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## **Looking Unto Jesus**

**(Convention Address)**

At one time, people used to think in terms of lasting values, but in the fast-changing world of today, it would be difficult to say just what is a lasting value. Wherever we look, everything is in a state of flux and change.

In such conditions, each Christian can be grateful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful love and unmerited favour. A scripture verse which we all might apply to ourselves, to our own previous condition and to our own development, is Eph. 2:12. There the apostle says: "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

How thankful each of us can be to our Heavenly Father, how we can praise Him in the presence of His people with all sincerity, confessing that while we in no way deserved His favour toward us, yet we greatly treasure it and praise the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy in that "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19.

How true are the apostle's words in Eph. 5:14 "wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For many years, as His people, we have enjoyed the Lord's marvellous light, His leading and His care, and His wonderful provisions for us. Even His great sacrifice on Calvary is the precious provision of our Heavenly Father, for there is no other way of salvation. No wonder the apostle could say: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.

All the Lord's people are seeking to walk in the light of our Lord, we are looking to Him in all circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy. In times of gladness, we thank Him, even though we realise that earthly joy is of a transient nature — it is here today and gone tomorrow. In times of sadness, we look to Him for consolation, for His over-ruling and his strength to overcome such experiences. Indeed, whatever we do, we look to our Lord Jesus.

For every Christian, the purpose of the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord is to look to Him and to grow in His likeness. "Speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." Eph. 4:15. Our looking unto Christ in all situations of life does not depend on our own wisdom, our education or ability, for as Jesus said to His disciples while He was with them during His earthly ministry: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house of Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." Mat. 10:24,25.

Every disciple of Christ has gone through practical experiences of privation, difficulties and persecutions; this has been so from the beginning even till now. But we realise that the Divine wisdom and the Divine mercy are revealed to babes, not to the wise of this world, nor to the powerful who can manage and change many things. Our Lord said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Mat. 11:25-27.

Then come our Lord's words of invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. 11:28-30. How often we think of these words of our Lord and apply them to ourselves in the many problems and difficulties of this life, realising how much we need the attitude of meekness of our Lord, to come and take His yoke upon ourselves, to be meek and lowly of heart ourselves, and so to find His rest to our souls. We know that Christians throughout the Gospel Age have experienced persecution and troubles, to greater or less extent, but that this is part of normal Christian development.

When we consider our Lord, did He live His life and was His earthly ministry peaceful and restful, with everything plain sailing? No, He continued to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself and had to carry on His work in the face of persecution and difficulty. But our Lord revealed that wonderful truth of Divine love when He declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. His preceding words tell how this was to be accomplished: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14,15.

We are all familiar with the experiences of Israel during the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Very often their’s was quite a difficult situation and we read in Num. 21:5-9: “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread (the manna). And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What an amazing story! It was as if a look at that serpent of brass (or copper) in itself contained some kind of anti-venene, to counter the venom of those serpents; these it seems were Egyptian cobras, very deadly snakes. It was just a look at that serpent on the pole which was sufficient for the person to recover and feel no ill-effects. In itself, this was a miracle, but again consider how it happened. A man or a woman was suddenly bitten by a snake; unless they believed Moses’ words, they would just lie down and die. But on the other hand, whoever believed Moses and the instructions of the Lord, lifted their heads in faith and looked to that snake on the pole — these did not suffer any ill-effects and recovered.

And so our Lord compared Himself to that brazen serpent, saying: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” With the brazen serpent, it was a Divine ordinance, God ruled it that way. And so it is with our Lord — if we have faith enough, we look to be the Lord. We look to Him for forgiveness of our sins, for that covering robe of His righteousness. By virtue of His blood shed on Calvary for us, He is our wisdom, He is our justification, for we know that it is only through acceptance of our Lord as our personal Saviour that we have a right to life. So we look to Jesus in all the affairs of our lives, for encouragement, for strength, for everything. For us, He has become our “all in all.”

It is the Divine ordinance that only through faith in Christ as our Saviour can we have life. Similarly, those Jewish people of old, those Israelites, had to lift up their heads and look toward that pole where the serpent of brass was glistening in the sun and that alone saved their lives. Speaking of God’s provision for us, the apostle John writes: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9,10.

