritual (John 3:6). Their sustenance is spiritual (John 6:33). Their knowledge of God and of His things is spiritual (1 Cor.2: 9-16). Their consummation is spiritual (1 Cor.15: 35,36). Everything now is a matter of spiritual measure and value. So the service of God in this age is essentially spiritual. Not what can be seen, counted or in any way appraised by the natural senses, but what is the pure work of the Spirit of God is the criterion.

The trend of things since apostolic times, has always most entirely been to set up a world system of Christianity; a church that is of a temporal account and position. The immediate result of touching this cursed earth is discord and division. Only a church on heavenly ground is the "Body" (see Eph.1,4). As the Church is of the "Eternal purpose", so is its ministry spiritual and heavenly - not ecclesiastical, formal and ceremonial.

Now we may consider some aspects regarding the servant who can be engaged in such service of God. As the work of God is essentially spiritual, it would demand spiritual people for its doing and the measure of their spirituality would determine the measure of their value to the Lord. Because this is so, in the mind of God the SERVANT is more than the WORK. If we are going to come truly into the hand of God for His purpose, then we shall be dealt with by Him in such a way as to continually increase our spiritual measure. Not our interest in Christian work, our enthusiasm, ambitions, energies or abilities, not our academic qualifications, or anything that we are in ourselves, but simply our spiritual life is the basis of our beginning and growth in our service for God. Even the work when we are in it, is used by Him to increase our spiritual measure. Any Christian work which does not have the effect of adding to the measure of Christ in the worker, is either not the true divine service, or is itself working to his or her

condemnation or injury. The Apostle Paul is a great example of how much increase of true spiritual knowledge and Christly measure is resultant from the very service of God itself, when the servant is truly a spiritual man. There are numerous other instances of this in and out of the Bible. God helping we may continue some more aspects concerning the servant in our next issue.

God willing the following Youth Camps and mini convocation gatherings besides dedication services are being arranged in the month of May, in view of the school and college holidays. Do pray for the ministry of the Word besides all temporal needs connected with these gatherings in their respective places. The Youth Camp in Jerusalem, Kurnool, will be held from 12th to 16th May, when Bro. Theodore Reginald would be ministering the Word together with the brethren of the Youth ministry from Hebron. The Camp at Carmel, 1Vijayawada, will be held from 9th to 12th May, when Bro. Paul Sudhakar with others will share the ministry. The Camp will be held in a community hall: in the town to facilitate accommodation and food arrangements. In Chennai a mini convocation is being arranged from 8th to 16th May in the hired facilities at Ennore, the church Horeb there being affiliated to the church at Jehovah -Shammah. Bro. Neville of Sri Lanka besides Bro. J. C. Rao and Elders at Jehovah -Shammah would be sharing the ministry. At Bethany, Pune, the dedication and thanksgiving service of the upper floor is being arranged on the evening of 18th May, followed by a Youth Camp till 23rd. Bro. G. T. Benjamin and some of us would be participating in the fellowship and ministry of those days.

Pray for the saints of the church at Kolhapur as the existing leadership has willingly entrusted the future ministries and administration of the church to us from Hebron, Hyderabad, with a suitable full time servant to stay in their midst, and carry on the ministry with local helpers.

Bro. Ambrose and fellow -workers of Rajahmundry area covet our prayers for the special meetings arranged, God willing from 26th to 30th May, in a college grounds nearby the House of Peace, Danavaipet, Rajahmundry. Saints and servants in the Hebron Fellowship, Delhi, are also planning for Youth Camp with special meetings, God willing from 1st to 6th June. Also in Hebron, a day Camp for three days is being arranged from 19th to 22nd May.

There are also other gatherings in this summer in various parts of Andhra Pradesh besides other parts of the land. Let us earnestly pray that these Camps and Special Meetings may contribute to the salvation of souls and the strengthening and establishing of the saints in His House, under the anointed ministries of His messengers.

It becomes us to pray for our country, in view of the coming elections, that the God of Daniel would set up such in power (Dan.4: 17,25,32) for good governance and welfare of the nation, maintaining the freedom enshrined in the constitution, especially of faith, and religion beside' that of sharing the love of God in Christ.

