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## **Seek Ye First the Kingdom**

Matt. 6:33.

### **(Convention Address)**

Our Lord had come to fulfil the Law and to open up “a new and living way” to eternal life. This way to life, while requiring a higher standard than that of the Law, would be a way by which life could be gained, because provision was made for the imperfections of the flesh, so that the heart and will would be accepted instead of actual perfection of word and deed.

John the Baptist had realised his privilege of introducing the Bridegroom, saying, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” He was quite content to realise himself merely as the friend of the Bridegroom. He was not part of the Bride, no, just the friend of the Bridegroom, the one introducing Him. Our Lord confirmed this in Matt. 11:11.

Up to that time Israel as a nation had represented God’s kingdom — an earthly kingdom. From that time the heavenly kingdom was proclaimed. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the message at that time. “The law and the prophets were until John.” A new age was now commencing, during which time the Israel of God, the Church, would be chosen to be joint-heirs with Christ, to bless all the families of the earth. The Lord was then present, directing the closing-down of the Law dispensation. As the “Lord of the Harvest,” His fan was in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor, gathering true Israelites into the garner, the chaff to be burned up in the “wrath to the uttermost”.

### **The New Way**

Jesus explained the principles which would prove whether or not a follower was really an overcomer, and worthy to be a sharer in the Kingdom. While the principles of God’s throne are always righteousness and truth — justice — yet the new way of harmony or at-one-ment with God was different from the way which was offered under the Law. There was no fault to be found with the law itself. It was holy and good; yet by the deeds of the law no man could be justified. The righteousness of the law was unattainable by poor, frail humanity, weakened by the fall, seeking but ever failing to attain to the righteousness which was required. Paul describes the pitiable condition of even the conscientious Jew under the law — Rom. 7. 14-25.

Here, then, was the way out, as Paul declares (Gal. 3:13), “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” “He was born under the law that He might redeem them also under the law.” The Law (he says) was our school-master to bring us to Christ. That is, the Law proved that man, by his own works, even under the favourable conditions of God’s Law, could not attain righteousness. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10: 20-22.)

It was this new and living way, with its heavenly hopes and spiritual life, “glory, honour and immortality,” as a reward for faithfulness that Jesus came proclaiming, and inviting the “Israelites indeed” to enter.

In this kingdom of heaven which was proclaimed, they were to sacrifice the selfish ambitions of the world, and seek the spiritual things, not by way of the Law, which was by works, but by a new and living way, which was

justification by faith; not the righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Gal. 2:16).

So we are not to seek to justify ourselves by any good deeds we might be able to do, but seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, which is by faith. That does not mean, however, that we are to be careless about good works. While realising that “Nothing in our hands we bring, Simply to Thy cross we cling,” our faith in Christ would be dead if we did not strive to walk as He walked, and to speak as **He** spoke, and thus show our faith by our works.

### Consecration

During this Gospel Age it has only been “such as the Lord our God doth call” that could seek the kingdom. We were all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and it was in the Lord’s grace that we were led to realise our need for the Saviour, and to long to be at peace with God and free from sin. When thoroughly longing for holiness and to be right with God, it was impressed upon our minds that this was the thing of first importance, “to seek first the kingdom.” It was only as we came to recognise God’s mercy in Christ in providing the means for our justification that we found the peace and joy of reconciliation with God.

This however, did not gain for us the kingdom. Thus far we had sacrificed nothing. Certainly, we had turned away from sin and determined to live a good life as far as we possibly could. But now comes the invitation, to “take up the cross and follow Christ,” to deny ourselves, to offer ourselves in full consecration to God, devoted like Jesus to do God’s will even unto death. This is a great step to take; to be willing to be nothing — **to** be counted, as Paul says, as the offscouring of the world — to suffer persecution, to be ignored, misunderstood, and to suffer loss for Christ’s sake, **to** die daily, to be dead with Christ, to endure just whatever the Lord may permit **to** come to us.

From a human viewpoint the true Christian life is not inviting, but even the appreciation of the loving sacrifice given to redeem us from death would lead the grateful heart to say, “Lord, I am thine, entirely thine.” “**I** am not my own, I am bought with a price, the costly blood of Thy dear Son. **It** is but the reasonable thing to do to give myself entirely to Thee, so here **I** give myself, it is all that I can do.”

