

Times of Refreshing

AND

The Church at Ephesus

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Format of this book

When this book was originally published, underlined text was used to emphasise a point. Unfortunately underlined print does not show clearly when publishing a document for e-readers (like Kindle).

In order to get around this problem, we have converted underlined words into bold text.

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TIMES OF REFRESHING

The will of God for each local church is that times of refreshing should come from the presence of the Lord. This is to be recognized simply as the coming of Jesus Christ amongst men by the agency of the Holy Spirit. 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you'. (Acts 3.19 & 20)

This is a tremendous promise. It was given straight from the heart of God by Peter, and has possibly been overlooked by many of us for years; nevertheless it is infallibly true.

In all forms of life there are times and seasons which are absolutely vital to growth. Throughout all animate life we recognize the heartbeat, the inhaling and exhaling of breath, the regular, rhythmic throb of growth. To be successful the farmer must co-operate unreservedly with this rhythm of the natural creation, and doing so would expect a harvest. It is the same also in human relationships; if a child is to be expected of a marriage union, then husband and wife must co-operate with this order and rhythm which the Lord has established, for it is impossible to break God's laws and expect fruit.

Notice that God's intention is not just one but many times of refreshing, not necessarily consistent, but nevertheless regular times in the life of the church of God in each locality when there are real moves of the Spirit, outpourings from on high. Glory be to God for His abundance of grace in this matter. The word that Peter uses in this verse is quite distinctive - 'refreshings', literally 'upsoul'. It is a glorious resurrection word. In a healthy church we are to expect regular times when the Holy Spirit is outpoured upon us, and refreshed souls 'go up' as though being resurrected from sleep into which they had fallen; also those who have never known newness of life are quickened by the Spirit into new birth. Thus there is vitally connected the refreshing of those born of God in the Church, and the adding by God of those freshly born.

The worst feature of the common fallacy being preached among us today is that we are already in the midst of the outpoured state and that this sudden effusion of gifts and preoccupation with the Holy Spirit is in itself all that is meant by an outpouring. This cannot be the whole truth, for 'He shall send Jesus Christ' is the promise. When this happens our preoccupation will be with Himself, more than with His Agency, the blessed Spirit, and the result will be resurrection life in the midst, not the modified and dressed up carnality of the flesh. When the Holy Spirit comes down, men and women 'go up' - these are times of 'up-soul' from the Lord's presence; and the lifting up into newness of life.

Are there regular times like this in your church when the Holy Spirit moves in expansion by refreshings and real new birth in your midst? Such occasions must not be confused with crusades or the like, because they are initiated entirely by the Holy Spirit - they are times when, through His body, the Church, God moves in on an area or a locality, and the impotent are raised into newness of life and activity.

The event that prompted this promise was the raising of the impotent man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. This man was well-known to them all in Jerusalem. He had lain there many a year, possibly Jesus had often passed him by in the days of His flesh. Now, by Peter's ministrations, this cripple had become a man raised up by the power of God which had gone through him. He experienced the healing virtue of the resurrected Christ, and was raised up because refreshing was in the midst.

In these days many are idealistically dividing soul and spirit; the word 'soulish' is much in vogue. The critical faculties work overtime in judging so- and-so as soulish and so-and-so as spiritual and many sit in meetings in this destructive frame of mind, being negative in the extreme and totally unproductive for God. How reinvigorating then to discover in scripture a promise of souls 'going up' when they experience resurrection of the soul - the soul of men utterly swallowed up in the spiritual life and movings of God because their spirits have been deeply readjusted to Him.

In Acts 2:27-31 we read of Jesus' soul being laid low in the bonds of death and darkness, but behold - the power of the Father was let loose from on high, and Jesus knew His own time of refreshing - 'up-soul'. He was raised up

into newness of life by the spiritual resurrection. Up He went, out of the environs of sin, hell, the grave and darkness, and passing through the heavens ascended to the highest point of all. Now He is the resurrected One, Himself refreshed in soul, and from His presence refreshings now come.

When we are recipients of refreshings from the presence of the Lord, we can expect two things to happen. Firstly the individual believers will know a real uplift of spiritual life in their souls. Whereas they were in some degree of soul-sleep, now they know consciously a sweet breath of resurrection life from on high reviving them in faith, love and good works. Secondly there will be outpourings of the Holy Spirit to effect new birth in those who hitherto had no life; these will be men and women drawn by Him to His refreshed church, or sought out by Him through those He has refreshed.

Thus we see that refreshings and outpourings are not synonymous terms. The refreshings are for God's inheritance, His Church, and the outpourings are upon men and women in the locality who are brought to faith by the drawings of the Father through the Spirit. Refreshings on the Church bring 'up-soul', reawakenings, while outpourings of the Spirit bring spirit-births. This distinction should be kept in view and both refreshings and outpourings should be sought by us in our churches and localities. It is possible that both may begin simultaneously in our church and locality, or alternatively firstly God's refreshings in the church, leading to outpourings and expansions in the church by spirit-birth.

Let us also bear in mind that the moment of spirit-birth also means the spiritual resurrection of the soul. When the enthroned Christ sent that first outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, among those who first received were Peter and John. They were spirit-born (regenerated) and they, in their soul-consciousness, were raised up simultaneously. They were now utterly refreshing to be with. Their presence had power and influence in it. Quickened in spirit and raised up in heavenly places in their conscious life, was it surprising that through their presence this man, who had been incapacitated from his mother's womb, should be recipient of such blessing and that God's bountiful provision outpoured so freely?

Unless there are refreshings in the midst, powerlessness will predominate and we shall be conscious of little resurrection life. The soul is the area of self-knowledge or consciousness in the life. Therefore the refreshed soul's consciousness is of the powers of the world to come, awakened unto righteousness and sensitive to heavenly things. A person who is conscious thus will be a trumpet, giving a certain sound whenever he speaks. He will be speaking of that of which he is aware and the word will be with power and the dead will be raised from their immobility and state of sin; their spirits, spoken into life by the prophetic word, are quickened into the reality of the heavenlies.

The immanent presence of God in the midst is imperative. Have we discovered the power of presence? We have all experienced inexplicable sensations of anxiety or unhappiness or peace or joy when in the company and presence of some kind of inner power. To be in some people's presence is a benediction, while another's powerful personality is often a cause of fear. When Jesus is present truly He makes things new. Wherever He moved while in the limited body of His flesh things changed, He left healings and deliverances behind Him wherever He went, and in that future day when He descends from heaven, everything will be changed also. He will come with a shout and the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive shall be caught up to be with Him in the air and the elements of the old heaven and earth shall simply be dissolved; and the thing which shall accomplish all this is His coming. What a powerful presencing this will be. By this the old order gives way to the new.

God grant us a full realization of this principle in every church and fellowship we represent - when He comes in real refreshing presence, things not ordained to resurrection are made over to destruction awaiting annihilation. Beloved, we must have this new order of things in our midst, or else we shall remain or degenerate into impotent religious worshippers. We could shout it from the housetops - wherever Jesus comes in power all things are made new, old things pass away. How far have we strayed from this? We may have prophecies, gifts, preachings and sing Wesley hymns and shout - but in our midst do our eyes rest on lives that have been made new in the last few days because they came into the presence of the Lord and were eternally changed?

In these verses there is a logical succession of ideas: resurrection - v.22; restitution - v.21; refreshing - v.19. The preoccupation in apostolic preaching was resurrection, because this was their soul-consciousness of the life they were living. Everywhere they went they were experiencing the uprisings and quickenings of Jesus, the New Man. Their speech was phrased in the language of that resurrected Man: 'rise up' was their watchword. They saw that all downtrodden ones who were brought low were entitled to resurrection of their inward man into newness of life and the restoration to all things promised by the prophets. Restoration and restitution are popular words today, so let us note that it is a restoration of what God promised by the prophets, the restoration of manhood, the resurrection of a new race of men, regenerated and conformed to their own heavenly Adam.

This is the main thrust of the prophetic stream which first flowed through the opened mouth of Adam and Eve, who believed they had 'gotten a **man** from the Lord'. We know that Cain, their firstborn, was not God's choice, but even so it appears there was some hint of knowledge that there was to be A NEW MAN. The restoration is quite impossible apart from this new race of beings. God's new creation could not be Himself, nor yet a mere man, but an entirely new company hitherto unknown, not angels or any other form of created being, but a new creation conceived in and produced from the inner heart and mind of God. Resurrection should be the mainspring of all prophetic ministry (see in our passage): Peter, quoting Moses, said 'a prophet shall the Lord send', and - through Him in resurrection - quickening from on high. In many places prophecy has been so defiled by men that it is a carnal shadow of the quickening word it ought to be, namely the word that refreshes and brings life out of death.

When times of refreshing come amongst the saints, it results in a new order of things - a spiritual rebirth, the times in the Church when God adds to the number in clear and definite moves generated of His Spirit. At such times long extended persuasive approaches to people, trying to talk them out of their sin, are replaced by definite repentance resulting in the sealing of the Spirit. No-one can read the book of Acts without noticing the regular and ever-expanding moves of God in those early years. Outpourings leading to foundation, followed by consolidation, then outgoings, those regular rhythms which we associate with the living organism of the Church.

May the Lord grant us sanity of mind in these days to lay hold of God for these same kind of movings. His Son died and rose again for them. What does it profit, brethren, if we receive gifts and blessings and gain rich understanding of scripture, with revelation also, and do not have this resurrection ministry in our midst. The presence of the Lord must be so vital and real that we know and feel ourselves to be a new race of beings, God's peculiar people, which are neither mere men, nor angels, nor beasts, nor yet devils. Each one should be a living sacrifice, quickened from above and alive from the dead, through whom the new creating prophetic word pours forth and from whose presence flows the river of life.

