

WILDERNESS FOOD

—G. W. Steidl

"We can't stand this food any longer," they protested.

To those desert travelers eating was a major activity — after all, how much else is there to do in a desert? But the food had become monotonous. They ground it in mills, beat it in mortars, baked it in ovens, and tried to make cakes out of it; but still it was loathsome to them. It contrasted miserably with the spicy fare (fish, melons, onions and garlic) which they had left behind in Egypt to follow Moses into the wilderness.

These ancient sons of Israel conveniently forgot two things, however. First, that the savory feasts of Egypt had been accompanied by a life of bitter bondage and slavery; a life of degradation at the hands of oppressors. Secondly, that the food (called mannah) which God supplied them on a daily basis was perfectly suited to meet their needs in the wilderness. Basically it was pure and sweet and wholesome. Their refusal of it only reflected their refusal of the God Who gave it.

Shall we condemn them? Or shall we who are Christians admit that we have travelled with them and shared their perverted attitude? Redeemed from the bondage of sin by the sacrifice of Christ, we have left behind the fleeting pleasures of sin represented by the spicy food of Egypt. We have begun to view everything from a new perspective — a perspective which reveals the existing world system (the establishment) to be as much of a wilderness as the deserts of Sinai. We have discovered that this wilderness is a hard barren place. And perhaps we have thought, "Egypt's food tasted better. Life was easier and sometimes more pleasant before I became a Christian."

What is the remedy? Certainly not to return to Egypt. How disastrous to become enslaved again for the sake of some well-seasoned fish! Rather it is to feast upon the very food which looks unimpressive, but which alone can give us true satisfaction and nourishment in the wilderness. The Mannah. The Christ of the Scriptures! He is the true bread of Heaven which the Father has given. Consider His promise in John 6:35, "I am the Bread of life; he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst."

THE ASSEMBLY IN THE BIBLE (3)

—H. L. Heijkoop

The Assembly, then, is the body of Christ. She is one body with Him, inseparably connected with Him, completely one with Him. But that is not all. She is needed to make the glory of the Lord Jesus complete. She is "the fullness of Him Who fills all in all."

We saw how the Lord Jesus longed for the Assembly. He loved her so much that He was prepared to sell all that He had to possess her. Do we believe that the merchant in Matthew 13, who sold all to possess that one costly pearl, would ever have been satisfied without her? No, that would not be possible. Could the Lord Jesus Who sold all things to possess the Assembly and Who made Himself a servant to serve her, ever do without the Assembly or find complete satisfaction without her? Impossible! Not only did He accomplish the work on the cross, but now He also lives in heaven for her, to cleanse her and to sanctify her and to wait for that moment in which He will present her before Himself in glory. Could He be satisfied there without the Assembly? In Ephesians 1, we even see that He, without her, is not even *complete*, just as a head is not complete without a body. The Assembly is essential for His joy and His completeness. Does not this give us some idea of the value which the Assembly has for God and the vastness of His thoughts about her? We received these things as *personal* blessings.

Many theologians hold erroneous ideas about this subject. The Roman Catholic Church claims that such *personal* blessings do not exist. According to her, all blessings are connected with the (Roman) church, and outside of her, there is no salvation. But this conflicts with God's Word, which says that every sinner must *personally* repent. That has nothing to do with the church. Each individual must come with his or her sins and guilt to God and must *personally* believe in the Lord Jesus and *personally* accept the gospel to find peace with God. Each one must have *personal* fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus. These are all purely *personal* blessings.

Protestantism goes to the other extreme, by saying that *all* blessings are personal. Anyone who wants to meet with others simply looks for people who think the same, and together they form a church. If someone is not quite satisfied, he goes somewhere else. *All* blessings, so they claim, are purely personal. But that is just as much in conflict with God's Word as is the doctrine of the Roman Church.

In Scripture we see that there are indeed *personal* blessings, but there are also blessings which we can only enjoy because we belong to the Church, the body of Christ. The individual cannot enjoy these blessings, since they can only be enjoyed collectively, because we are members of the Assembly, the bride of Christ, the subject of all His love. But, as we saw in Ephesians 1, the Assembly is also His body; so that she shares everything with Him Who is the Head over all things. She possesses all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him.

