

JUDE (17)

— H. L. Heijkoop

But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. — vv. 20-21.

These are the resources of God for the saints — the means whereby they can be kept during difficult times. Just as in Nehemiah, we see here that we have to fight incessantly against the enemy if we are to contend for the truth once delivered to the saints. But at the same time, we have to build. We have to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. The sword in one hand and the trowel in the other (Neh. 4).

Despite the confusion all around, there is no need to be downcast, to be discouraged, or to go about groping our way. God gave us these terrible descriptions of the evil, lest we would be led astray. God wants us to know what the true condition of Christianity is in His eye. He does not want us to have any illusions about things, nor have us evaluate matters wrongfully. And having thus prepared us, He admonishes us to build ourselves up.

Then we are told to build ourselves up. And we may ask on what shall we build and wherewith shall we do it? On the only secure thing available: "God... and the Word of His grace, which is able to build [you] up and give [to you] an inheritance among all the sanctified." That is how the apostle Paul expressed it in Acts 20. We are not directed to leaders and teachers! Insofar as these are mentioned in this epistle, they are evil men, deceivers. It isn't that there were and are no good and reliable ones, but many were then, as they are now, just as described in the previous verses and several other portions of the Word. The saints are addressed directly, and they are pointed directly to the infallible guide, and the immovable rock: the Word of God. We are not dependent upon men. We should not surrender our privileges, or believe that we can no longer be as fortunate, since today is a day of decline and apostasy. We are called to more faith than in the days when all was well, for faith shines never brighter than in days of darkness. We have to hold fast what we have received: that we are beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ (v. 1). We must hold fast all that we know that God has done for us, all that God has revealed to us. We must hold fast all those things wherein the power of the truth to sanctification will make itself known to those who truly accept this *faith*.

While considering verse 3 we saw the great distinction between "faith" and "*the faith*." "Faith" is the spiritual strength within each believer that accepts what God has spoken. "*The faith*" is that which God has spoken and which our "faith" must believe; this latter word is meant here. Just as in verse 3, it encompasses the whole Word of God, the Bible, but more particularly the *Christian* truth, those things the Old-Testament saints did not possess, which have been revealed in the New Testament. Here we are admonished not just to contend for it, as in verse 3, but to build ourselves up on it. That which is within ourselves (i.e. our faith) is not a firm ground to build on. We must rest on the great truths of Christianity as the source of strength for our souls. By these we must be edified, and these must fill our hearts with the thoughts of God revealed in His Word, that Word whereby we have been sanctified. Thus, securely resting on the divine foundation, we will be strong for the battle to which we have been called.

This is the only place in the Bible where the faith is called "the most holy faith." One might feel this terminology better suited for such an epistle as that to the Ephesians, the epistle addressed to "*the saints and faithful* in Christ Jesus." Human nature is inclined to remove the fine lines when faced with opposition, but God never does so. Particularly in the epistle which depicts the decline most vividly, which prophetically describes the time in which we live — a time during which one can hardly find a group of believing Christians in this world that does not practice Bible criticism; that still accepts the Word of God as being fully inspired — particularly in this epistle the Word is called "the most holy faith." The more everything in Christendom is in decline, and the more the apostasy manifests itself, the more that Word stands out as holy (separated, distinct). It never goes along with man in his departures; it stands alone, and remains so eternally as the immovable rock: "From Thy testimonies, I have known of old that Thou hast founded them for ever"! (Ps. 119:152).

We must contend for that Word: that faith once delivered to the saints. We must build ourselves up with it and on it. We must learn anew that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth" (Mt. 4:4). Many are still willing to believe the Bible *partially*. Others, who don't go quite so far in their pronouncements on inspiration, reject certain portions as no longer practicable in our times. Do we live by *every* Word of God that has proceeded from His mouth? Do we hold to *every* utterance, feeding ourselves with it? This involves an industrious reading of the Word in all its sanctifying power and our feeding upon it. Jehovah Himself instructed Joshua to do so when He put

him at the head of His army to lead Israel in the battle, "This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth; and thou shalt meditate upon it day and night, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all that is written therein; for then shalt thou have good success in thy ways, and then shalt thou prosper" (Josh. 1:8).

praying in [the] Holy Spirit

God's Word and prayer are always seen together. Both are needed for a healthy spiritual life and sound growth in faith. The reading and study of the Word without prayer leads to legalism, and prayer alone, without any study of the Word, leads to fanaticism. But the reading of the Word in a dependent spirit leads us to prayer, for through it we become increasingly aware of our dependence. Thus we get more and more subjects not only to pray about, but especially to give thanks for.