### Patient Continuance

However, the kingdom is not gained by our consecration, our promise to do God’s will even unto death. **It** is one step, but our whole contract must be carried out. Our consecration is but the entry to the race, we must so run as to obtain. **It** is but the beginning of the good fight of faith. We must so fight, not as one who beats the air, but as one in deadly earnest, beating down every stronghold of error in our hearts and minds, casting down every vain imagination, and bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ.

It was comparatively easy to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, which is of faith and not of works of the law, but it **is** more difficult to keep all of our thoughts, words and doings in line with this standard, “Seek first the kingdom.” How is it that there is danger of losing our first love? Our love responded to the Lord’s invitation, “Seek ye my face,” with the words, “Thy face, Lord, **I** will seek”. **It** is one thing to express such love and zeal when filled with a sense of God’s love, but our faith and love must be able to stand the stress of trial.

We must, like our Master, learn obedience and be prepared in the fire of experience; we must prove our loyalty under the severity of adverse circumstances. We must have a perfected character which will be true to our duties and obligations. We have a good number of obligations, to our families, towards husband or wife, to parents, and so on. Many have obligations to employers, all indeed have daily obligations to others and there is a test going on as to our loyalty to our various obligations. “Loyalty” is a beautiful word. There is a great loss of loyalty in the world around us today, but as the Lord’s people we should be loyal to each other, as members of one body, seeking to uphold one another for the glory of our Head. Our character is to be proved, our loyalty, by how we meet these tests.

Character is proved in all the small affairs of our daily lives; the place where it is developed, and where it may be manifested and proved and tested in the best way is in our homes — how we are living there. Are we seeking to manifest the law of gentleness and love and peace and joy towards each other? The **Lord is** watching us to see just how we are doing things, whether **His** love is filling our hearts more and more, and finding expression **in** all our thoughts, and words, and doings. How we need to have that Christianity which is just as careful of our conduct in our homes as in public. We should have the loyalty to principle that will enable us to live for Christ just where we are placed.

In this way, then, the Lord is permitting us to be tested; our faith is being proved. We need to remember that

“like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that reverence Him.” He knows our frame, and just how the trial of our faith is going on. This trial, as Peter says, is more precious than gold, and the Lord is patiently watching in loving interest to see how well we are standing the test; watching to see us victorious, overcomers. He is watching if we are seeking first “the kingdom of God and its righteousness.” There are so many pitfalls, other interests and pleasures, that our great enemy will take every advantage of, to blot out our one great aim.

We have all, no doubt, repeatedly resolved to more earnestly make God first in everything, and no doubt also have been astonished to realise how much we have come short, how often have failed, and allowed self to come in. Many inducements are held out which may prove our undoing. We must judge ourselves in these matters, and correct ourselves. Only if we keep God first shall we obtain the kingdom. How serious is the warning in Heb. 2:1-3! Dare we neglect so great salvation!

While we have so much to encourage us in promises of grace and strength for every time of need all along the way, and of so great a reward, how serious is our position if we have put our hand to the plough and look back. Our Lord counsels us to “remember Lot’s wife.” How trivial are the things that cause some to look back! We counted the cost when we made our consecration, and signified in the waters of baptism our willingness, our desire, to be “dead with Christ.” Having made that stand, shall we allow the drawings or the allurements of the world or the flesh or angels to prevent us from seeking God first? All is lost if we turn again to the doomed city, as did Lot’s wife. How much then it really means to us — even the loss of all if we lose this chief aim of our life.

### **God First**

As each year passes, our text verse might well go with us, to help us to examine ourselves. Could we have a standard as good as this which the Lord gave at the beginning of His earthly ministry, at the opening up of the call or invitation? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” O, that nothing, nobody, come between — God has a right to our whole attention, all our talents, all our wealth, all our powers of mind and body. When He says, “My son, give me thine heart,” He is asking for His own; yet He is not demanding our consecration. He has however privileged us with the most gracious and wonderful call, the invitation to become joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

