
Shield of Faith

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Too Many Hypocrites

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? {9} Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? {10} Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" (Job 27:8-10)

Recently I heard used what I would call the "classic" excuses for not being a part of the visible church. The first was "There are too many hypocrites in the church." The second was "I can better worship God by communing with nature, etc. than in church." I hold little hope that one who makes such excuses will be persuaded by my arguments (experience has taught this), but I consider it my duty to refute such excuses as being contrary to God's word.

It is almost amusing to see how those who are outside the church profess to know the condition of the church. Those who cry "too many hypocrites" are usually those who have not been in the meeting of the church in years, if ever, and yet they set themselves as judges of the church. Can such a one make an intelligent judgment of the church. I would challenge them to meet with the church for a while before they rush to judge.

Those who say "too many hypocrites" are really saying "I'm too good to associate with those hypocrites." I wonder if they would be willing for their own life to be judged in the light of God's word to see how *they themselves* measure up. No, I don't think so. One who deems himself too good to associate with the people of God are themselves not fit for the church. The Bible, speaking of the temple, says, "And the house, when it was in building, was built of

stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7). While the gifts of the church are "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12), the Holy Spirit must first do His work in making the "stone ...ready before it was brought thither," not only in regeneration but also in conviction of one's sinful condition. Until one sees himself as the chief of sinners, and sees the genuine need for mercy, he is unfit for the assembly of saints.

Failure to live up to the standard Christ has set for his church does not necessarily make one a hypocrite. Anyone, in any area of life, who always meets their goals have set their goals too low. The goal of the church is the highest goal: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). We admit to the weakness and sinfulness of the flesh. The Apostle Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Who would dare to call Paul a hypocrite?

What is the standard of the world *outside* the church? Their standard can be no higher than the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, {20} Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, {21} Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time

past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

The excuse-makers deem themselves too good to associate themselves with the church yet they daily associate with those of the world. Do they consider the world better than the church because the world *always* lives according to their *low* standard and the church sometimes (even often) fails to live according to their *high* standard? Or do they admire the "honesty" of one who denies any authority outside himself and denies that God has any right to direct the lives of His creatures? Do the excuse-makers measure their companions with the same yardstick with which they measure the church?

We admit, sadly, that from time to time hypocrites do come into the church, but there are not so many as some think and they seldom stay long. There is little in the church to attract any except those whom God has called to Himself. In the past it was considered good business practice to join the church to give the appearance of respectability and to make contacts, but there is probably little of that today. If fact, these days church membership may be considered a liability to the business community.

A hypocrite is an actor playing a role and few actors can keep from showing their real self for very long in the church where it is the goal of the members to know one another better. When one is revealed to be a hypocrite, the church should labor with them to correct their false manner of living. If that fails they should be excluded from the church. Rest assured that if the church fails to discipline herself, the Lord will discipline her.

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Too Many Hypocrites

(Continued from page 1)

"Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, {5} That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? {6} Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; {7} Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?" (Job 20:4-7).

What about the idea that one can worship God better alone than in the assembly of saints? These excuse-makers usually claim to commune with God by admiring His creation and believe this communion is better than "the church experience." David said "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Psalms 19:1). Every believer should behold His glory in His creation. I and others I know have had awesome experiences with the Lord when alone and meditating on Him and His works. Believers should have such a relationship with the Creator that we can experience His presence at any time. But can such experiences as that replace assembling with other believers? God's word says no. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: {25} 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 approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). John wrote, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14). Can one truly love his brethren and yet not desire to be with them? Some claim to love, but show no evidence of it. Many feeble attempts have been made to define love, yet few have found words to properly define it. One thing should be very clear, however. Biblical love, whatever else can be said of it, is an action word. It is not simply something that one feels; it is something that one does. "My little chil-

dren, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). John records these words in John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Love will produce action according to Jesus, and the action produced is obedience to His words. Paul wrote in Romans 12:9-10 these words: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. {10} Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Love without hypocrisy is Paul's command.