Let it be known that unless the prophetic ministry is raised up among us in the true stream, there can be no real movings of the kind we need. Men who speak the word which brings life and construction, or death and destruction, raised up of God and flowing in the ministry of the Eternal Word. God cause us to magnify this prophetic ministry. Men confuse it with foretelling, with such phrases as 'My dear children .. this', and 'My little children ... that'. Beloved, the spirit-quickening word cleanses the reasonings, smashes the arguments, commands response, reaches the spirits of men and commands them to rise up and leave sin and self and the world.

That is the glorious revelation prepared for those who move in this stream, they see obedient spirits rise up, one spirit with God, and the souls go up in consciousness of Life Eternal. When this ministry prevails in the churches God will bring people in to hear it and live. He will see to it that the hungry shall come and be fed, they shall listen and hear and live, for they shall hear His voice. At this point it is advisable to pause and ask - are we experiencing such times as this? Is the Lord's presence so real in the midst that new birth takes place regularly because waters of the Eternal Ocean are rolling in and engulfing souls into resurrection life? If not why not? Honesty is imperative here, for the promise is sure and the principles of the Lord are beyond question. How thrilled we should be about that.

Now we must consider the significance of the words 'so that' in our text: they are so important. The original reads: 'Repent ... and be converted **so that** your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you' (Acts 3:19 & 20). There are certain conditions which must be fulfilled before we shall come to regular times of refreshing in the Church.

These conditions are not so attractive as some would like them to be, but the same God Who gives the promise also gave the conditions for its fulfilment, and will never change them. He changed none of His principles for His only Begotten, so it is morally certain that He will not do so for us, but He will give grace abundant for the time of need from the Throne of Grace that His will may be done.

The first condition is repentance. To repent is to change your mind. The following instruction 'to be converted' is made contingent upon the former. Conversion is to 'change direction or course', an entirely impossible thing unless a change of mind has formerly taken place. The fountain of all creation is the mind of God, the Word He spoke came from His mind. Repentance is fundamental to times of refreshing, indeed to receiving anything from God. I must confess that my own mind has undergone change in this matter. When first I entered into the life of God I believed very much in God's will to outpour the Spirit regularly. But afterwards I began to adopt that mental stance, prevalent among so many in the country today, that assumes or says, 'we are already in it'. Pride, mental arrogance and high-mindedness debase us, as though that which is generally seen country-wide is God's norm. However, due to God's grace moving upon me in His unremitting way, I began to return to the same love and understanding which I had from Him at first. I had need of a change of mind and He gave it me.

In so many things we all need this, indeed our minds need to be changed totally. It is easy to say that 'revival' is an old covenant word, and that revival is God's norm. Of course it is; but unless all the evidences of it are in our midst, to say in the same breath that we are in that revival state is nothing but crass folly - carnal-mindedness. What is our mental attitude to this message concerning times of refreshing? Do we believe that we are in them, or do we agree that we need them and by God's grace will co-operate with Him to obtain them?

The basic need amongst us is to have a changed mind about it; without that, faith cannot come. Faith must be operative in the mind as well as the other faculties of the inward man. Faith is the response of the inward man to the Lord and to what He is saying, for this the mind must be utterly responsive to the will of God and delivered from all objections, arguments and carnal attitudes. Only when our minds change will feelings truly alter, so that desire moves after the will of God. It is waiting on God about this matter that will effect such a change in our thinking. Tarrying in His presence will give God the opportunity to re-shape our thinking, and not only this but also all other faculties of the mind.

Repentance subsists as a state, not merely as an initial experience. God refashions our thought life through the revelation of His Spirit, when we allow Him to do so He brings in the consistent life which consists in the permanently converted state. God can only outpour refreshings of Himself upon those who are in this state of repentance, those whose eyes look up to Him, waiting on Him in faith, shut up to Him alone, knowingly convinced that this is His will. The outpourings of the Spirit can only be given when the company with whom we gather moves into line with the will of God. It is of no use to ask God to outpour if you are not prepared to bring the whole of your life into accord with His will. Conversion, that real state of changed behaviour, attitude and life, will naturally follow on from this work of God done in the heart that is brought to repentance, so that 'sins are blotted out'; thereby the ground is cleared for the moves of God so desperately needed among us.

It must be confessed with sorrow and shame that sin is still evident in many quarters. There is no other conclusion to which an honest man or woman can come, for the promise is so clear, yet it is not being fulfilled in church experience. If there are no refreshings then the only reasonable conclusion is that the thing that prevents outpourings is sin, be it of the objectionable, grosser type, or just the more general subtle one of unbelief. When sins are blotted out the blessings will come, and not before.

Waiting on God is one of the most vital necessities of the present-day Church. Merely outward kneeling before Him for an hour or two per week is insufficient. Waiting on God has to do with the inward disposing of the whole heart to God. The proper relationship which should exist between God and man is that of creature looking up to and waiting on Creator as to the Source of all. The basic sin of world is the self-exaltation of the creature to the position of God, for this renders the true Creator God obsolete. If we wish to return to the purposes of God in the world of men, we must then return to the simplicity of creaturehood. Dependence on God, waiting with a holy naivety for Him to move and pour out from on high. This waiting upon God in hope is the ground in which faith

will flourish; the interior eye will be opened, the revelation of the Spirit will increase and wisdom will abound; the things of this world will lose their lustre and will no longer dominate hearts.

Beside this, fear of man, with its consequent evil of looking for honour from men will disappear and all will be replaced by the unveiling of the Invisible to the interior eye. This is our great need; to behold the Invisible, to live our lives as seeing Him. The psalmist in Psalm 39 instructs us in the way that the fire begins to burn; it was while he was musing, that his thinking was straightened out about God and himself and all men. God rectifies our thinking. It is salutary to notice the Church's one-mindedness which is so prevalently demonstrated in the Acts; they became of one mind with God. We are apt to think that single-mindedness is only a group of people becoming one mind with each other, but it is possible to have mental agreement with one another and yet be a million miles away from the mind of God. They came to unity in and about the mind of God; this was the secret of their boldness.

The mark of a person's growth in grace is that his mind becomes renewed successively up into God's own mind, so that he becomes fully persuaded of all God's thoughts and deeds. The result is that his heart becomes feelingly aware of what God has wrought in the resurrection and enthronement of His Son, and is super-conscious of the person and presence of the Invisible. The man has a living consciousness of the state of change in the invisible world, a knowledge that the invisible power of sin has been broken and dethroned, and that righteousness has triumphed in the heavens.

Now the Holy Spirit is freely given without measure and 'hangs o'er all the thirsty land', ready to fall upon and flow out through lives sacrificially given over unto God. Truly the spiritual Rock whence living water flows is everywhere to be found. Of old, when Israel wandered in the wilderness, they needed above all to find water, and wherever they made camp there it was. They never saw that spiritual Rock, but whenever they needed it, there the water appeared and flowed unto them. We know that Rock was Christ.

The brooding immanence of the Spirit of God becomes a vital reality to those who wait on God. As their hearts move along with Him in this path, their spirits take flight, and they lay hold on God, moving out into intercessions both expressed and inexpressible. At such times the Invisible becomes almost visible, and the intangible tangible and touchable. With the resultant decrease of the activities of the mind, the groanings and desires and longings of the 'hidden' (invisible) man of the heart become audible, and blend with the desire of the Eternal God. Until then, these inward movings of the invisible man are quenched by the reasonings of the questioning mind. We have all to discover that in this realm, as in all other, the mind must follow the spirit, not the spirit the mind. Once a man's spirit moves with and after God, his mind is restored to its proper place and function, he is becoming realigned and adjusted.

It is not possible to over-emphasize this need to wait on God. A man must do it with faith; it will certainly mean periods of prolonged quietness. He must not be deterred by this, for this is nothing but the silence of God. Let him but continue and surely the fire will burn. Incidental things and worries great and small will vanish from his spirit, making way for his desires to be brought into sweet union with the heart of God in the deepest levels of human consciousness, unshakeable and profound.

It is not possible to talk concerning these things without realizing that this ministry will cost a man everything. If a man chooses this way of life (and to move in another is folly) then he must be prepared for the real conversion to take place in himself involving change of course, as well as change of behaviour. Jesus, as described in Phil. 2 thought in a new different way from all mankind in obedience unto death. Be ready then for a change in life-style, wherein things formerly acceptable become obsolete. Things hitherto lawful will become unlawful and if continued will be sin. Tastes will change, and so will our use of time. So drastic will be the renovation that even the records once listened to will become offensive to our spirit, and levity, frivolity and sarcasm will be banished from our idea of humour. Nothing will be allowed that grieves away the Spirit of God from His present intentions and movings in the churches unto the salvation of men.

All this is nothing other than the Lord Jesus purging His floor so that we, being sensitized to the mind of the Spirit, shall live our lives to the glory of God. With the gentle dove abiding undisturbed within our breasts, we shall be a holy people, separated unto the Lord. In Noah's day the dove left the ark, but had to return again for there was no

place of rest anywhere to be found, but thousands of years later she found sweet repose in union with the pure and undefiled Lamb of God, whose sole aim was to fulfil all righteousness. Beloved, let us also fulfil all righteousness, that we too may know the comfort and glory of the blessed Spirit residing within. Let moral rectitude return to the heart and restitution be made; let sin be cast out and He shall come. The gentle Spirit is easily grieved, but so swiftly returns when men turn in humble brokenness and confession of their need to God.