It is wonderful that these blessings do not just hold true for this earth. These verses (Ephesians 1:22-23) in particular do not speak of the earth. We see here the Assembly according to God's counsel. In that form (i.e. with all members present. Ed.) she will only be on earth for a moment, for in this way she will only be complete when the Lord comes and all who sleep and belong to the Assembly have been raised. But this is also the moment in which she will be taken up into glory to be for ever with Him.

Often one hears the claim that the Assembly as the body of Christ has only significance for the earth. But the marvelous thing is that here this type or picture of the Assembly is expressly applied to the time when we are in glory. We will rule with Him over the universe only because we are *one* body with the Lord. Ephesians 1:22 is only connected with our future glory.¹

So we will be united with the Lord Jesus, not as individuals but collectively, as the Assembly. During the Millennium we will rule with Him. In the Father's House we will share everything with Him because we have been so united with Him that He could not possibly possess anything in which we would not have part. All that the Head possesses will also be enjoyed by the body. What a marvelous thought it is that we will be united with Him in this way for eternity.

But it is true that the Word of God speaks in other verses in a different way about the body of Christ, not as far as her character is concerned but as far as time is concerned. There is no doubt that in those places the Assembly is seen as the body of Christ here upon the earth since she is there seen in different circumstances than here in Ephesians 1. We see how the body came into being in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit." That means that the Assembly as the body of Christ has come into existence through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites all believers to each other and, at the same time, with Christ. On the day of Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit formed the Assembly, baptizing her into one body which is united with Christ, her Head in glory (Acts 2).

John the Baptist said in the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) that the Lord Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Then in Acts 1, we read that the Lord shortly before His ascension to heaven commanded His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but to await the promise of the Father which (He said) "ye have heard of Me. For John indeed baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit after now not many days" (vs. 4-5). The Lord thus told His disciples that "after not many days" they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and also that they had to wait in Jerusalem until this would be fulfilled. In Acts 2, we read that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and that the disciples were filled with Him.

After this we read only twice about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 11, Peter was asked to give account of his baptizing Cornelius and his house. Peter then said, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them even as upon us also at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God has given them the same gift as also to us when we had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?" (vs. 15-17). We see that at this first occasion after the day of Pentecost, when new mention is made of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, there is also a reference to the day of Pentecost. At that time, this baptism was fulfilled. The only other reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit is in 1 Corinthians 12:13. From this we see that the baptism with the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost and never afterwards; nor will it ever occur anymore.

¹ To be sure, God has given Christ as Head over the Assembly. He is her Head now. In title He is Head over all things today (Matthew 28:18), yet we do not see all things subjected to Him now (Hebrews 2:8), but we see Him seated at God's right hand until God effectually puts all His enemies as footstool of His feet (Hebrews 1:13). Only then will He as Head over all things exercise His dominion in connection with the Assembly; only then we shall reign with Him (Revelation 5:10). The Editor.

I say this so emphatically because in recent years the thought is often advanced that each believer ought to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. In this connection many things are referred to which, however, only confirm that the Assembly was formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. As result of the work of the Lord Jesus, the believers who together were there were baptized into one body. John 11:52 says that the Lord would not only die for the nation, but also that He would gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad. This gathering-into-one took place on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended only after the Lord Jesus had died and was glorified. John 7:39 says, "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." Through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the Assembly was formed. The Holy Spirit came upon the individual believers who were present there and baptized them into one body. From that moment on, they were united to each other and to Christ in the glory. That is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It has never, nor will it ever be repeated.

When someone is converted and accepts the gospel in faith so that he obtains peace with God, he personally receives the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes His abode in him and *thereby* he is added to this body so that from this moment on he is also a member of the body of Christ. But the Holy Spirit never calls this a baptism with the Holy Spirit; for this took place only once. I will try to make this clear with the help of an example. In the army a regiment is formed with a certain name. When 10 years later a young man joins this regiment, then he is part of it. But there is no need to form again this regiment; that happened only once. Because this soldier joined, he became part of this regiment. So it is with the Assembly.

But as I mentioned already, other places in God's Word speak of the body of Christ as it is today in practice upon the earth. Time and again, we can only be amazed about the correctness of the Word of God. It never contradicts itself and every word has its correct place and meaning. Sometimes one can hear the remark, "The Assembly is not at all complete at this time, is it? Many have already died and others will still be converted and become members." And then they use this argument to make the conclusions and the admonitions of the Word of God powerless.