Praying that we may be enabled to serve our Lord acceptably in relation to His Kingdom that cannot be moved, inspite of the socio -economic and political changes that may befall us in the land,

I remain,
Yours in His grace,

K.PHILLIP
Heb. 12: 2,28
2 Cor. 9: 8
Psa. 2: 6,11

THE GREAT MOUNTAIN. 4
BAKHT SINGH

Silver in the Bible speaks of the price of redemption paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., His precious blood. How great a price our Lord paid to make us His own! He was betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver, but He has purchased us with His own precious blood and because of the price He paid, we have become unto God very precious. Before your conversion you probably thought of others in terms of money. Now, as a new creature, you must think of every one in terms of the redemption price. No longer do we think of others as inferior or superior, nor make relationships for the sake of money. We think in terms of God's perfect will. We meet believers as equals, live as equals, and move as equals because of His blood. It is only because of His blood, we enjoy His love in fullness, and that is why we have love for others, and are loved of men of all classes. Before our aim was to see how much money we could squeeze out of others, but now, we want only to know how we can serve others and tell them what we have found. This is because of the value of the precious blood of Christ and because we know that every redeemed soul is very precious to God.

Thirdly, brass speaks of divine strength. It is the knowledge of our loving God that becomes our daily strength. "Thus saith the LORD, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD... Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Jer.9: 23,24; Deut.33: 25). We now walk and live and move in the strength of the Holy and the living God. We may live a long life or a short one; we may have few or many burdens, but according to our days He gives us strength.

Fourthly, iron speaks of spiritual weapons. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor.10: 4). Our weapon is obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ even in our imaginations and thoughts. We do not conquer the devil by our Bible knowledge, or by fasting, or by seeing miracles. It is only by absolute obedience to our Lord that we can conquer the devil everywhere.

God wants us to have true gold, true silver, true brass and true iron. But before He can give us that, He must take away from us the false gold, false silver, false brass and false iron. That is how we first receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the Rock cut out without hands. We receive Him in a simple way by simple faith. Have you allowed that Rock to break the gold, silver, brass and iron into pieces? Has the wind begun to blow and drive out the chaff? The wind is the symbol of the Holy Spirit coming into our heart, and driving out the chaff of false gold, silver, brass, and iron.

The Rock, we are told, increased, and went on increasing. It will fill you through and through till every lesser thing is removed and your whole heart and being are filled with the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you not allow that Rock cut out without hands to come and take full possession in your heart? Will you receive Him? He is ready and waiting to come in. Then the Lord Himself will become your gold, silver, brass and iron. He comes in a very quiet way. Your neighbours will not know it, but you will know as He begins to shake and break every image within and begins to increase till He fills your whole heart and life.

(Concluded)

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NO 10

FOLLOWING PAUL -5

In case there be someone who is perplexed or troubled by the thought, or fear, of using merely carnal energy in this regard of following Paul, let us hasten to append his clarifying word in Col.1: 29 where he speaks of himself as "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily". We may always be assured that the energy for this race is never intrinsically our own, but something entirely "sourced" in Christ. It is purely and simply His strength, graciously imparted to us through the Holy Spirit, -a wonderful heavenly "supply" which we may breathe in, moment by moment, as an athlete would breathe in the air. It is what Paul, in this same epistle, calls, "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil.1: 19). So, after all, (as in all matters of spiritual achievement), it is basically a matter of yielding to Christ, and drawing all from Him. You will recall that Paul wrote to the Romans that it is they who "receive abundance of grace "who "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom.5: 17). Writing similarly to the Corinthians, he testifies, "...laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor.15: 10). The question, then, comes back to this, how much of God's grace are we willing to receive, and to live by, and, shall we add, to "run" by? Certainly no one abhorred carnal energy more than Paul did, and yet he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize".

We are left, then, with this very solemn question, -are we, or we are not, following Paul in this matter of the race? Are we, in our day. Evidencing a similar concentration? Have we a comparable heart for the proffered prize? Are we receiving an abundance of the same grace?