Jesus set an example for us to follow in all areas of life, including meeting in God's house to worship. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, **as his custom was**, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16, emphasis added). Jesus, "made under the law," worshiped according to the law and met the law's requirements, including assembling with others in God's house for worship. "We are not under the law, but under grace," (Romans 6:15) yet "we not without law to God, but under the law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21). There is abundant New Testament Scripture to prove that we are to serve and worship God in the community of "them that have obtained like precious faith" (II Peter 1:1). The religious order of Jesus' day was unspeakably corrupt, but Jesus demonstrated that the sinfulness of others did not alter *His* responsibility in serving God. Even when men sought to kill him, Jesus attended and taught in the Temple and in the synagogues. (See John 11:55-57, John 18:20, etc.)

Jesus warned His disciples, "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; {18} And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for

a testimony against them and the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:17-18). He told them to be aware that this would happen, yet there is no warning to avoid their synagogues. Rather there seems to be an implied command for them to be there, "for a testimony."

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus speaks to the church of the Laodiceans saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." In verse 16 He reveals the condition of the church: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Despite the sickening condition of the church Jesus promises, "if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The entire church may be lukewarm, but if one man hears His voice and opens the door for Him, Jesus will bless that man with His presence. The condition of the church does not alter the believers responsibility, nor does it limit Jesus Christ's ability to bless those who hear His voice.

For the most part, the excuse-makers are simply trying to justify their own ignorance of God's word or their rebellion against His explicit commands. We, the church, however, should examine ourselves to see if we are a hindrance to those who are truly seeking to serve the Lord. The greatest and most effective form of evangelism is Christians living Christian lives. Peter admonished, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). That exhortation implies that others will see *evidence* of the hope that is in us and will want to know about it. Is that evidence apparent in our lives, or are we turning others away from the church because of our inconsistencies?

Bible Quiz

1. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9)
2. Paul (2 Cor. 12:9)
3. Moses (Ex. 3:17)
4. Noah (Gen. 9:9)
5. Disciples (Matt. 14:27)
6. Jacob (Gen. 31:13)
7. Mary Magdalene and Mary (Matt. 28:6)
8. Ruler of the synagogue (Mark 5:36)
9. Gideon (Judg. 6:23)
10. Hagar (Gen. 21:18)

- a. "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."
- b. "Be not afraid, only believe."
- c. "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."
- d. "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."
- e. "My grace is sufficient for thee."
- f. "He is not here: for he is risen, . . . Come, see the place where the Lord lay."
- g. (When he had seen an angel) "Fear not: thou shalt not die."
- h. "I have put my words in thy mouth."
- i. "I establish my covenant with you."
- j. "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt . . . unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

Answers on page 4

"It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with the rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures . . ."

"I am a most unworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole purpose to enjoy His marvelous presence. For the execution of the journey to the Indies, I did not make use of intelligence, mathematics or maps. It is simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied. . ."

These words were written by Christopher Columbus in his Book of Prophecies, a compilation of studies on the Scriptures completed after his third voyage to the New World.

OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERS

The privilege of membership in the church of Christ is a great one indeed. The church furnishes a safeguard against the temptations of the world when its privileges and obligations are understood. Having the associations of the people of God, and hearing the gospel preached is a great comfort. That this privilege may be continued and enjoyed, certain obligations are assumed by those who become members of the church.

ATTENDANCE

The church could be of no benefit to the members, nor to the world, if the members did not meet together; hence arises the obligation of attendance at the regular meetings of the church. Paul gives a rule that should be observed by all the members of the church—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is."--Heb. 10:25. Neglect of this duty is discouraging to the church and pastor. We should consider that it is a service we owe to God, and when we are "making" excuse for staying away we should think that before the excuse is a valid one, the Lord who knows the very thoughts and intents of the heart, would have to approve of it.

This searching test, "Would the Lord excuse me?" ought to be ever before us. We may be tempted to stay away because of what some one else has done or has not done. But are we justified in treating the service of God with contempt because of what any one in the world does? We are not serving men, but serving God, and what we do should be done as unto Him and not as unto men. This is a matter of so much importance that the church is justified in requiring its members to attend the meetings, or have justifiable grounds for staying away; and if members have the right feeling about it, they will be willing to let the church pass [judgment] on their reasons for missing the meetings.