The Christmas season is the generally accepted time of our Saviour’s coming into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He came as a little child, but with what rejoicing! The shepherds there in the fields were told to go and see Him and they went and they saw Him, just a new-born child but how they rejoiced. The angels too rejoiced and praised God. Only a small beginning but what a wonderful thing. Thirty years later, when our Lord at His baptism became the Messiah in His full authority and began His ministry, it reached out first to those that heard and believed in Him. That was the time when Divine mercy and Divine forgiveness was turned to the people. Before that, there was no way out, the Jews were under the Law of Moses but were in bondage to the law, because none could keep it perfectly; even if 99 per cent of it were kept, failure in one point resulted in the law condemning that one to death.

So the apostle John writes: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” John 1:17. That is the grace extended to and accepted by us, when we first looked towards our Lord. He is our Saviour, in

due time we accepted Him and we became reconciled to God, who is now able to overlook all our imperfections because He looks to us through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing of this is of ourselves, though we are trying to do our best, are trying to look to our Lord and grow into His likeness, and surely enough are being transformed by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. But still we are imperfect and it is only through the merit of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that we are acceptable to God and have right to life.

The same apostle puts the situation simply and positively "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. In other words, the person who does not accept Jesus is still under condemnation. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian brethren points to the Divine grace revealed to us as part of His plan of salvation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18. This ministry is first for the believers of this gospel age; we are reconciled to God by faith in our Lord and in His great sacrifice.

The ministry of reconciliation has only a small beginning however in this gospel age; during the millennium when the kingdom of God is established, uncounted billions of people will come back from the grave and will be restored. To them too will that gospel be preached — that ministry of reconciliation will reach them too and they will have the possibility of being saved and living forever. But it will still need to be by faith, for that is what God desires. For as the apostle writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

In the same chapter, the apostle goes on to describe, as it were, a gallery of the great victors of faith, beginning with the first martyr, Abel, then going on to Enoch, Noah, and so on. Finally he says that time would fail him to tell of everyone who pleased God, not through keeping of the Mosaic law but by faith. Then to conclude the chapter he writes: "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Heb. 11:32,39,40.

Then as if to show supreme faith and the pinnacle of faithfulness and loyalty, he exhorts us to be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2,3. What an encouragement we have — to look to our Lord, to look to Him for everything. We look to Him for wisdom, for our salvation, for redemption and for the great reward He promised when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you and... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2,3. Where the Master is, there will be His servants!

So let us look unto Jesus, our confidence and trust in Him will bring great reward in our own lives here and now and in the work of restoration of all mankind in the age to come. Especially in these insecure times, when there is no such thing as a lasting value or a secure tenure, our Lord is the best and indeed only security. He is our Leader, He is our elder Brother and we can depend on Him for all things. (SS:1991)

## **Justification, Sanctification, Redemption**

These are the three steps by which we are to reach "the prize of our high calling"—glory, honor and immortality. Not one of these steps can be omitted by those who win the great prize, nor can they be taken in any way but their order as directed in the Scriptures.

### **Justification**

Justification comes first as a necessity, because, all the human race being sinners, as such God could not either sanctify or glorify them; therefore, by some means, they must be "made free from sin" (brought to a condition of sin-less-ness) in order that they might "have their fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), and eventually receive "the end thereof—eternal life" (redemption). Rom. 6:22.

As sinners, men "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can, they be." (Rom. 8: 7). We are "made free from sin" by faith; that is, we are told of God that a ransom has been given for our sin, and that if we by faith accept the ransom, He no longer regards or treats us as sinners, but as perfect and sinless beings. This cleansing from sin is a complete work. You are justified — reckoned of God just and perfect, but it cannot be seen with the natural eye. You cannot realise that physically you are any more perfect than before you believed yourself justified. It is entirely by the eye of faith that you know yourself now as a being, justified freely from all things. God's word declares it and you believe Him.

We need not fear that our justification is incomplete, for Jehovah Himself is the justifier, as we read, God is "just

and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3: 26); and again, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth.”