This kind of concentration will surely entail for us, as it did for Paul, a determined "laying aside. of all hindering "weights", -not to mention the obvious matter of "sins" (Heb.12:2). We hardly need to be told that if any athlete in a race keeps on his comfortable overcoat, or tries to carry his easy chair, he cannot expect to gain the prize! Yet, how wedded to our comforts some of us are, and how reluctantly we surrender them! Nor, of course, can an athlete afford to be weighed down by a large bag of gold! Gold may be all right in its place, but never in a race! And yet, again, how tenaciously many of us cling to this world's passing treasures, and yet expect to win an eternal prize! Better far to follow Paul who, having nothing, yet possessed all things, and, being poor, yet made many rich (2 Cor .6: 10) .Yes, we too, have to learn this lesson of "laying aside", and then the accompanying lesson of utter concentration in the race. In all these things we are to be "Followers of Paul".

In concluding our study, there is one further thought which we feel should be emphasized in connection with Paul's call for "followers", for we sense it touches a matter which is of no small moment. It would appear, from the actual wording of the call that it was the Apostle's desire and hope that there might be many at Philippi who would follow him in the various matters we have here considered, and, moreover, who would do so together. The actual wording is, "Brethren, be followers together of me", and we feel sure that the insertion of that word "together" was studied and deliberate. Evidently Paul was envisaging not just one, or two, or more, isolated individuals, who, as such, would rise up to his call, but rather of the whole church or, at the very least, a considerable nucleus within the church, who would definitely commit themselves together to come behind him in these explicit matters which he had set before them. As you will see, this is no small matter, and we should give it some earnest thought and prayer.

We may be well assured that God's servant had some important reason for including that vital word. May be he was thinking of the great encouragement and strength which such a group at Philippi could be to each other in the spiritual battle that would inevitably be involved in any following of Paul in these new ways. More likely, it was a combination of such considerations. In any case, Paul did reach out for a group, or a fellowship, of those who would faithfully follow him in the matters he had mentioned. Perhaps it would be timely and appropriate, here, to say that many of us have had to learn that it is in the disciplines of fellowship with others that we have come to discover the real depths of our own personal need, and then the availability of God's gracious supply. That is certainly one reason why God puts us in churches, and also into groups of fellow-workers in the gospel. The disciplines that are called for will prove to be His highway (or low way!) to spiritual enlargement.

However, we just return to the fact that Paul's call was for those who would follow him together in all the matters he had indicated, and we feel that this is something that all of us should take seriously to heart. Should we not be asking God for something like that in our day; -groups and companies of those who have seen the King, and who, as a result, are committed to Him, and to each other, in pursuing God's good and perfect will for His people? What a difference it would make if, for instance, the elders of our churches could be brought to the place where they are solidly together in following Paul in all the matters we have here considered.

"But what things were gain(s) to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil.3: 7).

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil.3: 10).

"I press toward the mark for the prize" (Phil.3: 14).

Needless to say, it still has to begin with the individual, and with individual decisions, -costly, no doubt, but far more costly, in the end, to the Lord, and to ourselves, if we foolishly turn aside. May God graciously help us to "follow Paul", -even as he followed Christ.

(Concluded)

C.R.G.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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May 2, 2003

Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the merciful and mighty Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. God be thanked that through His sacrificial death on the cross and His blood shed through the eternal Spirit, He hath purged our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. May the Lord by the same Spirit equip us all for the different ministries and administrations we are called to fulfill for the up building of His Church, to attain unto the measure of the fullness of Christ (Mark 10:45; Heb.9:14; 1 Cor.12:5-7; Eph.4:10-13).

Continuing our thoughts in relation to the "service of God" and the qualifications of the servant, we find Paul the Apostle adding in 1Tim.3:6, "Not a novice". This may be applied not only to overseers but to all those who bear responsibility in the things of God. The lack of essential measure of maturity has resulted in tragedy, in many lives under strain, and defeat in the work. Too often, the devil has either weakened or destroyed the work and the worker, by making the activities too heavy and exacting for the spiritual life to measure up. It is not the truth stated, ideas set forth, doctrines preached, etc., but the spiritual life, power and measure behind it all that settles its real value and fruitfulness.