THOUGHTFUL OF EACH OTHER

It is the duty of members to be

thoughtful of one another. We should think more of the members of the church than we do of the people of the world, and we should show it in our actions. If one of the members is sick, other members should at once show their love and kindness by doing what may be needful to be done for the comfort of the sick. Jesus showed a sympathetic nature, and helped and comforted the sick. They were glad to see His face and hear His voice. His followers should walk in His steps. Let the sick see your face and hear your voice and feel the willingness of your hands to help them.

CARE FOR THE POOR

The members of the church should be careful to look after the poor. Though it is especially the duty of the deacons to relieve the immediate needs of the poor, it is the duty of every member of the church to be thoughtful in this direction, to keep the deacons supplied with funds when there is need, and then to give personal attention to the poor, that they may not feel to be neglected. The Master was Himself very tender toward the poor, and we can not feel that He would at all approve our course if we neglect them.

BE LOVING AND KIND

The members of a church should be very loving and kind toward each other. They are brethren, and they should treat each other as the members of one family. This will require that they be forbearing, for there are none perfect. Should we require perfection of others it would be more than we are able to give in return, which would be very unkind of us, for we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. We should be forgiving, because we shall need to ask others to be forbearing and forgiving toward us.

And especially has the Master laid this upon us, for He teaches His disciples to pray to be forgiven, even as they forgive others.

Elder Walter Cash

Revival & Revivalism

The men of the Old School, while believing in revival as fervently as they did, and knowing that there are seasons when believers have special reason to plead, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law' (Psa. 119:126), nevertheless knew no biblical reason to be cast down by the normal. Fruitfulness and blessing are possible at all times. The duties of our prayer and evangelism are constants. The Old School men kept the possibility of great effusions of the Spirit before them but they never supposed that without revival all labour was futile. They believed that God would grant his blessing in the measure that was appropriate - whether in its heightened form - gloriously advancing his kingdom - or in quieter ways. They also sought to remember that the prayers and work of one generation are generally far more closely intertwined in God's purposes in another than we can readily recognize. 'One soweth and another reapeth' is a law in Christ's kingdom (John 4:37). Thus the larger fruitfulness of revival periods is itself connected to the labour and perseverance of the church in preceding years. So J. H. Rice could truthfully say of the revival at Prince Edward, Virginia, in 1828: 'Much that our valued friend, Mr. Lyle did in the way of sowing seed, is now springing up, and producing a glorious harvest.' Similarly, J. W. Alexander could write of the sixty-one new members he received at one communion in 1858 that they were made up chiefly of 'persons with whom I have been dealing for years.'

Isaac Watts, among the older writers, had warned against dependence on times of special blessing for such times 'are rare instances, and bestowed by the Spirit of God in so sovereign and arbitrary a manner, according to the secret counsels of his own wisdom, that no particular Christian hath any sure ground to expect them.'

Our need of revival is indeed very great today. Once more men claim, as Voltaire claimed two centuries ago that the world is seeing the twilight of Christianity. But it is not any kind of revival that we need. Before his death in 1963 Dr. A. W. Tozer had come to this conclusion: 'A widespread revival of the kind of Christianity we know today in America might prove to be a moral tragedy from which we would not recover in a hundred years.' With thankfulness we can believe that another kind of Christianity is reappearing in the English-speaking world and that in connection with a history which had been long largely forgotten. Contact between the bones of a prophet and a corpse was once God's way of bringing a man back to life (2 Kings 13:21) and handling the records of which we have sought to make use in these pages can have similar effect. It may be that a generation of freshly anointed preachers is already being prepared. Whether that is so or not, when such men are sent forth by Christ we can be sure of certain things. They will not be identical in all points with the men of the past, but there will be a fundamental resemblance. They will be hard students of Scripture. They will prize a

great spiritual heritage. They will see the danger of 'unsanctified learning.' While they will not be afraid of controversy, nor of being called hyper-orthodox, they will fear to spend their days in controversy. They will believe with John Rice that 'the church is not purified by controversy, but by holy love.' They will not forget that the wise, who will shine 'as the stars forever and ever,' are those who 'turn many to righteousness' (Dan. 12:3). They will covet the wisdom which Scripture attributes to the one 'that winneth souls' (Prov. 11:30). But their cheerfulness will have a higher source than their work. To know God Himself will be their supreme concern and joy. They will therefore not be strangers to humility. And their experience will not be without trials and discouragements, not least because they fall so far short of their aspirations. If they are spared to live as long as John Leland they will be ready to say with him at last: 'I have been unweariedly trying to preach Jesus, but have not yet risen to that state of holy zeal and evangelical knowledge, that I have been longing after.' Whether their days be bright or dark they will learn to say with Nettleton that 'the milk and honey are beyond this wilderness world.'