Upon what grounds does God reckon human sinners as justified or righteous persons? Because the ransom for our sins has been paid by Jesus, who “Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. 2:24). For “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust (sinners), that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18) as justified beings. Jesus was treated as a sinner on our behalf, and we are now treated as just persons on His behalf. As we read again, “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 6:11). And again, “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom. 5:9). But *only believers are justified* during this Gospel age. They who do not believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day for our justification (1 Cor. 15: 14; Rom. 4: 25), are not justified: “Ye are yet in your sins.” So we read, God, “is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Again, “All that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39), and “A man is justified by faith.” (Gal. 2: 16 and 3:24).

When we believe the “good news” of our justification, it causes us joy and peace to realise that we may now come to God; and we no longer dread but now love God, because we see His goodness and love, for “herein is the love of God manifested.” (1 John 4:9).

We are thus brought into fellowship with God as justified human beings—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1). Few, very few, lay hold upon justification fully; few believe God that they “are justified from all things” and are in God’s sight clothed in the spotlessness of Jesus, in whom was no sin; consequently very few have the joy and peace which spring from believing. And it is no uncommon thing to hear, in church meetings of all denominations, men and women tell God that they know themselves to be “miserable sinners.” No wonder they agonize and daily ask the forgiveness of those sins which God’s word declares *are* forgiven. 2 Pet. 1:9. They know not that they partake of the justification by believing. If they would only believe God, they would have the realization of forgiveness, and consequently joy and peace. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” Beyond this point of rejoicing in a consciousness of forgiveness of sins, and acceptableness in God’s sight, few Christians go.

Did you ever think why God has made known to us our justification now, but keeps it hidden from the great mass of the race until the millennial age, though the ransom price is eventually to release all mankind from sin and its penalty, and bring them to the same condition of acceptance—sinlessness—perfection which we now enjoy by faith! It is because God has a plan which he is working out according to the counsel of His own will, and a part of that plan is that He will select from among mankind a number who will eventually be transferred from the earthly conditions and human nature to spiritual conditions and the “divine nature” to be “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s object in the development of this “little flock” is two-fold: first, He will make them everlasting monuments of His goodness, to be known and read of angels and men. As Paul expresses it (Eph. 2:7), God’s plan in the development of the Gospel church of overcomers, is, “that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The second part of God’s plan, in which we are directly associated, is that he purposes to use us during the next Millennial—age as kings (rulers) and priests (teachers), when we shall reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev.5: 10, 20:6). Thus shall the “seed,” of which Jesus is the Head, bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:29).

No sinners are called to have part in this “high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.” True, Jesus called “sinners to repentance”—so does the word of God, and all His children seek to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ and consequent justification. But only the justified ones are called to be “kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth. ‘ It is worse than useless to present the grand prize for which we run to the attention of sinners—the unjustified. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned—they are foolishness unto him. Therefore, “cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This being true, that none are called to the high calling except the justified ones, the fact that you know of your justification may be the proof to you that you are one of those whom God has “called” to spiritual life and joint-heirship with Jesus. What a blessed privilege to be called with such a high calling. Now do you realise that you are called to be a member of the bride of Christ? Then remember who called you—God; and that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. 5: 24). Our Father mocks none with a call which they cannot attain to. His grace is sufficient for us.

All who are called may take the second step—

## Sanctification

To sanctify is to set apart or separate to a special purpose or use. God's will is that all justified ones should be sanctified or set apart to His service as we read: "This is the will of God even your (believers) sanctification." (1 Thes. 4:3). There are two parts to sanctification—first ours, secondly God's part. As we have seen, God provides for our justification as men and then calls us to set apart-sanctify-or consecrate to him, that justified humanity. When we thus consecrate or give up our will, our time, talent, life and all we have and are to God, and ask Him to take our little all and use it as seemeth to Him good, and agree to let the will of God dwell in us richly—when we have done this we have done all that we can do; and here God, who accepts of every such sacrifice, begins His part of the sanctification work. He begins to use this will resigned to His care and "to work in you both to will and to do" in harmony with His will. From that moment it is no longer you (the human) but "Christ in you." Even the earthly (human) body, under the new controlling will (God's) is used in God's service and is thereby made holy.