However, it is amazingly beautiful that the Word of God always views the Assembly as the body of Christ as complete as long as it exists on earth. The body of Christ is never seen as a cripple. If the claim were true that, because many have died and still others have yet to be added, the *body* is still incomplete, then the body would be a cripple until the very last moment. But the body of Christ is not a cripple. It is perfect. Christ is the Head and the body is *always* complete.

But how can we explain that so many, who were members of that body and who in eternity will be members of the body, have yet died? If we carefully read the Word of God, it will give us a clear answer. I don't doubt that most believers would answer the question, "Where does the Holy Spirit live?" with words like, "in my heart, or in my soul, of course!" But God's Word does not tell us this. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 it says, "Do ye not know that your *body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God; and that you are not your own?"

So, we find that my *body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit causes me to be a member of the body of Christ, joining me to all true believers and to Christ in glory. This leads to a very simple conclusion. When a believer passes away, his body dies. The body is mortal whereas the spirit and the soul are not. But since *our bodies* are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are from the moment that we pass away no longer members of the body of Christ in actual practice.

It is just as with a regiment consisting of a certain number of soldiers. After a period of about two years, most of them may be sent home and others take their place. The regiment retains its full standing with all its privileges and duties although many of its original members are no longer present, having gone on furlough. Although they are in actual practice no longer members of the regiment, they still are so in principle; in case of war they are immediately called up to join the regiment.

In this sense, the body of Christ consists of all true believers living at a certain moment on earth. At this moment, it consists of those who are alive right now, and in ten minutes from now it consists of those who live then. It is likely that in the intervening ten minutes some have passed away and others have been added. But the body remains complete. If I may say so, those who passed away are on furlough but the moment will come that they will be called to return. When the Lord Jesus comes, their bodies will be raised, the bodies in which the Holy Spirit dwells, and immediately they will once more be actual members of the body. So the whole body will be complete but in a different sense. Then it will consist of all believers from Pentecost until the moment of the rapture. In this way it will be for ever in glory.

To be cont'd.

Him Who knew not sin He has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

Some time ago one of our readers asked whether we could write about this verse in COME AND SEE. With the help of God let us look at this important verse.

The thought expressed in these words comes at the end of a discourse in which the Apostle Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, has presented what God has done. In verse 19 we read that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses." This is the contents of the message that every Christian may carry to his fellowman. Asking, pleading, "Be ye reconciled to God."

And then follows the verse we want to look at. It is presented as the means whereby God has reconciled the world to Himself, the basis upon which each individual can be reconciled to God. Someone else has been made sin for us. God has given His Son.

The Lord Jesus is introduced to us as "the One Who knew not sin." From John 1:18 we know the Lord as the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father. This verse does not just refer to the time (including eternity past) prior to the Lord's incarnation, but also to the time He walked on earth. He always was the Son in the bosom of the Father, the Son of man Who *is* (not Who *was*) in heaven (John 3:13). Of course, He knew not sin when He was in heaven before His walk on earth. But perhaps this needs to be clarified. Does God not know sin? God certainly is aware that man has sinned, isn't He? Of course God is. But the sense in which the verb "to know" is used here is similar to the way it is used in Matthew 25:12. There the Lord says, "I know you not." Obviously God knows each of His creatures, in the sense that He is aware of them and knows their attitude; He has made them, He pleads with them to be reconciled with Him. And yet He says, "I know you not." With these words, God expresses His complete lack of fellowship and identification with each person that has not come to the Lord Jesus with repentance. God has nothing in common with them, or perhaps better, they have nothing in common with Him; they are foreign to His character and nature.

And so it is with Sin. It is completely foreign to the nature of God; there is no point of contact, of fellowship. What fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14).

So, when the Lord Jesus was in heaven He did of course not know sin. But this really is not the sense of our verse although it is a true observation. The verse refers to the Lord Jesus' not-knowing-sin when He walked as Man here on the earth. As we read it in Hebrews 4:15, "Tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart," or: "Yet without sin." There was no sin in the Lord Jesus. Before His birth, the angel spoke to Mary of Him as, "the Holy Thing which shall be born." His life was a demonstration of His holiness and sinlessness.