Again, because this is true, there is no end to spiritual growth in this life. We are really only getting to a position to be of some value, because of experience and understanding, when we are taken away. This would make life an enigma and something of a mockery, were it not for the fact that the greater measure and nature of our service will be afterward, when and where His servants "shall serve him, And they shall see his face"(Rev .22:3,4).

There is a dangerous tendency to commit the interests of God to the hands of those who do not really know Him in a deep way, and to regard those who have spiritual measure through much experience as incapable of meeting the needs of the younger generation. The New Testament would soundly condemn this superficial tendency, as a peril to the Church of God. Years may not be the criterion, either way, but spiritual degree or measure most certainly is!

We may also consider some precepts or principles connected with the training of servants. Because what we have said about the servant and service is so true, the training must be above all things, that which will produce spiritual men and women. Of course this applies to all the children of God, who would serve Him in any way. But we are now having in mind such as may serve Him in a more than general way.

(a) It is essential that there be a strong and sound grounding in the knowledge of the Scriptures. For every obvious reason this is so. But when we have given this matter all the place that it must have, it is necessary to point out that the letter of the Word is not enough. Lectures on the Bible and analysis of its books, will never make a true servant of Christ. The need is for spiritual knowledge of the Word of God. It must be spiritually taught and apprehended. That which lies behind the letter as to the Divine mind must be seen. The teaching and study of the Scriptures must have immediate spiritual effect in the lives of those concerned. The Word of God will only profit us in so far as it comes to us in spiritual power.

(b) There must be a practical life running side by side with the study work. This practical side should have two aspects at least. Firstly, there must be life in a spiritual family, so that all the lessons of forbearance, patience and co-operation are learned. The cross must be known in the numerous and frequent occasions, when the flesh in us and in others rises because of human failures and faults. The great value of fellowship has to be learned in the testing conditions of life at close quarters over a sufficient period. The reality of the laws of the "Body of Christ" has to be established. Dependence, interdependence, interrelatedness as against independence, individualism and detachment are some of the laws which will mean in their observation or violation, life or death, fullness or limitation in the Lord's service. Our object must not be to get adherents to Christianity, but to "BUILD" a spiritual "BODY". Therefore we must know BODY LIFE, its order and function.

Secondly, there must be a practical spiritual expression in our training and the best and most directly fruitful way for this is assembly life. The training of workers should be in "close" relationship with church life, as constituted and formed on the true basis of the Body of Christ. Not just a preaching place or one where meetings are held and attended, but where there is true corporate life and mutuality in building up. In such and out of such corporate life, ministry and service should be developed, - not just technicians from an institute. No one should be allowed to go out into whole time Christian service, who has not had a true church training and learned the meaning and value of corporate life. God is not wanting so many units, either for salvation or for service. He is set upon His Church as the corporate expression of Christ. Everything therefore, if fullness is to be attained, must be on this basis.

To sum up, God is working in relation to His eternal purpose concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. The Church, which is His (Christ's Body), is the predestined "fullness of Him". This personal and corporate expression of Christ, is not earthly, temporal or "ecclesiastical". The ministry of this corporate representation of Christ is essentially and solely a spiritual thing, determined by its spiritual measure. (Spiritual is what is of God and not of man, even religious man). While there are those things which are of value in furnishing the Lord's servants for the human aspects of their work, the real training is spiritual, i.e. the knowledge of God and His Son, vitally in the Word of God and in experience. Training for the service of God should therefore be solely governed by the object of producing men and women of a sound, strong spiritual life, with a background of deep knowledge of Him, "the Word of God" dwelling in them "richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". The Lord write His word upon our hearts.

Please pray for our fellow -workers and servants, who are praying about moving to new centers, to take up the responsibility of the ministry of the Gospel and the Lord's work, residing with their families in the respective local Houses of Prayer. Pray concerning their personal needs, especially children's admissions in schools etc.

Bro. Reuben, God's servant with the little flock at Sholapur are thankful to the Lord for enabling them to obtain a piece of land and have it duly registered for the construction of a small Prayer House, as they are gathering in a rented facility. May the Lord supply all their needs to have the Prayer House constructed soon and the ministry of the surrounding places be also helped forward from that base.