Why the spirit of this school of men so largely passed away is a subject that needs far fuller discussion than it has ever received. In part the answer has to be theological. The sublime truths relative to the conversion of sinners, worthy of the attention of angels, came to be regarded as commonplace. The interest in theological training shifted elsewhere. 'Scholarship' assumed a priority never given to it in Scripture. The older generation had not, in the first place, been concerned with the ability of a candidate for the ministry to prove his general learning. They wanted more. They looked for evidence of 'divine unction'. Speaking of this subject in 1857 a writer reported the words of 'one of our most eloquent preachers, now in glory': 'After listening to a popular discourse, delivered by a young licentiate, and expressing admiration of his pulpit talents, he closed his remarks by asking, "Do you think he can pray down the Holy Spirit?"' Dr. Kirk was referring to the same kind of thing when he wrote: 'The old preachers of the law used to make the services of the sanctuary the opening of the grand assizes of the judgment. We have no more of that now, but a good deal of dilettantism in its place. We live too far from Sinai and from Gethsemane, busied with our alphabets and the questions of grammar and metaphysics'.

*Selected from Revival & Revivalism,
The Making and Marring of
American Evangelicalism 1750-1858
by Iain H. Murray*

Answers to Bible Quiz

1- 01 2- 64- 03- 17- 07- 08- 11- 07- 17-1

Devotions:

Psalms In Reflection

From the book of the same title by Elder Len Dalton

The First Psalm

"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. {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. {3} And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. {4} The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. {5} Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. {6} For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalms 1-6)

It has well been said that the law of Jehovah is the master thought of this psalm. It is very interesting to notice how the words "obedient" and "disobedient" are placed in sharp contrast in the psalm. In order to vividly bring out the contrast so that it may quickly be seen, we have but to call attention to the first and last words--"blessed," "perish." The former word brings to light the results of obedience, while the latter word reveals the results of disobedience. Please take notice of the fact that the conditions of blessedness are stated both negatively and positively. Negatively, there must be complete separation from such as are disobedient. This can most clearly be seen by observing these words: "walketh," "standeth," "sitteth," "counsel," "way," "seat," "wicked," sinners," "scornful."

The positive condition stressed is twofold: delight, and meditation in the law of God both day and night. Please do not miss the thought of the experience of blessedness as it is expressed or described by the figure of a tree planted by the rivers of water, bearing much fruit, and well coated with green leaves. Note also that such a man prospers in the things which he does.

In order to see the contrast, simply let the words "The wicked are not so" be considered in the light of all that has been said concerning the righteous or blessed person. Instead of the wicked being like the tree planted by the waters, they are like the chaff driven by the wind. They will not be able to stand in the judgment. The psalm ends with a summary: "For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." What a marvelous psalm for meditation!

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. {8} For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Hymns and Hymn Writers

O for a Closer Walk with God

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:" (Colossians 2:6)

Soon after William Cowper was discharged from Cotton's mental asylum, he met Morley and Mary Unwin coming out of church. Morley, an evangelical clergyman, incited William to spend two weeks with them and William ended up staying in the Unwin home for 22 years. He took up gardening as a hobby which helped ward off his depressions.

When Morley was killed from falling off a horse, Mrs. Unwin, wanting to sit under the ministry of another evangelical preacher, decided to move to the village of Olney, population 2000, where John Newton was vicar. Newton, ex-scoundrel and slave trader, had become a celebrated preacher in England. William moved with her, and he and Newton were soon fast friends. They frequently met in the lawn between their houses, and William began assisting John in visiting the sick and dying, and in distributing benevolent funds.