But let us first pay attention to another point that might easily be overlooked. Our verse says, "Who knew not *sin*." It does not say, "Who knew no *sins*." That would have been a true statement also, but it does not go as far as the first one. What is the difference? *Sin* in the singular, refers to the force within every person who does not know the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour that works in him and causes him to sin. Romans 6:12 says, "Let not *sin* therefore *reign* in your mortal body." *Sin* can reign, and does reign in every unconverted person, whereas in those who are converted its force has been broken, a believer does not have to be ruled by sin.

Sin is a principle of life, its fruits are the sins we commit, the wrong deeds we do, the wrong thoughts we have. As apples grow on the apple-tree so *sins* grow on the tree of *sin* which is in us. That is an important difference. When you do wrong things, when you sin, God can forgive your sins, the wrong deeds you did. But what is God going to do with the evil within us that produced that fruit? God cannot forgive that, He must condemn it. And so we read in Romans 8:3, "God ... has condemned sin in the flesh." And in the same verse we read how God has done this, "Having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of *sin*, and for *sin*." And here again every word is of vital importance. If we would leave out the word likeness, the verse would claim that the Lord Himself had sinful flesh, a terrible blasphemous thought. Outwardly He may have appeared to be the same as every other man, He may have looked like them, but there was a most important distinction: He was without sin. His life proved it to be so. He was the only Man who could say, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him (to My Father)." No man can repeat that! Satan tried to find a point of contact when he tempted the Lord in the wilderness (Luke 4). Satan tried to produce *sins*, but failed utterly. Why? There was no *sin* in the Lord Jesus, and therefore He did not commit any *sins*. So Satan left Him for a time. He returned to the Lord in that time to which the Lord refers as, "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). But once more Satan failed, once more — and this time even unto death — he tried to find a point of attack in our Lord. Gloriously our Lord withstood that test and He was

"obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross." It had been fully demonstrated that He came only in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, but *sin* did not dwell in Him, He was sinless!

Now we return to Romans 8:3, "God... has condemned *sin* in the flesh." And we read, "God... sent (His own Son) for *sin*." What would happen if God condemned *sin* in me? I would die, there is no other way! But God has no delight in the death of the sinner (Ezekiel 33:11). And at this point the message of our verse comes in. God has made Christ *sin* for us. That is something different from what we read in 1 Peter 2:24, "Who Himself bore our *sins* in His body on the tree." That is a different aspect, a different view of the work of the Lord Jesus. In our verse we see the Lord made *sin*, which means that God made Him the source of all these awful sins we have done. And then God condemned Him. He had to die, for the wages of *sin* (not *sins*) is death. But His death has for everyone who believes in Him a glorious result: they are free from the law of *sin* and death (Romans 8:2). They are free from a law that is as certain as the law of gravity; for that is the sense of the word law here. It is a normal rule of cause and effect: You have sin indwelling? — then you *must* die! There is no escaping from this rule, this law. That is to say: there is no escaping apart from the death of Christ. For those, and only those, who are in Christ Jesus have been set free from this law of cause and effect. They have received eternal life in the Son (1 John 5:11, 13, 20). That is the basis upon which God can entreat man to be reconciled to God.

This covered the first part of the verse. Now Paul continues and he says, "That *we*..." First we should observe that he is going to give a reason why God has made Christ sin for us. God had a purpose in mind. Now every single purpose of God always has His glory in view, each purpose of His shows His greatness, His holiness, His righteousness. Here the accent is on God's righteousness. But first let us notice that Paul accentuates the word *we*. Whenever he (or rather the Holy Spirit) does this, it is to stress the point that it is not for *all men*. True it is available to all men, but it takes only effect upon those who have come to be reconciled to God. This verse is certainly not applicable to man in general. This we can see in Romans 3:22 where it says that "righteousness of God (has been manifested) by faith of Jesus Christ *towards all*, and *upon all those who believe*." It is similar to what we see so often today. A firm mails saving coupons to every household in town; anyone who takes their coupons to the supermarket will get a 10c discount. It is not sufficient to buy the product, the coupon must be taken to the supermarket and presented, the conditions must be met. The coupons were sent to all, but the effect is only upon all who presented the coupon. So it is with the righteousness of God, it is only *upon all those who believe*. That is why Paul emphasizes the *we* (i.e. those who believed).