We should thank the Lord for the enabling grace upon all teachers and helpers engaged in the V.B.S. ministry, at nearly 65 centers in our assemblies. The parents and teachers especially, who were faithfully ministering to nearly 700 children in Hebron for the past ten days, would have us to thank the Lord for the blessings and encouragement they and the children have received. After the procession on the 1st of May, followed by songs and some items through children, and a final lesson, I gave a brief exhortation and closed it with prayer. At Horeb, Somajiguda, Bro. D. S. Christopher participated in the final day ministry of the V .B. S. and Bro. G. T. Benjamin attended to the same at Ephratha, Vengalarao Nagar. Let us not forget to be in continued prayer for the children who were led to salvation or fresh commitment in the gatherings all over.

Bro. Joseph Kurien and elders with the saints at Beulah, Kazipet, would have us thank the Lord, for the blessings connected with the dedication of the newly constructed large two storied building for the Sunday School ministry, by Bro. G. T. Benjamin. I shared the Word on the following Lord's Day.

We covet your prayers for the Lord's enablement to bring about proper divine order of elders and deacons, and related ministries under His Headship in the church at Hebron, in due course.

Praying that the Lord may enable us to be labourers together with Him, in true divine order the building and edification of His Church,

I remain,
Yours in His grace,

K.PHILLIP

1 Cor. 3: 9
2 Cor. 6: 1,3,10

SPIRITUAL WEAPONS
BAKHT SINGH

In these end days the enemy is very active and he uses all kinds of weapons to attack believers, God's servants and their co-workers. He uses many subtle devices to weaken our faith, bring strife among us, make us negligent about spiritual things, fill our hearts with discouragement and bring confusion among us. As the world powers are inventing more advanced weapons against their enemies, we also should be fully equipped with spiritual weapons of warfare. God has given us weapons to overcome dejection, depression, doubt, fear, strife. Jealousy, anger, etc. We should know what these weapons are and learn how to use them. All these weapons must be used properly. In 2 Cor.10: 4-6 we find some of these weapons. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds); Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled".

The first great weapon to defeat and confound the attacks of the enemy, is implicit obedience. Whenever God speaks to us and shows us something we have to obey immediately. Our weakness is due to disobedience. We are ready to hear but not to obey. Quick and joyful obedience is the secret of the power of resurrection. See for example, on the early Easter morning an angel told the women who had gone to the sepulchre, "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: 10, I have told you" (Matt.28:7). Verse eight says, "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word". They were told to go quickly and tell the disciples, and they obeyed immediately, whereas when the disciples heard what the women told them, they did not believe them and they started to argue. In Luke 24:18-25, the Lord rebuked the disciples saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken". Because the women believed what the angel said and obeyed quickly, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them by the way. The disciples lost the privilege of being the first witnesses of the resurrection. Being men, they had to have the privilege of first telling others about the resurrection, but because of their unbelief they lost that privilege. Thus quick and joyful obedience gives us victory. What God shows us, we have to obey quickly. Then our prayers are quickly answered. It is not by our loud and long prayers that we get answers. Please make sure that there is no disobedience in your life against the Lord.

The second weapon we have, is to pray always and not be discouraged even when our prayers are not answered immediately. "...men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke18:1). Very often we cannot concentrate in prayer. We find our thoughts wandering here and there and our body becoming restless. The enemy can use many many devices to hinder our prayer time. Many times we decide to spend one hour in prayer. But before we go upon our knees, some one comes and knocks the door. That is the enemy's device. He can bring worldly friends just at that time. Then we begin to argue, "They have come all the way to see me". So we give up prayer and spend time in eating and drinking. When we find a burden upon our heart for prayer we have to persevere in prayer and not allow the enemy to hinder us.

(To be contd.)

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THE FIRE OF GOD

God is holy. "...our God is a consuming fire" (Heb.12:29). But God wants you also to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), and He wants His holy fire to burn in you also.

THE BURNT OFFERING

Firstly, in the Tabernacle of God spoken of in the Book of Exodus, the fire of God burnt upon the brazen altar on which was offered the burnt offering, the first of the offerings. "... This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev .6:9, 13).