There are important practical considerations which should be touched upon at this point, for example it is a good thing to make provision in the weekly meetings of the church or fellowship for regular times of waiting on God in prayer. Someone has said that the spiritual tone and depth of a church is most easily discoverable at the prayer meeting and reading the record of the history of the Church in the Acts, who will doubt the veracity of the latter statement, or the advisability of the first.

Initially it may be discovered that such prayer meetings are poorly attended, but perseverance and patience are essential qualities in Church leadership, and as God begins to move, the prayer meetings will become the 'hub' of all that goes on. When God's consistent movings in depth and power are seen in meetings for prayer, times of waiting upon God and intercession will become the special meetings which people will make every effort to attend. These are not occasions when people pray according to a list, but a gathering (initially at least once a week; it will become more frequent as God begins to move) where the hungry can come together to seek God and call upon His name. One of the most popular pleas of the day is for meetings for discussion or questions and answers and such like. Here is the point where spirituality is so often revealed. The prayer meeting should be pre-eminent in the life of any church, and the last meeting to be cancelled or substituted for another.

If people would begin to wait on God, they would discover they had already received the Answer to their vital need, and would speedily find the answers to their questionings also, having no need of discussion to obtain clarity. For example, if the main meeting for prayer in a church is held on Monday evenings, this arrangement inevitably means that upon four or five occasions in the year, due to Bank Holidays, the prayer meeting would be cancelled. However, when God brings His times of refreshing, by the general consent and desire of all concerned, the prayer meeting would be moved to another evening, so that the opportunity of being together with God during that week should not be missed. This would indicate a healthy hunger in the midst, but an example of an even healthier state would be to disregard the Bank Holidays altogether!

In every department of the Christian life there are paradoxes. This is such a normal condition of life that the absence of paradox indicates an unhealthy spirit. For example, we behold the shame of the cross, yet paradoxically there we also see the Lord of Glory. The natural state of us all, if we are healthy, is to be satisfied and contented, yet hungry for more; then, having received more, and being contented therewith, we still want to go even deeper. It is wonderful how God has fashioned us to stand on two legs and feet; if we do so we shall be steady. Birds cannot fly on one wing; God formed them with two in order that they should traverse the heavens in liberty and freedom; so we have the inward paradox of two extremes. We all at times feel unwell. We catch influenza, health leaves us, we lose appetite, lassitude sets in. When health begins to return, one of the main signs of it is a desire for food. Ah, it is a healthy sign to have a hungry heart to move in more of Jesus, yet to be contented in His gracious supply. You will find these two wings shall carry you on into real liberty from self and sin into the heaven of a healthy life in Christ.

This matter of standing steady on two legs and feet is the answer to all objections. For example, some object that we should be in a consistent state of being 'in the river of God's life', not having sporadic outpourings. But does not wisdom indicate the need for both? God brings individuals into the spiritual counterpart of the physical conditions which pertained in His earthly paradise where all seasons blended into one. Then mist watered everything and rain showers were unknown; the time of fruit, and leaf and bud were always occurring together. Everything was going on at the same time, in much the same manner which we now find in equatorial regions where the sun is perpetually overhead and seasonal times are almost non-existent.

When an outpouring is in the midst it is to be expected that it will be the cause and the occasion of some men and women getting into the main stream of God's will and never leaving it. Doing so, they are carried on in the most wonderful manner, and bring forth life and fruit wherever they go. These are they for whom the Son is overhead

perpetually, whose lives are consistently watered from on high by constant distillation from the presence of God. Alongside this consistently flowing life of abundance and as a result of it there are to be definite times of outpouring also. These outpourings are not primarily for them, but are bestowed so that others may be partakers of 'up-soul' - resurrection life by the Spirit. The Church is here to be God's opportunity to outpour Himself upon the men and women He so loves. We are not left here selfishly to 'perfect ourselves', but to be, in the truest sense, 'channels only' to others.

These refreshings are signs of God's approval, the sealing of that which pleases Him. In Moses' day when the Tabernacle was completed and reared 'according to the pattern as the Lord commanded Moses' the Lord presented Himself in it by fire and a cloud of glory to seal the work. The same thing occurred in Solomon's time. When the Temple was finished, the sacrifices slain and laid out in order, the fire fell sealing and consummating it all; all had been done according to God's own heart. In all burnt offerings there were two parts - first the beast was slain and washed and laid out in order upon the altar, and secondly the fire consumed and sealed the offering, transforming the sacrifice into an ascending odour, a savour of rest, pleasing to God. The fire sealed the sacrifice.

We recognize here a vivid picture of the vital association between Calvary and Pentecost. Calvary - the sacrificial Lamb expiring as man for all mankind; and Pentecost - the coming of the fire on those whose allegiance was wholly given to their Messiah Jesus and that sacrifice. This is the explanation for the tongues of fire that sat on their heads, it was the sealing of Calvary, the consummation of the life He laid down for them. Calvary without Pentecost would have been unfinished, unsealed. The outpouring of the fire of the Holy Spirit is the consummation of the fulfilment of all things by Jesus in Life and Death and Resurrection and Enthronement, according to the pattern. Refreshings in the midst are God's sealing, confirming and assuring that all is well. Let us therefore fear lest we should come short of this.

Men must give themselves to waiting on God in intercessions and prayers, looking unto Jesus from whom these sealing refreshings do now flow. As the fire fell and transformed the sacrifice to an ascending odour of rest to God, so also when these refreshings are in the midst, though there be many ashes in evidence, there shall be a sweet odour ascending to Him. Are we ready to bring that which shall be turned to ashes as the Lord brings all things to the consummation of fire? Peter tells us that God will pour out His Spirit in the last days, at the end of the age. We are not then to regard the outpouring as the consummation only, but as the culmination also. Then shall the end come; the fire shall dissolve all the elements and all things shall be changed. God grant us hearts that are unreservedly abandoned to His will, living sacrifices indeed, thus giving God the opportunity to outpour Himself in refreshings and all-transforming fire from on high.

Nothing less than such as has been described will satisfy the heart of God, and those who are walking close with Him shall feel Him share the burden of His heart with them also; it is an indescribable privilege to be brought into this communion of the heart-purposes of God. Even so then, Lord, come and lead us in. Draw us to the sharing of those things dear to Thy heart, Thy love for the souls of men, Thy grief at the sight of the corruption of those for whom Jesus died. We cannot bring ourselves in, we covet Thy drawings, our Father, that secure us ever more deeply into Thine eternal will.

THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS.

The truth of God lies in the domain of revelation, not in the realm of intellect or imagination. However, there are times when God graciously helps the dullness of men and brings illumination of truth through illustration. Jesus' own ministry was full of homely illustration, vivid pictures painted in words, to assist hearers unto an appreciation of truth. He used such an illustration concerning a lighted candle (Luke 11:33.) A fool hides it under a bushel; lights are to be seen. They are to be lifted up on a candlestick in order that the light reaches a much wider area than if the candle were on the ground. How necessary to each other are lights and the utensils we call lampstands or candlesticks. A light can be virtually ineffective if the device fashioned by men to hold it up is inadequate.

During a visit abroad this truth was illustrated in a vivid way. It was an afternoon meeting in a Swedish house and the address was being given. As the daylight faded, artificial light was needed so that the hearers could read the scripture just quoted by the preacher. Any visitor to Scandinavia will recall the virtual absence of a large central light suspended from the ceiling in rooms. The use of side lighting and candles is very popular, and so, as the lights were turned on, there was no central light but a number of side-lights. These were switched on, but one brother in a corner was still unable to read his Bible. A light was pointed out to him almost on the floor by his chair. He switched it on; it served no real use to him however, not because the bulb was faulty, but because of the total inadequacy of the lampstand to lift up the light.

In Revelation chapter 2 the apostle John records the vision of the ascended Lord Jesus in the midst of seven golden candlesticks: these candlesticks are clearly defined as being seven churches. The function of each local church is therefore unmistakable. A church is a company of people raised up by God for the express purpose of lifting up the Light of Life which is Jesus Christ. The Life is the Light (John 1:4). The moving of the Lord in the midst of these candlestick-churches, sending a personal message to each one, can be clearly linked to an Old Testament type. There, the High Priest daily, morning and evening, attended to the trimming of the flames and the adjustment of the seven-branched lampstand in the holy place of the Tabernacle. This lampstand was the only source of light in the room immediately before the veil, in which were the incense altar and the table of shewbread. In the inner room, behind the veil, God's glory shone, but in the outer room, only the mingled flames on the seven-branched candlestick supplied the illumination.

The table of the shewbread had upon it twelve loaves, which prefigure Christ - the true Israel; these loaves were only clearly seen when the lampstand showed its light. The incense altar was all of gold and glowed with a charcoal-type fire: the carefully prepared constituents that were crushed together to make up the incense were burned there morning and evening. Incense is to do with the crushings of the Christ-life offered up through a worshipping, interceding life; without the light given by the candlestick it would have been a hidden cloud of glory, just an odour in the blackness, but the light caused all of Christ to be seen. This was the type: much more could be said.

The express intention of God for each local church set in the world is that it should perform the function of a lampstand, lifting up the light that illuminates the Christ. What use is a lampstand a few inches high, inadequately developed; or alternatively, one well-developed which has fallen over-through neglect? The words of the New Testament High Priest, the Lord Jesus, are now clearly understandable as He moved among a selection of His churches and applied Himself to the correction and re-development of the one at Ephesus: 'Remember from whence thou art fallen', He said. The candlestick had fallen over; the church was failing to fulfil the express intention of God.