From this moment when we give—consecrate—ourselves, we are reckoned dead, as human beings; for the human will should be buried from that moment forward; and when the will of God—the mind of Christ—the Holy Spirit takes possession of us so that it becomes our will and our mind, we are called "new creatures"—we are thus begotten to newness of life. This new creature is only an embryo being. It is not complete; but it grows and develops as "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus as new spiritual creatures we grow in His likeness during the time we abide in this earthly condition. As the spiritual nature grows stronger the human nature grows weaker and is the easier to keep dead, for I must not only give up my will to God, but keep it in a surrendered condition, "keep my body under"—under God's will.

As the new spiritual nature grows, it longs for its perfection when it will no longer be trammelled and fettered by human conditions, but be "like unto Christ's glorious body." This is promised us—we have been begotten, and by and by shall be born of the Spirit—spiritual bodies, for "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," just as truly as "that which was born of the flesh was flesh." Our begetting we have and our spiritual life is begun. It is to be completed, perfected, when this corruptible and mortal condition shall give place to the incorruptible, immortal conditions of the spiritual body. This is at the moment of resurrection to those who sleep in Jesus—raised spiritual bodies; and it will be at the moment of change to the living (from the fleshly body to their own spiritual bodies—theirs as new creatures.) Thus, "we which are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment." 1 Cor. 15:52.

This change of residence or condition, from the earthly body to the spiritual body is the third step of our development, viz:

## Redemption

This redemption from the present earthly conditions finishes and completes our salvation and the glory and power will follow.

Toward this, the end of the race, we are looking with longing eyes, "Ourselves, that have the first fruits (begetting) of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for sonship—the redemption of our body" (the body of which Jesus is the Head and all overcomers are members.) Rom. 8:23.

Let us recall to mind the steps: First, justification of the human nature; second, consecration or sacrifice of that human nature to God, its consequent death and the beginning of our existence as a spiritual new creature in the human body during the present life; third, the completion of our new, divine nature by the power of God, when we will be made like unto Christ's glorious body—who is the express image of the Father's person. What a glorious, high calling it is to which we are called!

How can each one of us make this glorious calling sure? Surely by continuing to maintain daily our consecration vows, giving over all things to our Heavenly Father for Him to use as He sees best. For the apostle assures us: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10,11. God will assuredly keep His part of the agreement for "He is faithful who promised." Heb. 10:23.

*"All for Jesus! All for Jesus!  
All my being's ransomed powers;  
All my thoughts and words and doings,  
All my days and all my hours."*

## Provoking To Love

*“Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on.” — Heb. 10: 24-25.*

“The word “provoke” signifies to arouse or I incite, or stimulate to activity. It is generally used in an evil sense, but is applicable, as in our text, to describe an incitement to good works, good thoughts, etc. The tendency of fallen human nature is toward things that are mean and selfish, and the natural bent is to incite or provoke or encourage similarly mean and unworthy thoughts, actions and words in others, and it has become a proverb that “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Everyone of experience knows this general tendency of evil to beget evil, and to corrupt and to pollute what is nobler and purer than itself; hence we have the Scriptural pronouncement, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Those who neglect this counsel need not be surprised if they are continually falling into temptation, and if the influence upon their own lives results in a measure at least of ungodliness and sin, and disfellowship from those things which are noble and true and pure.

But the “New Creature in Christ Jesus” is one in whom the transforming influences of the Lord’s Spirit have already begun — one who has a new heart, a new will, a new disposition. With such “old things have passed away and all things have become new,” they have been begotten again, i.e., re-begotten, to new hopes, new wishes, new ideas of propriety. Instead of the earthly wisdom and way, with its “bitter envying and strife,” which “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,” they have now the wisdom that is from above, and a heart (a disposition) to appreciate and pursue its counsels, which are, first purity, then peaceableness, gentleness, meekness, mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the disposition of this class, in proportion to their attainment of this heavenly wisdom and new nature, will be to “provoke” or incite or encourage one another, and all with whom they come in contact, to similar goodness of thought and word and act, in harmony with the heavenly wisdom which is guiding their own course.