In December, 1769, Mary Unwin fell ill and appeared to be dying. William's anxiety and depression returned with a vengeance. Mary, being quite a bit older than William, was a mother-figure to him. He prayed earnestly for her, and it was during this time that, examining his own spiritual condition, he wrote "O For a Closer Walk with God." He said, "(Mary) is the chief of blessings I have met with in my journey since the Lord was pleased to call me . . . Her illness has been a sharp trial to me. Oh, that it may have a sanctified effect . . . I began to compose (these verses) yesterday morning before daybreak, but I fell asleep at the end of the first two lines. When I awaked, the third and fourth verses were whispered to my heart in a way I have often experienced."

The hymn begins, "O, for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame," then goes on to ask:

*Where is the blessedness I knew / It When first I saw the Lord
Where is the soul refreshing view / Of Jesus and His word*

*Return, O holy Dove, return, / Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn / And drove Thee from my breast*

*The dearest idol I have known, / Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne, / And worship only Thee.*

Fortunately, the danger passed, William's prayers were answered, and Mary recovered.

Not forsaking the assembling

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh. Hebrews 10:25

The inward and the outward must ever go together. As there is in every man a hidden inner life of the soul, along with the outer life of the body, so too in the Church of Christ. All its members are one body; the inward unity must be proved in active exercise, it must be seen in the assembling together. The assembling of His saints has its ground in a divine appointment as well as in the very nature of things; all who have entered into the Holiest to meet their God must turn to the meeting of His people. The tabernacle of old was the tent of meeting; to meet God and to meet our fellow-men are equally needful. Among the Hebrews it was already the custom with some to forsake the assembling together; it was one of the dangerous symptoms of backsliding. They are reminded, not only of the personal duty of each to be faithful, but also to care for others, and to exhort one another. For exercise and strengthening of the faith and hope and love, to which we have just been urged, for the full development of the life in the Holiest of All; for the helping and comforting of all who are feeble; for the cultivation of the fellowship of the Spirit and the Word—the assembling of ourselves together has unspeakable value. Let us listen to the exhortation, in connection with our entrance into the Holiest. **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is.**

If we would rightly apprehend the import of this word let us not forget the link to its context. Our section has been teaching us what life in the Holiest is to be. As those who have drawn near to God we are to draw near to our fellow-men. Meeting God is a thing of infinite blessedness and peace and power. Meeting our fellow-men is often accompanied with so much of weakness, distraction, and

failure that some have thought it indeed better to forsake the assembling together. Let us see how life in the Holiest of All points to both the duty and the power of our assemblies.

It suggests the duty. The Holiest of All is the home of eternal love. It is love dwells there. It is love that came forth from there to seek me and bring me in. It is into the everlasting love I have been welcomed and taken in. It is love that has been shed abroad in my heart. My entrance in was only in the path of self sacrifice, my abiding there can only be as one dead to self and filled with love. And love seeketh not its own; it gives itself away, and only lives to make others partakers of its happiness. And it loves the assembly of God's people, not only for what it needs and hopes to receive, but for the communion of saints, and the help it can give in helping and encouraging others.

It not only does this, but obeys the added injunction—**Exhorting one another.** It seeks to watch over those who are in danger of becoming unfaithful. It cares for those who have grown careless in their neglect. True love is quick of invention, it devises means for making smaller or nearer or more attractive assemblies for those who have become estranged. It counts nothing too humble or too difficult if it may but win back to the gathering of God's children those who may there be blessed and saved. It lives in the Holiest of God's love; it gives itself up to the one work of winning others to know that love.

The life in the Holiest is thus not only the motive but the power for doing the work aright. Yes, it is as those who profess to have entered the Holiest of All truly draw near to God, and prove the power of fellowship with Him, that they will have power in prayer and speech and service among their fellow Christians. The Holiest of All is the place for daily worship and consecration and intercession; even a little band in the assembly will have power to make the divine presence felt. The worship in the place of prayer may become so

linked to the secret worship of the Holiest of All that its blessing may come to those who have never known of it. God is willing so to bless the fellowship of His redeemed that the assembly shall be crowned with a fuller sense of His love and presence than ever can be found in the solitary approach to Him. **Wherefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the Holiest, let us draw near; not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, but exhorting one another.**