This burnt offering showed the complete surrender, consecration, obedience and devotion of Christ to the Father. Everything was burnt to ashes (v.10). The ashes signified that the fire had made full appropriation. There was nothing more left, which could be burnt. God had received fully what He wanted. Do you know, beloved, how this fire of devotion and full consecration was burning and burning in the life of the Lord Jesus? Is it burning in your life also? Do you also want to be burnt to ashes? In suffering, sorrow, sickness, opposition, persecution, misunderstanding and in a multitude of other painful situations, does that fire of devotion to God burn continually and ever increasingly in you? Are you willing to become completely humbled and exhausted of all natural strength and reduced to ashes? Are you willing to serve your Lord without asking for a reward, without a murmur, without a sigh?

Note that the fire upon the altar had to burn always. Do you forget the Lord sometimes and go after worldly pleasure? Do you get discouraged and drop away sometimes from the work which the Lord has given you? The fire has to burn always and go on burning until that blessed morning when the Sun of righteousness will arise and the Lord will come (Mal.4:2).

May the Lord find in you and in me something of that full satisfaction which He found in the fire of the burnt offering in the life of His beloved Son.

THE INCENSE

Secondly, the fire of God burnt upon the golden altar of incense. The smoke of the incense stands for the prayer of the saints (Rev.5:8; 8:3,4). It ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. That angel represents the High Priest Aaron who had to burn perpetual incense before the Lord (Ex.30:8). We also have a High Priest Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, Who ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb.7: 25,26).

Do you know, beloved, how the fire of prayer and intercession burned in the life of our Lord? He often continued all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). He prayed with strong crying and tears (Heb.5: 7). Does that fire of prayer and intercession burn in your life also? Consider the prayer life of Paul (Gal.4: 19) and of Epaphras his co-worker (Col.4: 12).

If you neglect your prayer life you are sinning against the Lord (1 Sam. 12:23). Quench not the Spirit (1Thess.5: 19).

May the incense of fervent prayer and intercession ascend up daily in your life unto the Lord.

THE CANDLESTICK

Thirdly, the fire of God burned upon the seven lamps of the golden candlestick. These are the lamps of testimony.

Jesus is the light of the world, and God wants you also to shine as lights in this world of darkness. "...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1 :8). If the fire of God is burning upon your altar of consecration and if the incense of your prayer and intercession is ascending before God out of the angel's hand, then it will be easy for you to be the Lord's faithful witness in your home, and in your locality, in your school, office, hospital, or factory. The fire of God will burn in your heart and the light of God will shine upon your face.

But note also there are seven lamps upon one candlestick. This shows that in God's plan, our testimony should not only be individual, but it should also be a corporate one. As children of God, born into God's family by the experience of new birth, we all belong to one Church, that is, to "the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven" (Heb.12: 23). The life and the light and the love of God bind us all together into one bundle. If God's people know this how glorious would be the light which shines out from His people. Please read what the Lord prayed in John 17:20-23.

As the fire of God continues to burn in you, you will not be happy until you come into the unity of the Spirit with other children of God. May God's holy fire burn continually in you.

C.E.D.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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May 14, 2003

Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who by the one offering of Himself on the cross hath put away sin and made us free from sin, thus making us servants to righteousness and servants to God. May we be enabled to render true service coupled with true leadership, in the wisdom and enablement of His Spirit for the edification of His Church (Heb.9: 26; 10:12; Rom.6: 12,18,22; 1 Cor.14: 12)

We may profitably look into 1 Corinthians 4, where Apostle Paul speaks of the principles of Christian leadership and service. He does so by employing three main metaphors, that of servanthood, (4: 1), of stewardship (4: 1), and of fatherhood (4:15). First the metaphor of SERVANTHOOD. The root meaning of this word refers to an under rower, the lowest galley slave. These were the most menial, unenvied and despised of servants. The word comes to mean an underling of any kind.

At the end of chapter 3, Paul has been insisting that there should be no more boasting about men. He then begins to build a kind of verbal pyramid. "...For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (vs.21-23). The significant thing is that verbal pyramid has Paul at the bottom, not at the top. In listing the things that belong to the Corinthians, he is seeking to cure their boasting about men and to deliver them from their false way of thinking, when they claimed, "I am of Paul, ...I am of Apollos".