God Himself has pledged to take care of those who will go with Him. It is for us daily to remember our great aim — seeking first the kingdom; God to be first in everything. No one else has loved us so much, no one has such claim on our hearts, our love. Even in adversity and under the deepest clouds of distress, it is to be God first. Although He may permit affliction and gloom as a trial of our faith, He is watching to see us victorious. Soon the sunshine of His face will dispel the clouds and comfort our hearts, and bring us joy and peace. (P.P. 2/1940)

## **Watchfulness and Obedience**

*“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” — Isa. 26:20, 21.*

The greatest comfort which God’s people enjoy is based upon their appreciation of their real and close relationship to Him as their Father and to Christ Jesus as their Redeemer and Head. Without such knowledge it is impossible to estimate the true value of God’s Word, and equally impossible to draw from it the help, instruction, and directions which it contains.

Our text suggests at once by its confidential tone that those so addressed do stand in this true and loving relationship to Him. “Come, My people,” speaks of His tenderness and loving care for those who recognize their continual need of the Divine protection. For such,

*“There is an eye that never sleeps  
Beneath the wing of night;  
There is an ear that never shuts  
When sink the beams of light.”*

Every true earthly father invariably gives the closest attention to the interests and persons of his children, and always provides means and suggestions for their safety, both for mind and body; and the father of experience should always be able to do so with a measure of success. But the Heavenly Father transcends in knowledge, foresight, and skill all human capability, and He sees just where the danger lurks and advises or commands as the need arises.

The Prophet's words in our text indicate two things — a place of safety and a time of great danger. The commanding voice of the Lord is there heard through the Prophet's lips, yet the tones are the softened ones of true parental love, saying, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers."

It is appropriate here to ask, Can we with any accuracy locate the time or period to which this prophecy may be applied? Shall we look for it in Isaiah's day only, or does the picture point us still further? No doubt a large proportion of Old Testament prophecies link themselves to their immediate environment at the time of their utterance, and as a noted writer says, "In such cases (and they are very numerous) the literal application is the true spiritual one."

Many unwise and unproductive efforts have been made to spiritualize practically all the best of the prophetic utterances and thus to "heap upon the Jew all the curses, and transfer to the Christian dispensation all the blessings." Surely such treatment cannot be "rightly" dividing the word of truth." It should not be difficult for Bible students to decide after examination where to place or apply such prophetic lines as bespeak the work, the sorrows, or the joys of the experiences of God's people — prophecies which may well refer to ages future from the prophets' days. An example of such prophecy, surely lies before us in our text, which closes the 26th chapter of Isaiah.

### **In That Day**

The phrase which opens this beautiful section of Scripture would well support this view. It says "In that day" certain gracious favors will have been received by some of God's people and responding acclamations will be accorded to Him; and if we compare the other many references to "that day" we shall be obliged to carry the prophetic words in many instances forward to the time when God shall begin gathering His people to Himself and destroying "them which destroy the earth".

The Prophet Isaiah was one of a minority who maintained the faith of Abraham, approved the Law of Moses, and looked for the consolation of Israel. He knew by heart all details of God's faithfulness to His people from the day that He brought them out of Egypt; and the Prophet's business here was to enthuse the mind of the few faithful ones, who were living in silent semi-isolation, among a decaying and faithless nation. No doubt his message was a means at that time of reviving the hope and cheering the hearts of many; though the real beauty and the far-reaching effect of the message were to be seen and felt in far future times, by those for whom it was written, "Shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment."

It is indeed for us that these bright beams of heavenly light have been projected through the ages, in order that we may be in a watchful attitude and hence be enabled to render obedient service to our Lord.

### **In the Secret of His Presence**

Without doubt, when the Prophet's mind was thus pondering the vivid picture of Israel's great deliverance out of Egypt that eventful night, and conjuring up all the wondrous details which Moses had faithfully handed down, he broke forth under the Holy Spirit's influence into the beautiful words of our text, reminding his hearers again that the only place of safety was "in the secret of His presence" — "the secret place of the Most High."

That night in Egypt and its calamitous ending for Egypt was marked by a peculiar inactivity on the part of God's typical people. No one, not even the leader of Israel, was asked to take part in the destruction. No one of Israel was asked for advice, and as far as we know no one of Israel did take part or give advice. Here, then, is a lesson on watchfulness and obedience for us. Should not we be at least equally as careful as they, in observing the Lord's ways and requirements in this our day? The words of Isaiah quoted above seem full of added meaning when we contemplate the passover night.