And so much the more as ye see the day approaching. The writer has doubtless in view the then approaching day of judgment on Jerusalem. We know not in how far the perspective of prophecy was clearly revealed, and that day was connected with the coming of the Lord Himself. It is enough for us to know that the fear of an approaching day of judgment was the motive to which appeal is made; and that, not only to move the indifferent, but specially to urge the earnest to exhort others. Christians need to be reminded of the terrible doom hanging over the world, and of all the solemn eternal realities connected with our Lord's coming in their bearing upon our daily life. So will our efforts for helping and saving others all be under the power of the thought of how short the time is, how terrible the fate of those who perish, and how urgent the call for everyone who knows redeeming love to do its work with all his might. In the Holiest of All we hear the voice of warning, and come out to save ere it be too late.

Andrew Murray in *The Holiest of All, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*

A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipotent, like the Deity. If we take to ourselves the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, duty performed or duty violated is still with us, for our happiness or our misery. If we say the darkness shall cover us, in the darkness as in the light our obligations are yet with us.

-DANIEL WEBSTER.

The Strength of the Church

Those who are outside the church cannot see her true strength. Unfortunately, they think that she can be knocked down with a push. They said the same about the Jews, though, remember, when Nehemiah was rebuilding Jerusalem's wall: "And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? {3} Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." (Nehemiah 4:2-3)

Do you think these people saw the strength of the Jews? No, the Jews' pillars were inside their hearts, and so they were shadowed from the world's eyes.

How then can the world judge of the condition of the saints? I doubt if they had known the church's true strength, that they would have assaulted her so furiously. What have all their efforts accomplished, either against the church's Head or her body?

After all this, she is still alive and well, and she will continue to be, even if all the nations on earth gather themselves together to fight against her. Even if many of her leaders are cut off, she will not stop flourishing. She needs to be pruned and trimmed sometimes; otherwise, her boughs would get too thick. Those who are taken away with God's pruning shears are removed so that the branches underneath may grow that much better.

No one needs to be afraid of Jesus Christ being the ruler of the world: He envies nobody; He has no plans to hurt anyone; His kingdom is not of this world, nor does He crave physical riches. Just leave His wife, that is, His church, alone, to enjoy the privileges He has purchased for her, and all shall be well. These privileges, since they are soul-concerns, don't infringe on anyone else's freedom. If you would only let faith and holiness walk freely in the streets, you would find you are as happy as the world can make you. (I am speaking now to those who are

against Christ.)

But if you can't swallow my wise advice, if you are too hardhearted and blind to find the way, then listen to these cautions from a long time ago: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. (Psalm 2:10-12).

The very name of Jesus is the tower of the Christian church, the place where she goes for protection from the world. He is like the tower of a castle; enemies look at it and are frightened. This is not what God means, of course, but human hearts misunderstand and think that Christ is a threat to their lives. In reality, neither the church nor her Jesus want to harm anyone. However, she threatens human selfishness, and this makes her look as terrible to the human eye as an army ready to fight, its banners flowing in the wind.

When Christ's enemy begins to make inroads against the church in the wilderness, killing and cutting, some of the pillars will always be left still standing. They will not be all burnt in the fire or cut down. "Come," Israel's enemies said, "let us wipe out Israel as a nation. We will destroy the very memory of its existence." But what then? There is a difference between saying something and actually doing it; after all, the burning bush was not consumed just because it was on fire, and the church shall not be consumed either, even though she is in trouble. The reason for this is that God always has His reserve: If Abel falls by the hand of Cain, Seth is put in his place; if Moses is taken away, Joshua succeeds him; and if the devil breaks the neck of Judas, Matthias is at hand to take his office. God has a whole line of pillars in His house, all standing in succession. And last of all, He has Himself as a reserve.

So they brought out Faithful, to punish him according to their law. First they whipped him, then they beat him, then they cut him with knives. After that they stoned him with stones, pricked him with their swords, and last

of all, they burned him at the stake until there was nothing left of his body but ashes. And that was the end of Faithful.

Now I saw in my dream that Christian did not go on alone, for someone joined him now, a man named Hopeful. This man had earned his name by watching the behavior of Christian and Faithful and listening to their words while they were in the midst of their sufferings at the fair. Hopeful promised Christian that he would be his companion now, and the two of them made a brotherly commitment to each other.