Now, says Paul, the very reverse is the case. It is we who belong to you. He is saying that the minister belongs to the church, not the church to the minister. This is true of all forms of Christian service; we are not just God's servants, we are the servants of God's people, as Paul makes it clear in 2 Cor.4:5. "For we preach Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake". So we fulfill not a master's role to domineer, but a servant's role to be underlings.

But notice that in this pyramid, although all things belong to the believers at Corinth, they do not belong to themselves. "Ye are Christ's" (1Cor.4: 23). This means that both leaders and those who are led, are together servants who owe allegiance to Christ as Lord. And the pattern of their service is the Lord's own service - "Christ is God's", Notice how the idea is built up. We are yours; you are Christ's; and Christ is God's. It is clear that this is a pattern of service. Some have been afraid to give this phrase its full force, because of the idea of what is called 'subordinationism' - that is somehow making Christ lower than God, But of course in His mediatorial office, Jesus does willingly subject Himself to the Father, and He is therefore the servant 'Par excellence'. So it is the Father, Who referring to the Messiah says, "Behold, my servant" (Isa.42: 1) and Jesus Himself says, "my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor, 11: 3, when he says that, "...the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God". This does not detract in the slightest form the full divinity and divine glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His equality with the Father. But it does mean that Christ's pattern of lowly, obedient, single-minded, God-centred, costly service is our pattern. That is why the Servant Songs of Isaiah are an important study for any servant of God. We are to be made in the same image. The key metaphor for Christian leadership is the metaphor of the servant. The badge of it is the apron; the typical posture is kneeling to wash the feet of those whom he serves. Brothers and sisters, how we need this servant-spirit to be written by the Holy Ghost into our life and character! So many problems in the relationship of Christian workers in all sorts of spheres, would completely disappear if God made us like His Son, Who made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself and took the form of a servant.

Secondly, the metaphor of STEWARDSHIP. The church has been described as a field and a building (1 Cor,3:9). But here it is mentioned as a household or an estate. Most households of means have a steward, who is a kind of a custodian. So our second metaphor for service is that of stewardship. The Greek word is that from which we get the English word "economist", The steward was related to his master in terms of total subordination and total accountability. So what was required of him was faithfulness, His master could trust him,(a) to subordinate his own interests to the master's, and (b) to deal with his goods as one who must give an account to the master. Here Paul focuses this matter of stewardship in four ways, Firstly, there is the stewardship of SCRIPTURE.

The precise sphere of our stewardship, of what our Master has entrusted to us, is "the mysteries of God" (1 Cor.4: 1). These are of course the mysteries and secrets revealed by God and recorded for us in the Holy Scripture. It is God's revealed truth, which has been committed to us as stewards and in relation to it, we are to be totally accountable to Him. "...it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (4:2). Our basic concern therefore in this stewardship is that we should rightly handle the Word of Truth and consequently have no need to be ashamed when we finally meet our Master (2 Tim.2: 15).

We may assume this from what the Apostle is referring to further on where he says, "Now brothers, I have written about myself and Apollos in this way for your benefit, that in us you might learn not to go

beyond what is written" (v.6, N.I.V). This perhaps must have been a saying in the early Church -"Nothing beyond what is written". Paul was eager that in Apollos and in himself the Corinthians should hold on to this. This was the stewardship that they exercised. He wanted them to be men and women who would be bound to Scripture. He wanted Scripture and Scripture alone to mould their thinking, to set the limits of their standards and behaviour, to be the highest court of appeal for their doctrine, and to be the rule by which they lived in every area of their life. Nothing beyond what is WRITTEN!

It is a glorious thing when the influence we have upon others and the lesson they learn from our lives is, not to go beyond what is written. That was precisely Paul's example, as he explains in his second letter. "We refuse to tamper with God's word, but by open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience. (2Cor.4:2 N.I.V). That is the Apostolic example. That is what our generation so desperately needs in the Church of Jesus Christ today. God helping, we shall continue the thoughts on stewardship in our next issue.