No words could have been better framed, nor echo more fittingly the instructions which Moses enjoined that night: "Go thou in Israel, for behold Jehovah cometh out!" Israel was safely housed and protected, while Egypt reaped a whirlwind of sorrow. Nor could the Divine love have been better expressed: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" — I shall know you are inside, watchful and obedient. And the Prophet echoes, "Come, My people, enter in" — remain in the secret place till instructed to come out.

This same beam of prophetic light shows us also that a night is fast approaching; indeed, it has well set in, and it is for us to hide ourselves in the secret place, and be sure not to be found among the disobedient in earth's present danger zone. For surely the greatest deliverance of all is imminent, in which God will complete the number of His elect who have cried day and night unto Him. This great deliverance will be carried out under the instructions of our Lord, earth's new King, and He will marshal them safely into the heavenly and true Canaan of rest, even in the First Resurrection. An abundant entrance is guaranteed to the faithful. — 2 Peter 1:11.

Though centuries had passed since the momentous night in Egypt, in Isaiah's mind the events and details of that great deliverance were as fresh as ever; but with the majority of Israel they were long forgotten and treated as idle tales.

As a result obedience and watchfulness toward their God was at a discount. So today, many who should be on the alert to watch for the Lord's guidance and to give instant and careful obedience to all His minute instructions, are either oblivious of the true issues and carelessly cutting adrift from the anchor of hope, or are being feverishly hurried into unauthorised activities, foreign to the original God-given instructions.

In illustration, suppose a great fire occurs in one of our great cities. How quickly there arrives upon the scene the well equipped and experienced staff with all their modern means for coping with the conflagration. How unwise would any citizen be who would interfere with their work or dare to instruct them. The citizens' place or duty on such occasions is to be out of the way and not in the way. So when the great God of truth and righteousness rises up to quench the fires of human passion, or to reverse the picture, when the "fire of His jealousy" is ignited for the destruction of all His opponents, for the disintegration of every work of evil, and for the disarming of all the forces of error and darkness, where should His people be? Surely, says the Prophet, "hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast, for the Lord cometh out," etc.

Why was it necessary in Isaiah's day to warn the typical people so seriously? Because the proprieties of the true worship, both in time and methods, had been long neglected, and innovations of unholy character had prostituted the truth; hence Jehovah's movements and work were unseen and unheeded.

### **Taking Heed to God's Word**

In further illustration, how much sorrow would the beloved David have avoided if both he and the priests with him had given more heed to the detailed instructions of God's law through Moses. They would have avoided the error of bringing the ark to Jerusalem — a right thing in the wrong way — they would have avoided pushing the work of God forward by unlawful and worldly methods. So again, when David devised his plan to build a house to the Lord — a right thing at a wrong time — disappointment would have been saved had he been more careful in ascertaining the Lord's mind correctly.

Many since David's day, right down to the present, have been actively engaged in more or less extensive though questionable methods of forwarding the great work for human deliverance with the paraphernalia of human schemes; and to that end they have vainly endeavoured to build a house of God in which they might secure the "ark" and thus claim for their own particular community, sect, or organization the sole right to give forth the Divine decrees and thus be (or claim to be) the only true source of light, etc.

All who are deceived by such are bound to lose ground and become deficient both in obedience and watchfulness, giving heed to seducing spirits rather than to the Lord's directions.

### **The Rest of Faith**

God's people still must walk by faith; faith's "doors" must be closed around them, and within those closed doors only will they remain safe and unharmed. While the world is full of sorrow and doubt and apprehension of the future, the Lord's people are calm and content. Neither should they take part in anything which would irritate or annoy their fellow creatures, whose cup of sorrow is already overfull. We can well afford to wait, and with Solomon can truly say, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise." (1 Kings 8:56.)

We may know with confidence that no necessary information will be withheld from those who with watchfulness and obedience are awaiting the Lord's command, through the antitypical Moses—the present Lord—to "go forward." Let us not attempt to emerge from our hiding place until we are fully assured of His voice and of the nature of His command.