"That we might become God's righteousness." I wish we were sitting face to face with each other, and that you could hear the comments from the different readers. For someone is bound to say, "You should write that different; you should never omit the words 'in Him.'" That comment is worth gold. For it stresses perhaps the most important point in this part of the verse. It is not possible to separate the word *righteousness* from the words *in Him* without losing the sense of the sentence. It touches the whole meaning of the verse. Whenever we find these two words *in Him* in the New Testament they are most important. They may appear somewhat differently elsewhere. In Ephesians we read, "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies *in Christ*; according as He has chosen us *in Him*." "He has taken us into favour *in the Beloved*." "In Him, *in Whom* we have also obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:3, 4, 6, 11). There are other places, but these will suffice to show that all our blessings are *in Christ*. In the first place this shows us that we are considered to come under a new head (1 Corinthians 15:47-50). We belong to Christ and possess His qualities and share His blessings. This thought comes out in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31. "But of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, Who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption." This verse gives a good deal of light on the verse we are considering. It presents us as now being in Christ Jesus. It is a present fact, not a thing to be expected at some future date. With our own feelings we would think, "Well, someday I will be holy, wise, and righteous but for now I am none of these things." But if we have faith, we may repeat what God says of us, "Ye *are* righteous *in Christ*." If your answer is, "My experience is different, I discover time and again that I am not righteous and neither are my brethren in Christ," such an answer shows that you have not really understood what is meant by these verses. Our being in Christ does not refer to what we practically display in this world, but to what we have become in the sight of God. God is righteous when He justifies us (Romans 3:26), for Christ has borne all our sins and has been made sin for us. "Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect?" (Romans 8:33). These two words, "in Christ," have to do with our position before God as redeemed people, bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). This does not mean that it is not important how we behave, but it does not affect our position before God: we are in Christ and there is now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). And that is because they are the righteousness of God in Him.

Romans 6:11 says, "reckon yourselves dead to sin." We may reckon ourselves dead to sin, because of the work of the Lord Jesus. The beginning of the same chapter says this, "We... have died to sin... as many as have been baptized unto Christ Jesus, have been baptized unto His death." "Our old man has been crucified with Him." All these verses show our true position before God. Death has brought an end to sin in the flesh. God counts us as having died with Christ.

But God also counts us as possessing a new life, we are alive to God *in Christ Jesus* (Romans 6:11). This new life does not sin (1 John 3:6) it only does the things that please God. Our old nature, sin in our flesh, may at times cause us to sin (and

truly, that is our experience). Whenever we sin it is because we let our sinful nature to which we should reckon ourselves dead, have its way, but God has judged it already on the cross. And though we will certainly lose out in fellowship with our heavenly Father, and in peace of mind, we cannot lose our position in Christ, forever we remain in Him (1 John 3:9).

This really is the end of our consideration but I like to look a moment at a rather similar, and yet so different clause found in Colossians 1:27, "*Christ in you* the hope of glory." Here it is not "ye in Christ" but just the reverse. What is the distinction between these two expressions? *Christ in us* has to do with our practical behaviour here on earth. Do we practically follow Him? Can He be seen in us, by our fellow men, by God? All these are important questions which affect our fellowship with God on a day to day basis, but they do not affect our place with God, the fact that we are sons of God, that we are justified and righteous before Him. So "*Christ in us*" relates to our practical *condition* whereas "*we in Christ*" of which 2 Corinthians 5:21 speaks relates to our *position* which we received when we came with repentance to God and received the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. At that time God completed a perfect work in us; He placed us in Christ and made us a new creation.

When you realize that this is what God has done for us don't you feel a longing in your heart to show in a practical way, your righteousness (which is Christ)? If He can be seen in our lives there will be glory and praise to God. That also seems to be the thought found with Paul, for in 1 Corinthians 6 he starts to speak of the practical Christian life. "We beseech that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." God has given us so much; let us see to it that there is the practical realization of it. Not that that would become our righteousness. Christ is our righteousness and our acceptance with God rests never upon what we have practically realized in this world but solely upon the work of Christ. "For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our eternal security rests upon Him only, whereas our reward will vary according to our personal faithfulness.