Allusion was made earlier to the careful and regular attention given by the Old Testament High Priest to the lampstand in the Tabernacle. Morning and evening he checked the flow of oil and trimmed the flames. He had special tools for doing this, mentioned in Exodus 25:38. All this has precious significance in the light of New Testament truth: it points to the Lord Jesus caring for each individual flame in His Church, each receiving His daily personal attention. It is written in Proverbs 20:27 that 'the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord'. How blessed it is to consider the spiritual, individual ministry of the Lord Jesus to His Church, in order that each flame may be carefully trimmed and have an unblocked supply of the oil of the Holy Spirit. Each member must yield to these

inner, spiritual trimmings carried out by the Lord Jesus. Such yielding will ensure a good shining forth of the Light of Life.

The church at Ephesus was in need of much spiritual trimming. The Lord Jesus instructed the apostle John to write a message to the angel of the church - 'thou hast left thy first love, remember from whence thou art fallen'. It was a personal exhortation to the angel. The word 'angel' means messenger. It cannot mean an actual angelic being, for they do not now fall, and will be discouraged from ever doing so by the example of a submissive church (Ephesians 3:10). These words of Jesus are relevant primarily to the leading brethren in the church at Ephesus. In every local church there are those (perhaps one brother or several) who make up 'the angel' (messenger) of that particular church. They/he may not necessarily be recognized as elders; the church to which they are messengers will be a clear reflection of their own ministry and spiritual state. A church can never rise above the level of the spirituality of its messenger(s), although some individuals not in a leading role in the church may be more spiritual. The corporate life of a church is determined by its oversight. Hence it is that the message brought is directed first to the messenger who begets his own spiritual quality and maturity, or lack thereof, in the church for which he is responsible. The remedy for the fallen state of affairs in the church at Ephesus lay firstly in a thorough change and return to first love and first works on the part of those who comprised Christ's messenger to that company, and secondly Christ's messenger to that church was to minister that message to his people in order that they might return to the life-state that pleases God.

The message has been prepared, it is the messenger who needs preparing. The messenger who has left first love will create the same state of heart where he is functioning in his ministry. This is a fall more terrible than Adam's; he fell from innocency, but in Ephesus the fall was from spiritual virgin love in the heart for the Lord Jesus, and the substitution of orthodoxy and religious practices for spirituality. Right beginnings are vital. Wrong things sown at the inception of a work will have to be corrected at some stage, and it will be the more painful the later it comes. Correction means adjustment and change, and some hearts set in wrong ways are confused or unhappy when things must alter. Considering the beginnings of things at Ephesus, who were they who made up 'the messenger' of that church at its inception? Four names come to mind immediately - Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos and, in the forefront of all, the apostle Paul. Spiritual leadership is so deeply important: messengers must be spiritual people. Paul, whose work at Ephesus was the key to all, was obviously deeply spiritual. The other three mentioned all had open hearts and were learning of God. It seems that at that stage in their lives they were in a state of infancy in the things of God, but the things they laid down in Ephesus were vitally helpful to future development, though not in themselves the full answer.

Spirituality is that quality of life that has seen, and is seeing doctrine made reality within - the Christ being formed in the life. It is an unhappy state of affairs to see babes seeking to do, or take upon themselves, the work that belongs to the more mature. Babes in Christ are spiritual as to their inner state, but carnal (fleshly) as to their behaviour. The spiritually mature are spiritual as to their inner state, and also spiritual as to their behaviour; they have put on Christ. At new birth the nature of God is imparted; from that nature the character of Christ is to be formed and developed in the life, but this takes time; it involves the making of moral choices at times of testing.

Testing (trial) is what the scripture calls temptation. This word has come to have connotations in the modern Christian's mind which do not belong to it. It is thought of as something akin to an irritating affliction which the devil brings to ruin the Christian's life, but it is necessary to the perfecting of character; it encourages exercise of will. There are different categories of temptation which cannot be discussed here, but suffice it to say that the real meaning of the word is 'to try', in order **to improve**'. This puts a different complexion on things. When the moment of temptation comes, it is a moment of choice between indulging the natural man, and thereby pleasing self, or curtailng the natural inclination and pleasing God. The new birth imparts the power of life which naturally inclines to the latter choice every time. The natural is then sacrificed unto the will of God at such times of testing, and the character of the Son of God is thereby developed in the life. Some are misled in the notion that after the new birth there is no more need for moral choice, that all is automatic and that there is no need to exercise will. This is an erroneous notion of the most dangerous order. Subsequent to the incoming of new life, there still remains the necessity to choose God; we grow by feeding (communion) and exercise (the putting on of new spiritual habits.)

It is a tragedy to meet babes who have never grown; they have preferred to abide in the nestled comfort of spiritual 'feelings'. They have not put off childish things, clinging still to the petulance of spoiled living when adverse circumstances come their way, manifesting pique when God withdraws some blessing. 'Yes, the little ones are often spoiled, they are protected watchfully. Is God any less caring? But swiftly the days of growing up approach, the calm gives way to the trial and test involved in temptations and the need to develop new habits. Those who refuse such growing-pains are no longer merely carnal as to behaviour, but degenerate to carnality of state.

The period of spiritual childhood is a time of great surprise, of radical need of behaviour change brought about by self-discovery, of a new consciousness of hidden things of God and man, and of issues hitherto unrealized. It is the breaking across the life of wave after wave of the unseen; it is a dangerous time, when lives can evade the issue, but hopefully a blessed time of inward expansion into God and His ways. The poet catches some of the wonder of this in the following words:

'God's fashion is another; day by day

And year by year He tarrieth; little need

The Lord should hasten; whom He loves the most

He seeks not oftenest, nor woos him long,

But by denial quickens his desire,

And in forgetting best remembers him,

Till that man's heart grows humble and reaches out

To the least glimmer of the feet of God.

[Saint John the Baptist - by Frederic William Henry Myers]

When considering the Ephesian church, it is important to notice the vital role of the messengers. Had they all been of the calibre of Paul, the words of Revelation chapter 2 would never have needed to have been spoken and written. The beginning at Ephesus was in the measured and careful purpose of God. Nothing vague manifested there; not chance or fate, but grace. Grace is the love of God in Christ caringly ministered to man. It comes to a city in a particular way for a season, then passes on. Paul was sent of God, he was no idealist consumed with a 'passion for souls'. Such practice leads nowhere except to unnecessary emotionalism or a marriage of heart to 'the work'. The passion in our hearts must be for God and His Son - first love; from it fountains the work. True preaching begets a passion for Jesus in responsive hearts. Idealism is often truth unrelated to reality; clear perception of 'the ideals' is a trait of youthful hearts. The bitterness and cynicism sometimes found in older people is often due to unrealized idealism; they failed to turn what they saw to be truth (their ideal) into actuality.

Christian ideals are useless to us unless they can be translated into actuality. The power of the Holy Spirit, coupled with the changes of our circumstances in time, are gifts of God to help us see the truth of God (the ideal) made actual in our experience. Some people never seem to know the enabling power of the Spirit, solely because they refuse the pressure of change in which that power is made manifest. Hearts which resist God's ways in the ordinary things develop an inner state of frustration. Abandoned involvement with God in the ordinary things of life is part of the way to spiritual health. It is possible to dislocate life into the sacred' and 'the secular', deifying the former and denigrating the latter. Inevitably this always results in an unbalanced Christian life.

What was laid down in Ephesus was not the result of the drift of ritual religion to the city. The self-inspired burnings of a so-called evangelist did not bring it forth; nor was it the result of some youthful idealist's exertion for God. **It was of God.** This must be known in each local church. God prepares His messengers and then sends them. He also makes sure that the place of appointment is ready to receive them, with hearts prepared to hear the message. Certitude is contained in every work of God, He is vague in nothing He says, nor in anything He does. It is written that 'Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it', the measured cost of securing a bride for Himself (Ephesians 5).

The Lord is continuing His work in this age and it bears that unmistakable mark; the cost is still the same - that is the laying down of the life in the ground in death. The Life of Jesus formed in the messengers must be laid down in the grave of that locality; it is required in the messenger first. The fixation of God's purposes in a locality is through death: the outcome of the death of the seed is fruit. This is the way God gets His harvest of souls in a locality; God's messenger to that place must die there. The word fixation used earlier denotes 'abiding stability', that is a fixed lampstand/church, upstanding, not shifting about, stable and sure. In Galatians chapter 2 Paul uses the striking picture of a pillar as being descriptive of overseers in the church at Jerusalem. Pillars are vital to the steadiness of a building, stability in a local church is greatly dependent upon some overseers abiding steadily in their local setting. Let men examine themselves to see whether the 'fixation' of God is upon their life and in their flock. Things become 'fixed' through death, the ensuing growth of an oak is fixed by means of the setting of the acorn in the darkness of death. The sturdiness of a building is secured by the fixing of the foundation-stones in their trench-like graves. If God sends a messenger to a locality to stay, He sends him there to die, to 'fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His Body's sake' (Colossians 1).

Having made all these remarks, it must be taken into account that God has, and does, set in the Church men whose primary task is to move from place to place spreading the gospel. It is imperative that each man move in his calling, but let there be no evasion of response to the call which each has personally heard, no matter what the cost.

In Acts 18:18 Paul is found to be travelling in company with Priscilla and Aquila. The party arrived at Ephesus, where Paul, according to his custom, went to the synagogue on the sabbath and reasoned concerning the things of God with the worshippers gathered. Some interest was generated in hearts, and he was asked to stay, but he, feeling drawn on in the will of God to go to Jerusalem, left a promise to return. Meanwhile his companions, Priscilla and Aquila, remained at Ephesus. Putting first things first, an honouring of former commitments, Paul had a vow upon him; he would not stay.