### **The New Nature**

This is laid down in the Scriptures as an unvarying rule; “A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water, and a good fountain cannot send forth brackish water.” A thistle cannot bear grapes, and a grape-vine cannot bear thistles. It is the Master Himself who says: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If, therefore, we desire to prove ourselves, and to judge respecting our progress in mortifying (putting to death) the old nature, and our growth in the new nature, we will judge ourselves by this standard, answering to ourselves the question, Is my own spirit (disposition) one which delights in sin in its various forms (not necessarily in its grosser forms of murder, theft, etc., but in its more refined forms, falsity, envy, strife, vainglory, slander, evil-speaking, evil surmises, etc.), or is my delight increasingly in righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love? If the former, we are yet, either wholly or partially, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity, and have need to go at once to the Great Physician, and to submit ourselves to His radical treatment — the cutting off of sin, the mortifying of such fleshly desires, etc. If the latter be our condition of heart, we have cause for rejoicing, yet no cause for pride or boastfulness; for we can say no more than that we only have done our duty, having merely learned, and that imperfectly, the lessons set before us by our great Teacher.

The Apostle is addressing the Church, the consecrated New Creatures in Christ Jesus. This is shown in the text, for he classes himself with these, using the word “us”; it is also shown by the context. He calls the attention of the consecrated to the influence which goes out from each to each, and the consequent importance that the influence shall always be stimulating, or provocative of that which is good. No doubt the Apostle found in his day, as we find now, that many who are consecrated at heart fail to see clearly how this consecration should associate itself with and mark itself upon our every act and word.

### **Consider One Another**

We are not to be reckless of each other’s interests. In our contact with each other, whether a personal contact or a contact by mail, we are to “consider one another”. We are to consider what would be helps, and what would be hindrances, what would be encouragements, and what would be stumbling blocks; and we are to do all in our power to assist one another to run with patience the race for the heavenly prize. If we are truly consecrated to the Lord, we can do nothing “against the truth, but (every effort must be) for the truth” (2. Cor. 13: 8). What a burning and shining light every Christian would be if their every act were considered and shaped for the benefit of those with whom they come in contact! What a blessing it would be in the home! What a blessing it would be in the church! This loving consideration is what the Apostle is urging upon us: Consider one another to provoke (incite, encourage), to love and to good works.” Avoid every word and every act, so far as possible, that might incite to

hatred, envy, strife, bitterness (and bad works, corresponding to these feelings), all of which are “of the flesh and of the devil.”

The Apostle links this advice with the exhortation to forget not the assembling of ourselves together, as the Lord’s people. None of us is so strong in the new nature that we can disregard the fellowship of kindred minds. But even if we did feel sufficiently strong for ourselves, the spirit of love in us should so control that we would delight to meet with “the brethren” for their sakes. We are more or less like coals of fire, which, if separated, will tend to cool rapidly, but which, if brought together, will tend to increase in fervency the entire mass. Our Lord has encouraged His people to seek each other’s fellowship for companionship in the study of His word, and in prayer. He indeed has pronounced special blessings upon the meeting together of His people even if they be only two or three.

### **Our Privilege**

The “provoking” of one another to love and good works, the extending of true Christian fellowship and the exhortation and encouragement of each other in the Narrow Way are very real and precious privileges of all God’s people. They are ministries which all are invited to take up, as they have talent and opportunity, remembering the apostle’s words:

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10)

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

“Very little can be known of Timothy outside of the New Testament records. His birthplace was that of either Derbe or Lystra, though it is not certainly known which. From the account given in Acts 16:1 it is stated that the Apostle Paul found him in those places and it appears that he had not been acquainted with Timothy before. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and evidently a woman of unusual piety as was also Timothy’s grandmother, Lois. Though his father was a Greek, he was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, for Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures.

It is claimed that it was about A.D. 51 or 52 when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra and became acquainted with Timothy; and though there is no way of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, it is reasonably presumed that he was then a youth. (1 Tim. 4:12.) From what is said concerning him he was undoubtedly a young man of unusual hope and promise and there were some special indications that he would rise to a place of influence and power as a religious man and would fill an important position in the ministry of the Gospel.-1 Tim. 1:18.