## **Estimating Costs**

*(Luke 14:28)*

### **(Young People's Address)**

Younger brothers and sisters often have to face major decisions in their teens, and twenties, with perhaps very little knowledge, and without the benefit of previous experience. This is the time when many decide on a professional career, get married, start families, and make other decisions which affect them to more or less degree for life. Some may also start considering the most important matter of all, a decision which not only affects them at the time but also in the future. That decision is whether or not, or when, they should make a commitment and

consecrate their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we make any important decision, there are always many questions we need to answer. For a moment imagine embarking on a business venture. You and your business partners will sit down and try to work out every conceivable detail of the project, such as

1. what are the objectives
2. what should be the plan of action
3. when is the best time to commence the project
4. what benefits should you expect from it
5. how secure is the project
6. what are your liabilities should something go wrong

The project will also involve some considerable costs, and you hope to have sufficient resources to cover them, so the next thing to do is to sit down with a sheet of paper and make a vertical line down the middle. On one side you write down all the things that will need to be paid for, your risks and liabilities and your best estimate of how much they are likely to cost you. On the other side of the line you list all the assets you have at your disposal, including any credit that you perhaps have been given. Then you add up each of the two columns and the relationship between the totals will indicate either the likely success or failure of the entire project.

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to prepare a similar balance sheet when we are considering following in His footsteps, so let us turn to our key text — Luke 14:28-30: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (N.I.V.)

We read in this chapter (Luke 14) that there were large crowds following Jesus. Many of them had different reasons for doing so, no doubt some wanted to listen to His teaching, some because Jesus would feed them when they became hungry (see John 6:26), while others hoped to catch Him saying or doing something that would be unlawful. But to all those who truly want to become His disciples, He has a word of caution: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10:37,38.

Our Lord does not wish to deliberately turn anyone away, He just does not wish us to be misled into thinking that being His disciple is going to be without any personal sacrifices. Other records of His words confirm this:

(a) Matt. 7:13,14 “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(b) Matt. 10:22,24,25 “All men will hate you because of me. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... if the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

(c) John 16:1-3 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue, in fact a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”

It is difficult for younger Christians to imagine this kind of persecution, especially in so-called civilised countries, but only our Heavenly Father knows to what kind of tests each one as an individual may be put in the future. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of the times of the end: “Before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name... and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. (vv.12,16,17)

The apostle Peter in his first letter also mentions suffering: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”. 1 Peter 4:12,13. How skilfully he counterbalances the suffering and pain of trials and the glory and honour which are to follow. In 1 Peter 1:6,7 we read further: “though now for a little time you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

The importance of weighing up carefully the costs of following Jesus before such a serious step is taken is shown by His words in Luke 9:62, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” To turn back after once being fully enlightened by God will result in very great loss. For our occasional human mistakes and failures, however, full provision has been made, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness... if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 1:9, 2:1.

Returning to our key text, which is about estimating costs, we note that it does not just end with adding up costs. Jesus tells us to do this, but then to compare the costs with the resources we have. Considering these will be far more encouraging; for a start let us turn to a favourite verse — John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” There is nothing new to tell about Christ’s great atoning sacrifice; it is indeed the great resource that we should use on our balance sheet. Without this resource, no further work could commence, no sacrifice of our own could be accepted.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. Further He assures us: “Whoever comes to me I will never drive him away.” John 6:37, and “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2,3. These are truly wonderful promises; they may sound simple, but it is such promises that give courage and strength to go on.

In John 1:12 we are told: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” and in Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Do we ever imagine what it would be like to be born into some prominent, perhaps royal family? There is surely no comparison between being born of God, being called God’s children, and being born into even the wealthiest, most prestigious family on earth!

Let us look at what else we are promised, in Jesus’ own words:

(a) John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

(b) John 6:35: “I am the Bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry.”

(c) John 4:14: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst, indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

We are also assured that for any sacrifices we make, we will receive a far greater reward. Speaking to the disciples and then to all believers, our Lord said: “I tell you the truth; at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **everyone** who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:28,29.

We are also encouraged to pray and ask for our needs. “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:23. When Jesus says to “ask in my name” He means to “use my name as a reference, as a guarantee that you are asking in the same way, in the same spirit, as I would ask.” By comparison, we read in James 4:3 how not to ask: “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on pleasures.”