It is obvious that the tent-making couple, Priscilla and Aquila, were deeply convinced of truth which they had shared with Paul right from the beginning of the work which God started in Corinth where they met. For eighteen months they were witnesses to God's doings in that city, they were disciples; now they were left in Ephesus to work for God. No particular outgoing gift seems to have been given them; they obviously attended the synagogue and thereby made contacts and no doubt shared truth. Sometime during this period an eloquent preacher named Apollos arrived in the city and began to speak in the synagogue; however, although he preached more than the usual Jewish teaching, he knew only things up to John's baptism. Priscilla and Aquila befriended this man, who received light concerning the way of God in Jesus through them.

The time which elapsed between Paul's first fleeting visit to Ephesus and his return to take up his more permanent ministry there was probably approximately two years. When Paul arrived, he found Apollos had moved on to Corinth (Acts 19:1), having been commended to the disciples of that region by certain brethren (Acts 18:27) at Ephesus. God knows no waste in His placing of people; Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila with a few hearts stirred by his words in the synagogue; it almost looks as if they were discarded, but God discards no-one; each one is set of Him. Apollos seems to have 'chanced' into Ephesus, but the fact is that when Paul returned he found a waiting company there called 'disciples' (taught ones), among whom were at least twelve men (Acts 19:7). Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos had done well.

In the light of the foregoing, the next step at Ephesus was understandably simple. The people that Paul met on his return were prepared ground. They were 'disciples'; they had been baptized unto John's baptism, a baptism unto repentance. This was a great stabilizing beginning. They had been taught and instructed in the things of God unto repentance. They had repentant hearts, bowed before God, ready for His will, open to His truth; repentance is a missing factor in much preaching today. True discipleship and repentance go hand in hand. Repentance is a state of mind, it is an utter change of opinion and thinking whereby God is first and all else secondary; repentant hearts are ready hearts, they are hearts that walk humbly before God. A repentant person is one who has deeply acknowledged that he no longer has any right to himself, he is God's. Repentance puts God in His rightful place in the life; faith comes sweetly to such souls through the word preached. The mind does not cry out in rebellion

against the preaching of Christ; its queries have not been answered by doctrine or theology, but by the superiority and greatness of God.

The sound of the word of Christ was readily accepted by faith in these Ephesian men. They were baptized a second time; this time not merely to signify repentance, but to signify acceptance of the death-sentence upon themselves and resurrection with Christ, their new-found Saviour. Paul then laid his hands on them and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was so simple, at that moment they received the indwelling life of Christ, and thus the outflow of their beings was released - they spoke with tongues and prophesied. This localised move of God bears marks of remarkable similarity to what took place at Pentecost in Jerusalem. There also were found disciplined hearts - on that occasion one hundred and twenty, repentant and ready, and already God's personal possession in inward will. He then moved to seal those hearts with the Holy Spirit.

It would be of great benefit to dwell upon the consistent steady labours which preceded this outpouring of the Spirit. The faithful ministry which prepared the ground, the prayer, the preaching, the arduous ministry which produced disciplined lives. The church at Ephesus was distinctive, in that the word used in the narrative to describe the believers is disciples (Acts 19:1,9,30), not saints, although they were that. What a stable beginning brought through stable lives laid down for them! However, there can come a point when such stable and well-grounded hearts become merely orthodox in their religion. Could it be that this took place in the Ephesian church in later years, thus evoking the words of the Lord's rebuke and warning to the church in Revelation 2? They had a well-ordered church; they had tried those that said they were apostles and were not; they were hard-working, but the state was one of orthodoxy without love.

There is but one safeguard against this tendency occurring in individual lives and churches, namely the daily cultivation of personal communion with the Lord. It is so easy for the diligence of the learning disciple to become a well-ordered system of religious activity. Meetings then become devoid of that spontaneity of ministry and worship that characterises people who live in daily communion with God. A life of inward, daily spiritual fellowship with God will be (the) strength and protection against the subtle and virtually unnoticeable drift into spiritual pride or into a carnal state of orthodoxy.

Every individual, and also every church, has its 'strong points' - some factors in the temperament which God took up and through which He poured His life. It is in the area of 'the strong points' that the greatest care has to be taken. Possibly it was the subtle drift into a reliance upon 'the strong point' and not upon the Lord that caused the fall of the Ephesian church; that is their stable, well-ordered beginning became the factor on which they relied. It is where a man thinks he is strongest that the danger lies. He comes to rely on that strength instead of upon the Lord; thus the slide into dead works takes place. In some churches 'the strong point' may be waiting on God and prayer; the danger is that this can become a sop to the self-indulgence of 'rubbing up and keeping bright my own holiness'. Some temperaments are of the reflective kind, preferring to be quiet and wait on God and pray.

A healthy spiritual life should have two co-ordinated parts - the reflective and the active, and God will see to it that the person who spends much time in spiritual reflection is also moved into healthy spiritual activity. On the other side there are the active souls, always out for evangelizing or going on the 'mission field'. Such lives sometimes need a good deal of reflective, prayerful waiting on God, so that this 'strong point' does not become a subtle slide into professionally helping God to save the world. God's workers are called, chosen and sent - by Him, The 'strong points', then, need to be watched; they are the places where we most need God.

Returning to the main theme concerning those twelve men who received the Holy Spirit so easily through Paul on his return to Ephesus, it must be recognized that the Baptism in the Spirit is God's seal on committed lives, making them wholly His. The church in Ephesus was established upon disciple/son lives, - or disciples made sons. He giveth not the Spirit by measure. He gives liberally, but He gives carefully; it is the gift of the **Father**, the dearest thing He had - His Son. It is not some vague distribution from a benign God. God had one Son: He only has individual sons and they must be died for, prayed for, yearned over, preached unto and brought to heart-felt repentance by these means, and God brings them to birth as individuals in His sight. Individuality and independence are not the same. Individuality is never lost; it is basic to Manhood as God intended it to be, and is not surrendered when a man is baptized into Christ's life by the Holy Spirit.

Independence from God is the very seed and fruit of sin. 'I don't need God, I can make my own way'. This independent streak must be utterly forsaken in the heart of a man in order that he be brought into and abide in Christ. God has no twins; neither does He have sons who live on independent means. He has individual sons, individually brought forth, who live in heart-felt dependence upon Him. Who can doubt that Paul, knowing this, looked on each of those men and ministered to them in such a way that caused them more deeply to know that they were not one of a crowd, but each a son of God. This regeneration of the dead spirit of a man by God, and the consequent formation of the Christ-life in that man's soul, must all bear the same prayer-agony and yearning and travail over each individual: God travails over every one through His Church. To make a distinction between a general flowing out of God's Spirit upon all flesh, whereby all flesh feel the Spirit's presence (Acts 2:17,18) and movings, and the careful giving of the gift by the Father to those who ask (Luke 11:13), is all-important, lest there is confusion between one and the other, resulting in the casting of pearls before swine.

Examining Acts 2:17-21, it is noticeable that God says 'I will pour out' on two occasions: the first, in verse 17, is 'on all flesh'; the second, in verse 18, is 'on my servants and my hand-maidens'. They were the one hundred and twenty waiting in a deep sense of their need to receive God's new and promised life, for which they had been asking and seeking and knocking (Luke 11:9-13). Now He gave. No-one gets swept into sonship, it is the unmeasured gift of God, carefully given to the heart made conscious of its need. God will not give the Spirit until an individual feels its need and turns to Him to supply that need; it is not that God cannot give: He will not give on any other basis.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of the disposition of God's New Man Jesus Christ; no-body wants a new disposition unless they have been brought to see that the old is useless, rotten and fit for nothing. The goodness of God leads men to this understanding of their own natural state. Not only does God say 'I will pour', He goes on to say 'I will shew' - wonders, signs, things bringing awful upheaval 'before that great and notable day of the Lord come'. When the Spirit is poured out and lives feel the touch of the Invisible power of God it brings great upheaval, lives are troubled, peace is shattered, a sense of need is aroused. There will be a great culmination of this principle, a final, developing, public manifestation of the power of God upsetting the equilibrium of all creation. Men will be face to face with eternal things hitherto hidden under the veneer of the earthly, such a sense of need will rise in their hearts and 'whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'. That is, out of their depth of need they shall call and the Father will give the Spirit to those who ask Him. At this point it would be of help to consider these words from the poem 'St. Paul' by F.W.H. Myers:

Let no man think that sudden in a minute

All is accomplished and the work is done;

Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it

Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

The proneness of human nature is to see only the part that pleases the senses, the quick answer, the instant response. But the Church is of God. Nature, where God's ways are clearly seen, teaches that there is much more to producing a harvest than merely sowing the seed. The vine that did not experience the husbandman's continuing attention would produce few grapes. God is against the sporadic, the occasional, the impulsive; the thing that dabbles does not possess the marks of God. God's messengers are called, prepared and sent with necessity laid upon them; to them God is known in the apparent haphazardness of life; they are under clear direction. The impulsive element does not originate a true work of God; the spontaneous outflow of a measured and deep walk will invariably be true and right. Spontaneity and impulsiveness are not the same: the Spirit never destroys spontaneity, but He will wage war on the impulsiveness of the carnal heart. Impulsive human nature is dangerous and unpredictable, it cannot do God's work.