That is how one man died to bear testimony to the truth, and another rose out of his ashes, to be a companion with Christian in his pilgrimage.

"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." (Genesis 4:25). When Seth comes, then the ground is made good again, then a living saint is found to stand and maintain the same truth for which his brother just bled and died.

John Bunyan in *The Riches of Bunyan, Selections From The Writings of John Bunyan*

Church Fellowship

It is the will of God that Christians should often testify to each other of the things of God, and that by doing so they should edify one another.

The doctrine of the gospel is like the dew, like the mist that moistens the tender grass, making it flourish, keeping it green. Christians are like all the different flowers in a garden, each of them having the dew of heaven. When the flowers are shaken by the wind, they let their dew fall on each other's roots-and as a result they are all nourished, for they are nourishers of one another. Church fellowship, when it is healthy and productive, is the glory of the world. No place, no community, no fellowship is decorated and spangled with such beauties as the church is when it is rightly knit together with their Head, each lovingly serving the other.

John Bunyan



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And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

The Peculiar People of God

THE WORD "peculiar" is found in Titus 2:14. Christians are the peculiar people of God. We use the word sometimes when we speak of something odd or strange. But that is not its use here. The word is translated from a Greek word which is made up of two words, one which means "around," as a circle, and the other which means "to be." It can be charted by a dot within a circle. This will help us to understand the meaning of the combined word. As the circle is around the dot, so God is around each one of His saints. The circle monopolizes the dot, has the dot all to itself. So God has His own all to Himself. They are His own private unique possession. He has reserved them for Himself. The expression in I Thessalonians 1:1, "The church of the Thessalonians which is in God," has in it the same idea, for the Greek case is locative of sphere. That is, it is in the sphere of God, circumscribed by God, surrounded by Him.

This is a place of high privilege. In I Peter 2:7, the Greek has it, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." That is, the preciousness of Jesus is imputed to us. He becomes our preciousness in the eyes of the Father as He becomes our righteousness before the law. The Son dwells in the bosom of the Father, closest to the Father's affections. Marvelous grace, that we sinners saved by grace are brought into that favored place closest to the Father's affections. The Father loves us as much as He loves His only begotten Son. What a pillow on which to rest our weary hearts when going through a testing time.

This is also a place of protection. Place a dot outside of the circle, and draw an arrow from that dot to the dot inside the circle. Label that dot a temptation. As the arrow cannot reach the dot except it go through the circle, so no temptation can reach us except it go through the permissive will of God first. As we walk in the center of God's will, He will not permit the Devil to confront us with a temptation too great for us, but will provide us with the necessary

faith and spiritual strength to overcome it. Victory over sin is a guaranteed fact when we are in the center of God's will. Put another dot outside the circle. Run an arrow to the dot inside. Label the outside dot "a trial or testing time." As the arrow cannot reach the dot inside unless it goes through the circle, so no time of testing, no sorrow, can reach the child of God who dwells in the center of His will unless it comes through the permissive will of God, and when it reaches us, God sees to it that all needed grace is given to bear that trial. He is the God of all grace who comforts us in all our afflictions. And this is what Paul means in I Corinthians 10:13 when he says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The Greek word translated "temptation" has two meanings, first, "a time of testing or trial," second, "a solicitation to do evil." We are the peculiar people of God, all His own, closest to His affections, under His protecting care, the recipients of all needed comfort and grace.

God in His wisdom plans the test, and limits the temptation. God in His love sends the test, and permits the temptation. God in His grace meets the test, and overcomes the temptation. In His wisdom He plans and limits. The purpose of Christian suffering is that it is a means whereby sin is put out of our lives and likeness to Jesus produced. "We must be ground between the millstones of suffering before we can become bread for the hungry multitudes." In His love He sends and permits. Christian suffering shows God's love for that saint. God wants him more to Himself. In His grace He meets and overcomes. The grace of God is sufficient to surmount every difficulty, comfort any sorrow, overcome any temptation.

Kenneth S. Wuest
 In *Wuest's Word Studies From The Greek New Testament*

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