Jesus also says: “If you love me, you will obey what I command, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of Truth — I will not leave you as orphans” John 14:15-18. Then in verse 26: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

We also have a strong support in our Christian family members — Jesus once said that those who do God’s will are to Him His brothers and sisters and mother. In Romans 12:5, the Lord’s people are compared to members of one body, where each member belongs to the other. In Galatians 6:2 we are told to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way to fulfill the law of Christ. We have each other to share in joys and sorrows, in our victories and falls, and we can count on each other’s love, support and prayers.

We could find still more examples of positive influences on our consecrated lives, but these should suffice to inspire us to look deeper into the costs of discipleship. As we weigh up costs and resources, may we each find a healthy surplus on the credit side and resolve to follow Jesus.

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say I find no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12:1. N.I.V. (RJ: 1991)

## **Timothy, A Good Minister of Jesus Christ**

*(continued from previous issue)*

*“Stir Up The Gift” (2 Tim. 1:3-8)*

Paul’s reflections on the trials likely to come upon Timothy would no doubt have had much to do with the Apostle’s prayers for Timothy “night and day”; and he now writes with a view to strengthening him along these lines, reminding him of the genuine faith and piety which he had inherited both from his mother and his grandmother, and assuring him that he believed that this had laid a deep foundation of true piety and faith in Timothy’s own heart. We notice the fact everywhere kept prominent in the Scriptures that according to the Divine arrangement not only are the sins of the parents visited upon the children for several generations, but also that the faith and godliness of the parents, when rightly based on the Word of God and the true promises of that Word, lay the foundation of character in their children, upon which there is the greater hope that a life of godliness and usefulness may be built.

Not only does the Apostle strengthen Timothy’s mind by a remembrance of the goodly heritage of faith and piety received from his mother and grandmother, but in addition he reminds him of the grace of God specially conferred upon him (Timothy) at that certain time when he made a full consecration of himself to the Lord, to be God’s servant; when the Apostle, exercising his power as an Apostle, and as was common in those days, communicated to Timothy by supernatural power an outward gift or token of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of his hands. The Apostle had evidently either heard or surmised that Timothy was allowing the fervor of his zeal for God to die out, and hence here he urges him to “stir up the gift of God which is in thee.” The Greek word here rendered “stir up” has the significance of *re-ignite*: as though the Apostle said, Re-ignite your gift by renewed energy.

The next verse enforces this view, implying that the Apostle thought that Timothy was in danger of being overcome by *fear*, so as to allow his zeal to abate. Hence he reminds him that the spirit of the Lord imparted to His people is not a spirit of fear, but on the contrary a spirit of power, energy, zeal awakened by love; loving devotion to God, and a desire to please and serve Him; loving devotion to the truth, and a loving devotion to God’s people and a desire to build them up in holy things, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Yet, lest Timothy should get the thought that the spirit of God led only to a zeal of energy — that might at times be unwise in its exercise and do more harm than good — the Apostle adds that the spirit of God which He bestows upon those who are begotten as His sons is a spirit of a “sound mind” — a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord on every subject, and hence, while thoroughly fearless of man, is wise in judging of times, seasons, and methods for using the energy of love which burns as a fire within the consecrated heart. Would that all of God’s children might appreciate, and more and more obtain, the spirit of a sound mind, by which all of their talents might be used, not only fearlessly but wisely, in the Master’s service.

### **“Wise Unto Salvation”**

Continuing his exhortation (3:14,15) the Apostle impresses upon Timothy two things (1) that he had been taught of God, and (2) that this teaching of God had come to him through the Scriptures, which he assures him are sufficient to bring him all the way to the complete realization (in the resurrection) of that salvation which God has provided through faith in Christ Jesus. It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of Divine things to which we already have attained, that may have really helped us nearer to God and to holiness, have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and His inspired Apostles: nor will it ever be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salvation promised.

Proceeding, the Apostle shows (Ver. 16,17) that the Scriptures which God inspired are profitable in every direction, and quite sufficient for the man of God, needing no supplements of visions or dreams, either his own or other. They are profitable for doctrine, containing the full statement of the Divine Plan; and no human authority is competent to add thereto. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counselor? They are useful also for reproof toward others. No words that we can use in correcting the errors of others either in word