Paul had been through the dealings of God in his soul; he was in Ephesus in the ordinations of God in His unbounded love for humanity. He was set of God; he continued what he had begun under God. After the crisis - what? They were baptized in the Spirit: did Paul leave them? After this beginning there was need for concentration: this is a vital lesson to learn; so few lives put on Christ; they think it is all done - 'sudden and in a

moment'. After the crisis, the powers of the life of men are to be concentrated into a concerted whole in service to the Lord. When Paul speaks to the Corinthians, he says 'we have the mind of Christ'. Now to understand who the 'we' is of utmost importance. Some have said 'it is every saint', some say 'he is only speaking for apostles, only apostles can have the mind of Christ'.

Now to the first suggestion that it is every saint a clear 'no' can be said from the context (1 Corinthians 2:16). He is writing on behalf of himself and Sosthenes as spiritual brethren, therefore it is the spiritual in a company who have the mind of Christ. He continues in 3:1 to say that they (the Corinthians) were carnal, babes, their minds were undeveloped in the things of God, so they still needed milk, not being mentally able to grasp the meat. Therefore the babes do not have the mind of Christ, and it is just as well to remark that this word 'mind' is the Greek word 'nous' which means 'responsible intelligence', it is therefore related to will and understanding. Babes are those who as yet do not have a developed, responsible intelligence within them; that will develop as they grow up in spiritual life.

These Corinthians were demonstrating their lack of responsible understanding by the malpractices and misuses, which Paul deals with in later chapters. For a man to discover his mind being changed and infused with the mind of Christ is a marvellous thing. It is true that a man lives what he thinks, so as his thinking alters, his living is transformed. It is true that a babe has the indwelling complete potential of the new mind, but that has to be transferred from his spirit into his responsible intelligence by concentrating on doing the will of God and cultivating inward communion with God. Knowing these things Paul abode in Ephesus in order to see the character and mind of Christ develop in the new-born ones, to exhort, encourage and bring the 'whole counsel of God' to them. The continuous ministry is vital; the 'hit and run' approach sadly lacks in the long run, and will not produce mature spirituality. The Christian life is one of development by concentration in obeying, communing and loving. Concentrated living is a rarity today. It seems that many rely upon a spontaneous 'inspiration' from the Holy Spirit, misusing such scriptures as Matt.10:19,20. God is ready to raise up ministers in this generation who are living concentrated lives; consecration is not enough, it should lead to concentration.

Knowing these things Paul, under the Holy Spirit, embarks upon a period of intensive, concentrated ministry. For two years, having separated the disciples from the synagogue (Christ's ways will not fit into any pre-ordained religious pattern - protestant, catholic or Judaistic. The religious organization or denomination is dangerous which would seek to absorb Spirit-birthed life into itself), Paul taught daily in the school of one named Tyrannus. This is nothing short of amazing; consistent, continuous, concentrated ministry from a consecrated life contained in the will of God; it seems that many men nowadays refuse to be contained in such a situation. God looks for contained lives, lives not contained in the smallness of inferiority complexes or limited vision, but contained into His perfect will in souls. Let it be remarked again that no-one will be perfect in Christ Jesus except he be agonized over.

In Colossians 1:28,29 Paul writes of the power working in him that caused him to labour and agonize to present 'each man' (this is the force of the Greek) perfect in Christ Jesus. No sea of faces to Paul: 'each one was a child in the blameless family of God'. Individuals were travailed for, and the travail did not cease with the new birth, it intensified: 'I travail again' he said (Galatians 4:19.) Whether they were Ephesians, Galatians, Corinthians, they were all heavy upon him, that 'Christ be formed in you'. He lived for it, preached it, prayed it, groaned for it. The great heart of God for humanity was being poured through his frame: God's agony for men was finding expression in his soul. * **Each** man perfect in Christ Jesus' - not born again only, but perfect in Christ Jesus. Paul was a man of vision and the vision had tried him, he had endured its searchings. The 'iron' had entered his own soul. The power (dunamis) of God produced in him power to pray, power to plead, power to preach, power to prevail and power to present each man perfect in Christ Jesus.

If we look into Acts 20 at Paul's own testimony of his time in Ephesus, we find that he says 'at all seasons' (verse 18). Continuance is so vital if saints are to grow up in Christ - if they are to be spiritually mature. Paul stayed eighteen months in Corinth, and after he left things seemed to go somewhat awry; was it the poignancy of this that caused him to abide the longer at Ephesus with even greater diligence, preaching the whole counsel of God? 'I kept nothing back' he says, publicly and from house to house for three years (verse 20) he continued, ceaselessly toiling with tears and prayers: no church will be soundly established on anything less than this.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, so it must be in every locality - men must give themselves up for the church - die for it; the indwelling Spirit of God wages war against all that would evade this, the Jesus way. It is not possible that a prophet perish away from Jerusalem. The place of outpouring is the place where the seed died; the gifts and callings of God are imparted that they may be sown unto the Spirit, not buried through fear, or misused to personal advantage; some know of spiritual dying, few of true spiritual burial; Paul knew the secret, this is plain on the pages of scripture. God's way is timeless, it is just as relevant to the day in which we live. When Jesus plunged into death two thousand years ago, He was sowing Himself, all there was of Him - gifts, callings, everything - into the Spirit, and in so doing set the pattern for all to see: He died for His own. When He rose and ascended He sent the Spirit to His own, probably they received that Holy Spirit in the same upper room where He had broken the bread and poured out the wine and shared the communion with them.

It is no surprise to consider the sorrow of the parting in Acts 20. The saints at Ephesus were not faces to Paul, they were 'his own' under God. When Jesus speaks of being the good Shepherd in John 10, this phrase comes again and again - 'His own'; it is not a carnal possessiveness, a cloying, clinging thing, such as is exhibited when matriarchal women usurp the true shepherding from the men God has set in the flock. This is the true care of shepherd-hearts, pastors indeed, each one so precious to Paul; the travelling side of his ministry was not in the ascendant in him at this time. He was their teacher, their pastor, their shepherd, their beloved friend; no wonder hearts broke when he said they would see his face no more. He wept with them, rejoiced with them, counselled them, rescued them in times of temptation. Who can tell the privilege of being set of God for a season like this amongst such a company and beholding transforming grace changing idol-worshippers into shining sons of God?

During this time of concentrated ministry special things occurred which have a marked place in the narrative. Looking again into chapter 19, it is mentioned that God did special miracles at the hands of Paul (verses 11 & 12); there was a season of special grace. Nowadays men try to make ordinary what scripture calls special; such an attitude shows the pride of man still undealt with in the heart. Also some crises which shook the city are mentioned, for example the incident of the sons of Sceva, when fear fell on everyone in the city. Indeed Paul's concentrated ministry spread far beyond the city bounds - verse 10 shows that all that dwelt in Asia heard. It is marvellous to consider these tremendous ways of God - He has His own great way of spreading truth. In the Church today there is a consciousness of the need for expansion. It is a blessed time, and a blessed consciousness to have, but such realizations and awarenesses bring danger with them, for without patience and prayer there is the possibility of being swept along on a tide of youthful enthusiasm, which like a fierce gale will blow itself out later, leaving wreckage behind it. Increasing awareness brings out the need for increasing prayerfulness. Those who wait on God will not miss the open door, or be asleep when the still small voice says 'Go'; they will be prepared and ready.

Fallibility is part of humanity, as indeed is a degree of inflexibility of approach to the will of God. There is the tendency in men to insist that everyone else should be like him, do what he is doing, travel if he is travelling or stay if he is staying. This is all very human, but not spiritual. The only safeguard is to come up into the mind of Christ as Paul had done, and embrace the principles of God as they are brought to the heart by the Spirit: Paul saw the will of God for him in Ephesus and did not run from it. 1 Cor.15:50 indicates some of the degree of spiritual wrestling he endured; chapter 16:8 & 9 shows the clarity of the persuasion that he must stay. It is one thing to have a door opened, but is it the door that is the most effectual? The world was open to Paul, but the great door and the effectual one was to abide at Ephesus. The possibility of squandering the effective opportunities and making use of the lesser is very real. A man ought to be conscious that the door through which he has gone is not only open but deeply effectual. Vagueness in these matters is tragic: certainty from God in hearts is vital.

Returning to Acts 19, this time to the testimony of the Spirit in verse 20 - 'so grew the word of God and prevailed'. The whole matter of the raising up of this lampstand church in Ephesus is replete with the marks of God's ordinations. Certitude pervades the whole. Referring back to the type of the lampstand, the pattern of which was given to Moses on the mount (Exodus 25:51-40), it was to be fashioned with such precision of beaten gold. There is a difference between gold and beaten gold. 'It shall be one beaten work of pure gold' (verse 36); what a description of a church'. The production of such a lampstand takes time - beaten gold, the pure new material 'beaten' into lives - the potential light-bearing lives of individual members fashioned into shape so that all their powers lift high the light of the Son of God. 'One beaten work'. Such oneness is rarely found, many lives moulded

together, travelling through the personal dealings of God individually, yet corporately. Jesus is the gold, the pure nugget, He is given by the Holy Spirit from the Father to us at new birth, but the candlestick life is that pure nugget 'beaten' into our individual lives like gold leaf. This beating implies the hammer, the pressure of passing through trial; in such a way God worked through Paul in Ephesus, 'so the word of God grew and prevailed' there.