The records indicate that Timothy was already a disciple, a Christian convert when the Apostle Paul first met him, but the means by which he became converted are not known. His mother too had been converted to the Christian faith before (Acts 16:1), so that they seemed well known to the Christians of the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. It was some six or seven years before Paul met with Timothy that he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra and it is not improbable that Timothy had been converted in the meantime.

### **Introduction To The Ministry**

Barnes in a very interesting way observes several things that “appear to have combined to induce the Apostle to introduce him [Timothy] into the ministry and to make him a travelling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the ‘prophecies which went before on him,’ his talents; his general reputation in the church; and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, fitting him to be an agreeable companion, attracted the attention of the Apostle, and led him to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3), and he was ordained to the office of the ministry by ‘the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’ (1 Tim. 4:14.) *When* this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before he went on his travels with Paul, as it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction.- 2 Tim 1:6.”

Some account of Timothy’s travels and collaboration with Paul are given in Acts 16 to 18. It is clear from this and references in Paul’s epistles that Timothy enjoyed the apostle’s full trust and affection. Of Timothy’s later life, there is no dependable evidence. The belief that he was “bishop” of Ephesus rests mainly on the subscription to 2 Timothy—not any real authority.

“Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the Apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been no one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached. See 1 Tim. 1:2,18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1, 1 Cor. 4:17, where he calls him ‘his own son,’ and ‘his beloved son’; 2 Tim. 1:4 where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; 1 Cor. 16:10, Rom. 16:21, 1 Thess. 3:2, and especially Phil. 2:19, 20, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the Apostle had established.” (Barnes).

### **Advice For All Christians**

Paul’s letters to Timothy are amongst the most valuable of the New Testament writings. Indeed they contain sound advice to all Christians, especially to such as are young in the truth, and particularly if they have consecrated their lives to the Lord and His service, and are seeking to be useful according to their consecration as His ministers or servants—whether in a public or in a private service, according to their talents and opportunities.

Paul introduces himself not by calling attention to his personal qualities as a logician, nor by boasting of any service which he had performed as the Lord’s servant and minister of the Truth; but, properly, by reminding Timothy of his apostleship, specially commissioned by the Lord to introduce His Gospel, and specially prepared for the work by being made a witness of the Lord’s resurrection, having been granted a glimpse of His glorious person on his way to Damascus and commissioned to declare the conditions for the fulfilment to men of God’s promise of life, provided in Christ Jesus.

Although the Apostle had no natural children of his own, his tender address to Timothy as his “dearly beloved son,” and his invocation upon him of a Divine blessing, shows that he lacked none of those fine, noble and endearing sentiments, which belong to a true parent. Indeed, the very fact that he had no natural children seems to have broadened the Apostle’s sentiments to such an extent that figuratively he took into his affections, as his own children, all who accepted the Gospel. We remember that he frequently used this figure of speech, “Although ye have many teachers, ye have not many fathers in the Gospel”—“I have begotten you in my bonds.” On another occasion he represents his efforts for a development of a fully consecrated Christian life amongst the believers under the figure of a mother travailing for her children. This being true of the Apostle’s general sentiment toward the household of faith, it would be much more true in the case of Timothy who had so nobly and truly filled the part of a son to him.

We note the Apostle’s care over this younger brother in the Truth, in whom he sees such great promise of present and future service. He realizes, perhaps better than Timothy does, the snares of the Adversary, by which one placed in so prominent a position is likely to be assailed. Would he become heady and high minded?—Would he lose his faith in the cross of Christ?—Would he fall into the snare of some of the philosophies, falsely so-called?—Would he become vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and get to feeling himself to be a “somebody?”—Or, would he, on the contrary, be a faithful soldier of the cross, meek, humble, gentle toward all, an example both in faith and practice to those with whom he came in contact?

And withal, would he hold fast to the Scriptures and be apt to teach others to look to this Divine source of information? He remembered that heretofore Timothy had been so close to himself in the work that he had been measurably shielded from many trials to which he would now be exposed; and yet, no doubt he realized that, if Timothy would be prepared to take the work of a general minister, which Paul the prisoner and growing old must shortly lay aside, it was time that he was learning how to stand, complete in the strength which God supplies through His Word, without leaning so particularly, as heretofore, upon any earthly prop.

To be Continued.