God's servant Bro. Victor David, together with the- responsible brothers of Carmel, Vijayawada, are thankful for your prayers for the Youth Camp they were able to arrange in a community hall, large enough to accommodate more than 2000, from 9th to 12 May. An average of 2000 from sister assemblies and other nearby areas participated and about 400 came forward in the evening meetings to confess their sins and to receive the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour. Bro. Paul Sudhakar dwelt on the profound theme, "The Church, the Body of Christ" in the mornings, followed by group discussions, and other themes in the afternoon. They are thankful for the singers and helpers of the Youth ministry, Hebron, who could take an effective share by teaching new songs and choruses. Pray for the follow up ministry.

Pray for the two day special meetings, God willing to be held at Kolhapuron 20th and 21st April when Bros B.G. Solomon, John Stewart and myself, hope to share the Word, besides setting in order vital matters connected with the administration and ministry which have been sadly neglected in the past years. Pray that a full time servant of the Lord's choice, may be soon made available for the flock there at Kolhapur.

Sis.(Mrs.) Anand Devaraj, one among the earliest believers, helping and serving the Lord with the sisters in Hebron, was called Home on 22nd April. Pray for the comfort of her family members.

God's servant Bro. K. Aravindam of Kurnool, who underwent some tests in the Asian Gastroenterology Hospital, Hyderabad, a few days ago, has been advised to undergo an abdominal operation. Please pray for the safety and success of the surgery.

Praying that having received a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, we may be equipped by the Holy Spirit, to render acceptable service in the fear of the Lord, looking for His glorious return,

I remain,
Yours in His grace,

K.PHILLIP

Psa. 2: 6,10,12
1 Pet. 4: 7-11
Rom.15: 30,32

BAKHT SINGH

According to 2 Cor.10:5, we have to bring into captivity every thought and every hindrance to the obedience of Christ. Also it says that we have to cast down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. Here we have to make sure that on no occasion we take God's glory to ourselves or give that glory to other men. Many preachers take glory and magnify themselves by printing full size photos and inviting large crowds for their meetings. Thus, perhaps unconsciously, they give more honour to men than to God. We should depend upon God in prayer and bring all our needs to Him. In God's work, we cannot use worldly methods. Our means is prayer. It is more effective than anything else.

The third weapon is strong faith. We need strong faith in prayer. Evidently, the devil comes in to weaken our faith as he desired to do with Peter. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31,32). The Lord Jesus Christ, knowing beforehand the devil's attack, used a mighty weapon to strengthen the faith of the man of God. If we do not have strong faith, no matter how many words we use in prayer, they are of no use. By weakening our faith the enemy makes our lives barren. That is why we have to pray by faith "Lord, make my faith strong and active". We must have the faith of God, as we read in Mark 11: 22, " And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God". In the margin it says, "Have the faith of God". That means, the Lord Jesus Christ living in us gives us strong faith. Our weak faith becomes strong by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ coming into us. With such a faith we can rebuke and bind Satan.

The fourth spiritual weapon is to learn to bind the powers of darkness. "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"(Matt.18: 18). When the enemy attacks us we should know his weapon. Otherwise we cannot say whether the attack is from the devil or not. Some attacks are from human beings and some from the devil. We have to have understanding and sense of the enemy's attacks. Then only we can confront him and bind the powers of darkness. That requires faith and oneness. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.18:19). That is a great privilege we as a church have, to bind the powers of darkness. Very few assemblies, God's servants, and believers use it. Some repeat the words like magic. First of all we have to have the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then only we can bind Satan. If we live defeated lives and the enemy has gained some place in our lives, and yet we pray, "Lord, we bind the powers of darkness", it will have no effect. We have to see that the enemy has no place in our life. Only then by one mind we can bind the powers of darkness.

Once some of us went for open air preaching. When we began the ministry, we found that our throats had gone sore. After a few minutes all throats became hoarse. Suddenly it dawned on us that it was the enemy's attack. We came back and spent the whole night in prayer. Next morning all the throats were clear. So we know, there are enemy's attacks, which can be bound by faith, oneness and unity.

The fifth weapon is to have strong faith in the Word of God and claim His promises. That is how the early church prayed (Acts 4:23-31). They lost fear and doubt and prayed with strong faith in the Word of God and the promises, which God gave to His people.

(To be contd.)