One consideration should also be given to the fact that the candlestick was not only a functional thing, it was a thing of beauty. It was fashioned by divinely endowed skills through Bezaleel, with ornamental work of flowers wrought in the same gold work (Exodus 25:33). The functional and the ornamental blended together. As the Spirit works in a local church, He will form this twofold truth into its life. A church is formed for a spiritual function and to show forth spiritual beauty. The truth sets the heart free. Some looking on could have said to Bezaleel 'why the waste of time, those flowers perform no useful function, isn't there work which you could be better employed doing?' A carnal misapprehension indeed, perhaps uttered unconsciously by hearts deeply engrossed in 'the work' of the church. Let all remember the other side, the Holy Spirit works in individuals, making them not only functional for God, but people of spiritual beauty also.

The continuing ministry in one local church is vital. To keep to our foregoing metaphor, but using it in a slightly different way, we could say that the evangelistic ministry dispenses freely the gold nugget of the gospel, while the consistent, continuous preaching-ministry in one place beats that nugget into gold-leaf in the minds and hearts of hearers. The giving of the nugget is done so quickly, but the transforming of it into gold-foil takes time. The working into the conscious life of hearers of truth involves the faithful ministry of the word over many months and years. There is no substitute for this. Truth is not to be merely held, but lived; not to be received once, but to be worked into the life. Jesus gave the doctrine in His ministry like a nugget, then Paul took it up and fashioned it into gold-leaf in the epistles. There is no clash between the one and the other as some scholars (so-called) would give us to believe. Paul under the Spirit just causes the hidden consistencies of the gold-nugget that Jesus had given to be brought into one tremendous shining of truth. Is not this what he means when he declares in Ephesians 3 concerning the mystery that had been hid 'now made manifest through the Church'? Lovingly beaten into full expression and manifestation by means of caring, consistent preaching-ministry brought forth by the Spirit .

Where this kind of ministry is absent a vacuum will be formed. Vacuums are sure to be filled. The main area of vacuum is in the mind - empty-headedness. The wicked one is quick to avail himself of such opportunities to fill the space with religious and pious counterfeits, producing unreal, pseudo-Christian behaviour, a grotesque caricature of the true. In this sort of atmosphere untaught and carnal minds are tossed to and fro by every over-emphasis of doctrine which may or may not be founded in scripture. Wrong thinking is often the result of one-sided teaching or no real teaching at all: proper Christian thinking is a necessity. Into such partially taught or untaught minds come such misapplied emphases as are apparent today - for instance the thing generally called 'the body-ministry'. Anyone with a passing acquaintance with New Testament scripture discovers that the Church is the body of Christ, and its growth is by the supply of each member of that body. This truth is then misinterpreted by being made relevant only to 'the meetings'. Where this sort of idea is held, degeneration sets in, the meetings become an interminable jumble of chorus-singing, a vision or two, prophecies disjointed and unconnected, and maybe a short reading of scripture; at the end no intelligible strand can be discovered which deeply ministered the things of God to the gathered people.

To pause at this point and define what we mean by consistent preaching-ministry and Bible-teaching would be helpful. What should such ministry consist of? Babes are untaught, at the mercy of 'every wind of doctrine', and consistent ministry regulates the life of a church and encourages right-thinking. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit such ministry will include a fine blend of doctrine and practical application. If minds of hearers are to be really filled with truth, then their living must be affected by their thinking. A thing greatly offensive to God is the hypocritical state of well-educated minds, intelligently filled with noble thought and lofty ideals, while the life is morally polluted. The thinking has never been applied to the living of the life - it has been applied to others but never to himself.

Such a state is also possible in a so-called Christian's life; his mind well-filled and versed in doctrinal truth, but that truth never worked into daily living. This state of affairs will be encouraged in hearers by an over-idealistic doctrinal preaching, where the truths are preached over and over again with scarcely any real practical application

to their outworking in daily living. The consistent ministry in a locality must contain the irresistible probings of the Holy Spirit, tenderly but ruthlessly reaching down into the hidden lives of hearers; systematic and faithful to souls must such a minister be, avoiding nothing.

The measure of a man's ability to reach others in this way depends upon how deeply he himself has been probed by that same Holy Spirit. Every life must be brought to measure itself against the standard of Jesus Christ, not to rest in the fact that it has been 'born again' or 'sanctified' or 'received a new heart'. The standard is Jesus; is He Lord? Are the channels of inward communion clear and open within me today? Now? A preacher must not allow people to rest in an experience of grace; new birth is but the beginning of things; lives must be brought to self-judgement in order to put on Christ and grow up into Him in all things.

Such a ministry will be found to contain something for every hearer; it will provoke proper living -which can only come by proper thinking. It will come forth from a life which itself is under the dealings of the Lord, a life walking with God, courageous and rugged and willing to run the gauntlet of being hated by those whom he loves the most. Through such a ministry the Holy Spirit will wage war on every lurking wrong notion or idea, and every continuance in carnal behaviour patterns; so shall the bride be brought forth who is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

The presence of such ministry in a local church will inevitably be linked with the emergence of a new awareness of the power and place of prayer. The one is the handmaiden of the other. They go everywhere together, and it is healthy for each reader to examine his own church and use this as a ready barometer of the spiritual vitality of the assembly. This pamphlet is not intended primarily to remind hearts of doctrinal truth, but to stir up hearts to some spiritual stock-taking, to examine and rectify if needs be. In some churches the prayer-life is present in a few, and they are a 'resistance movement' who see more than their elders do, and pray for awakening in their oversight. This is a tragic state of affairs indeed. Prayer waters the ground in which the seed is being sown, it tenderizes and moistens the hard 'sod' of the heart and mind, and brings about amenability to truth. The incisive, surgical preaching-ministry, vital in a local setting, must be coupled with prayer.

Some years after Paul had left Ephesus, he wrote an epistle to that church in which he lays bare his revelation of truth. Nowhere in scripture is there such a closely-packed unveiling of the mystery as in that epistle. In the course of his writing he prays two prayers which contain precious keys to truth. It is not enough to preach, there must be Spirit-born prayer accompanying the preaching. When human hearts read or hear such unveilings of the mystery of redemption and the purposes of God as Paul writes in this letter, they deeply need prayer of the calibre and understanding which Paul manifests in Eph.1:16-23 and 3:14-21 .

The 'eyes of their understanding must be opened' by the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him 'in order that they may be able' to 'eide ai' - 'see with understanding and clarity'. Men and women must be 'strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man' if 'Christ is to dwell in the heart by faith', which leads through to comprehension of the magnitude of things and the love of Christ, and in the final outworking to 'glory unto Him in the Church'. There are requests which Paul made to God for his hearers; where did his preaching end and his praying begin? All seems a tremendous blend of spiritual activity, watering his own preaching by prayer, until others there could join with him in the great work:

'How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring

Lifted all night in irresponsive air

Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,

Blank with the utter agony of prayer.'

[F.W.H. Myers, Saint Paul]

It is little wonder that in such a healthy serving, life becomes one tremendous flow of spiritual activity, it is not spiritual drudgery, everything is charged with God, alive with Him.

Amenability to truth is uncharacteristic of the natural man (1 Corinthians 2); the carnal mind is enmity with God (Romans 8). These mental ramparts must be destroyed by prayer and the preaching of the word of God: the barren natural man, which has kept God at arm's length, must be watered by prayer to receive newness of life. These states must be replaced by a teachable, receptive heart; the Holy Spirit is sent to work these things in answer to believing prayer; the prayer of faith shall save.

There must also be a ministry in every healthy lampstand church which is reaching these inward realities, exposing sham and religious priggishness, and presenting Christ's ultimate, loving demands. Such a minister will know the necessity and power of prayer. On the road that leads to the production of spiritual maturity lies consistent ministry and prayer of this calibre.

Both the prayers in the Epistle to the Ephesians were for the saints, (Paul was not praying for the lost of the world). The positioning of them in the epistle is vital in relation to the truth he is expounding. Their order too is no mere chance; he prays first in Ephesians 1 for the opening of inner eyes of understanding; he felt they needed to discover a new and deeper dimension in the Life of God, a discovery of inner things. The whole epistle is the unveiling of the mystery hid from before the foundation of the world, and the prayers relate to the discovery of that mystery being worked in the life of each saint.

The Spirit of wisdom and unveiling (revelation) is given in order to produce a healthy activation of the senses and powers of the inner spiritual man. This develops the perception and knowledge of God's purposes; when this occurs in the life of a saint it is subsequent to new birth. It is not an isolated experience, a 'bolt (of revelation) from the blue'. It can, in a poor way, be described as a climber who, having already arrived at the summit of a mountain in the hour of morning mists and clouds, watches as the obscuring blankets are removed and the vista opens up before his wondering eyes. His eye slowly takes in each new sight, he sees where he is; it is a protracted time of discovery; his senses feast upon it all, his mind records all. He has never seen such things before from this perspective; all is wonderfully new. Things seen before from the limited perspective of the plain are now set in context from the mountain-top view.

A climber on the summit not only sees the grandeur of the scenery, he also cannot miss the evidence of man's interferences; he sees the eye-sores, the productions of men, sometimes hideously in contrast with God's beauty in creation. Perhaps he will also notice that some of man's efforts do show some attempt at blending with God's original; so his discovery is twofold - God's great creation and man's feeble attempts at harnessing that creation: in short, God's grandeur and the results of man's defilement. Great truth is portrayed here, for the saint it is a time in the life when self-discovery and discovery of God takes place, and a man sees how these two discoveries are vitally linked.

Paul, at the close of chapter one, speaks of the power of God in Christ and immediately in chapter two touches on the invisible powers that quicken the children of disobedience. The unveiling of the hidden things of God will be intimately connected with the unmasking of self-love in the heart, the painful realizations of what man is. This is not objective perception, it is subjective discovery, a distinctly personal time when the soul is scoured by the light of God. It is not mere isolated insights, it is immense, the discovery of 'a world within the world', a time of surprise, of shock, of sweet understanding and sad remembrances. The wonder of the redemption pours over the soul as it contemplates the awful wreck of its own self before it met Christ.

Every soul in some measure must tread this path (it is a part of growth) and as it does so, the relevance of Paul's second prayer in chapter three becomes obvious. In it he prays for the 'strengthening of might by His Spirit' in the inner man: again he is taken up with inward things. The inner man needs strengthening in order to bear the implications of self-discovery and the sight of God's great power and purposes. The strengthening is imperative at such times in order that the Christ may dwell in the heart by faith (in reality). The strengthening involves the giving of courage and might to embrace the Christ-life in new entirety and consciousness, and to put off the lately revealed shreds of self, and the immature ways that have been lived in up until that time. Thus it will be that the amazing discoveries unveiled will be held together (rooted and grounded) in love. The immensity of all that God is, and has done, will begin to be comprehended, with the amazing love, so leading the life into being filled into all

the fulness of God. As this takes place in the lives of saints, it will result in glory in the Church through Jesus Christ (3:21).

We pointed out earlier that what took place at Ephesus produced a company of people who could be named unashamedly by the Spirit through Luke as 'the disciples' - 'taught ones'. A babe is innocent; yes, he is pure; he is gifted, he has a mind, a heart. A babe is a bundle of potential. This is the state of a babe new-born of the Spirit. As the babe begins to grow, the need for lessons comes. The exercises and discoveries of life unfold, the potential must be realized; God demands lives that walk with Him, taught ones who follow in His steps. Who can but recall the testimony of God to those wanderers in the wilderness - 'I carried you'; they were babes, carried of God, brought out of Egypt, experiencing a baptismal/birth in the Red Sea through which they passed, scarce knowing the meaning of what was happening.

New birth is exactly that - in the Spirit. These Israelites were brought out in order to be brought into the promised land. Their grumbles and groans are evident as He sought to bring them into the yoke with Himself at Sinai. It is necessary to be deeply yoked to Him by the law of life in Christ subsequent to new birth if the promised life is to be possessed. He suffered their manners, but they refused to grow and walk with Him, so they died, short of the intended purpose; they never possessed the land of promise in their life-time.

Jesus Christ is the Promised Land; 'in Him all the promises of God are yea and amen' (2 Corinthians 1), His life possessed and consciously present in the soul of men (Luke 21:19). Oh the wonder of this truth!

Those who insist on staying babes will never possess Him; it takes spiritual courage to see Christ formed within. Grace is given that the disciple life may be formed, that the heavenly Joshua (Jesus) may lead the obedient soul into full possession of the Life that is in Him. Discipleship involves the discarding of all old self-orientated habits and ways, and the discovery in their place of the new self, which is Christ. It is not possible to become selfless, this is an imaginative fiction. The desires of the natural man must be consistently denied when they conflict with the will of God. The will of the born-again individual must continue to choose God's way, and as these choices are made, the natural man (self) is thereby transformed into the life which is the New Spiritual man (self) Christ Jesus.

In Acts 19:8,9 & 23, we see that antipathy was caused by the lifestyle produced by the preaching, not by the preaching itself. It was 'the way' the disciples were living that offended: this ought to be deeply borne in mind. The Spirit wrought with the preaching to produce a new 'way' of life in obedient hearers. God was not an abstract idea to them; the doctrine they heard was not a series of abstractions, everything was brought into the realm of relationship with God through the Lord Jesus in the inner man. The new birth brings people into proper relationship with God by the Spirit; that is into the relationship God always intended that men should have. Thus comes the inner knowledge of 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit', that is the result of being truly born, from above. Let this speak to every heart and be clear to every mind - that the new birth was not the thing. The new birth is the means by which God brings about the opening of a proper relationship between Himself and a man in that man's inner heart. That relationship must be cultivated subsequent to the new birth, tenderly nurtured through the passing of the days, months and years.

Deepening relationship is the result of cultivating communion with Him. Only deepening relationship with God will save men from clinging to sentimental memories of past experiences of God's dealing with them. This produces zealous promoters of an abstract doctrine called new birth, a panacea for all ills, a sure answer to troubled minds, all the while missing the vital thing for which the birth was intended - to remove sin from the human heart and to open the link of unhindered communion with God. He that is properly related to God is truly holy. Sin is basically me, in myself, being out of true relationship with Him, that is having other gods before Him. Holiness is the state of well-being produced by the centralizing of my self-life upon Jesus Christ. Such is a disciple/son life, it is offensive indeed when people live this 'way'. No wonder there was no small stir caused by such transformed living.

Care must be taken lest a doctrine itself becomes deified in our hearts. Truth can easily be turned into a slogan. Paul said, 'I bear about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus' (2 Cor.4:10). He says 'who hath bewitched you Galatians before whom Christ was evidently set forth crucified?' (Gal.5:1). Christ was not crucified in Galatia but in Jerusalem, but Paul testifies that for all eyes to see, the 'way' of the Crucified One was in clear evidence in his manner of life and preaching in Galatia, and who can doubt but in Ephesus too? This is that manner of life his

preaching produced under God, and it offended. Indifference in onlookers will turn to hatred or grudging respect, leading to a softening amenability to truth as such 'disciples' walk in 'the way'.

So it was that the lampstand church of beaten gold in Ephesus was fashioned to uphold the light. Moving again in scripture to Acts 20 - in verse 19 we read that Paul was 'serving as a slave', unbroken servitude to the Lord Jesus, Paul's testimony was utterly complete. From this setting he was able to reach the whole locality, and it seems every strata of society there. Somehow God did it without all the evangelistic paraphernalia which is deemed necessary nowadays. Concentration of ministry in seeing a healthy local church formed under the leading of the Spirit will see the uplifting of the Light of Life to the whole area and the spread of truth into the alleyways, back-streets and main-streets too.

Drawing to an end of this brief consideration of the birth and establishment of the church at Ephesus, a little insight is given as to what its future held. Grievous wolves would enter in (Acts 20:29). Men of the company itself would rise up also, slightly perverting truth, and gaining a clientele of their own, resulting in division and dissention. Paul warned them and followed by exhorting them to 'watch and remember'. If as is probable Revelation 2:2 refers to the incoming and uprising of such un-Christlike ministers, 'those who say they are apostles and are not', then the church withstood the storms well, but did so on the basis of orthodoxy and doctrine, not that of a continuance in the life of first love and first works. The true protection of a work of God is implicit when souls abide in the place of unhindered communion with the Lord Jesus. If that deep inner relationship is broken, then dead orthodoxy begins and protective means are employed which are carnal in the event of divisive elements rising up.

Carnal orthodoxy is the state in a church where right (or maybe incorrect) doctrine and practice have taken the place of Christ in the hearts. To such a condition Jesus speaks, 'repent, return to that first simplicity of inner relationship with Myself - the first love. They left it for another security, that of being correct, well-taught and 'in the truth'. In the event of such a repentance and return not being forthcoming, the candlestick would be removed. It had fallen, giving no light; it was still gold, but it was not fulfilling its function, therefore it was an irrelevancy in its locality, being a seat of orthodox religiosity, in the letter but not in the Life. There is no such thing as immunity from the possibility of this happening in any church or fellowship; the saving factor will always be the maintaining of 'first love' in the heart, which issues in labour of love described as 'first works'.

Denominations are without exception the outcome of a particular doctrine over-emphasized to the exclusion of other truths which ought to be ministered in relationship to it. Such churches fast become irrelevancies to the average man in the street. The Church is called to set forth the truth as it is in Jesus, to lift up the Light of His life; souls must be drawn into relationship with God in Christ through the gift of repentance and the gift of faith toward God and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When some forgotten or discarded aspect of essential doctrine is revealed to a heart by the Spirit, there is need for great wisdom. God reveals truth in order that it may be preached, but care must be taken that a certain doctrinal truth is not over-emphasized in the preaching. In the event of such truth not being set in the context of life as it is in Jesus, the emphasis itself can quickly become the thing on which everything is erected. In such settings a situation is produced where many young men and women parrot like a 'shibboleth' the appropriate doctrinal password to acceptance in their church or fellowship connections. Such doctrinal emphases fast become irrelevant to the needs of men and women in the world. 'I will draw all men unto Me', the Lord Jesus said, 'if I be lifted up'. A ministry that presents Jesus as God's full answer to men's need is vital; preaching which leads men and women to personal confrontation with Him, and total capitulation to Him. Such ministry can only be the result of deepening relationship with Jesus Christ in the heart of the preacher.

In the foregoing, mention was made of 'a doctrinal password to acceptance'. It is possible that such things as 'being born-again', 'the new heart', 'the Baptism in the Spirit', 'being sanctified' or 'saved' become (in some quarters and in some hearts) mere 'shibboleths'. Consideration of such phrases in the light of scripture is deeply instructive; their usage is rare, choice and beautiful, not bandied about like slogans.

This is in no way to denigrate precious truth heard and loved and deeply experienced. Paul was expanded in heart and mind far beyond such 'shibboleths'; he testifies that during the course of his ministry at Ephesus he testified

to all of 'repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21). He amplifies that further, that this was the 'gospel of the grace of God' (20:24); he 'kept nothing back' (20:20); he declared unto them 'all the counsel of God' (20:27)

God ever seeks to raise up in every generation such expanded hearts and minds, flowing with the truth as it is in Jesus, ministering bountiful truth, free from cant. These are not people who specialise in some aspect of truth alone, but those who set forth the Lord Jesus, the gift of God, as the sole answer to all men's need.