Here praying in Holy Spirit is mentioned. Again there is no article in the Greek. It therefore means that prayer must be characterized by the Holy Spirit. Such prayer always flows from a humble sense of need, and an awareness of His presence. It is a conscious asking for His will. It also is the evidence of the intercession by the Holy Spirit within us (Rom. 8:25; Jn. 14:16).

This is clearly in contrast with verse 19, where it is said of those who got in unnoticed that they did not have [the] Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the most characteristic feature of the Christian and the Assembly. Thereby they are distinguished, not only from unbelievers, but also from the Old-Testament believers, and from the believers living after the rapture of the Assembly. Praying in the Holy Spirit is therefore prayer in its true and full character. Then, the Holy Spirit is the power of the prayer, and the things prayed for are the longings directly worked by the Holy Spirit, and therefore they are entirely according to His will and thoughts. It may even be true that we ourselves don't know what to pray for as is fitting, but that the Spirit Himself prays with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). But such prayers will always agree with God's thoughts, and will therefore always be answered. The Holy Spirit has come to earth to glorify the Lord Jesus. Therefore He will only pray for those things that will glorify the Lord. And it is the Father's joy to answer such prayers, for He too seeks the honour of the Son (Jn. 16:14; 8:50).

From this all follows that praying while in doubt about the will of the Lord, such as Paul did when he asked God to remove the thorn in his flesh, is not praying in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 12:7-10). But after the Lord had given him an answer refusing his request, he prayed in the Holy Spirit.

Does this mean then that we are only allowed to pray if we are sure of the will of the Lord? Fortunately not! How seldom could we pray if this were so, for we are not all, and not always, so close to the Lord and so spiritual that we only want what He desires, and *know* what His will is. Scripture says, "Be careful about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). But Scripture does not add that all these prayers will be answered, but that "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus." God rejoices when young believers, or believers who have in a spiritual sense remained "little children" (Heb. 5:11-14) come to Him with all that occupies their hearts. It is proof that they feel their dependence upon Him and that they trust Him. God loves to hear their prayers, even when their desires are actually foolish and His love cannot answer them, because to do so would be bad for them.

There are many reasons why our prayer may not be a praying in Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 4 one reason is mentioned: when we grieve the Holy Spirit because there is bitterness, anger, wrath . . . railing, evil or unrighteousness found with us (Ps. 66:18; Isa. 59:1-2). Other reasons are mentioned in John 15:7; Proverbs 21:13 and James 4:3. The Holy Spirit is not One who caters to our desires to satisfy our natural lusts.

In 1 John 5:14, 15 and Psalm 37:4 another prerequisite for answered prayer is mentioned. We must pray according to the will of the Father. For this, we must not only be familiar with the Word of God, but besides this, we must be in fellowship with the Father. First we must know from the Word that a certain thing is according to the will of God. But then we must learn through communion with Him whether it is His will for us personally at that time. Well, once we know this, the Holy Spirit gives us the thoughts and the words to express them. Then He is also the power of our prayer.

It is a blessed thing that we may go to God with *all* our wants. But the simplest way is, to cast all our cares upon God and then to pray in the Holy Spirit. In the time of decline and apostasy in which we live, this is especially needful. Only then will God be able to answer all our prayers. And because they are prayers in the Holy Spirit, the Lord will be glorified by them, all the more in this time in which His name is so often dishonoured, even by those who call themselves Christians.

Keep yourselves in [the] love of God.

In verse 1, love and keeping were used in the passive form; we are being loved and kept. But here it is active: we must keep ourselves in the love of God. And the unusual order of words in the Greek text even emphasizes this aspect. The word "kept" is in a tense (the aorist) which indicates that we must seek to be in such a condition.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 shows what the intent is. There it is written: "The Lord directs your hearts to the love of God... "We are the objects of the love of God and God's love does not need encouragement from our side. God commends His love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us (Rom. 5:8) when there was as yet nothing in us that could arouse His love. God's love has its source within itself. But our awareness of that love is not unchangeable. When all around us is in decay — even that of which the Scriptures say that Christ loved it and gave Himself for it, the Assembly — then there is the danger that we lose the consciousness of the love of God.

The proof that God is love and loves us, we find outside ourselves. See for instance John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and I John 4:9-10. But the essential thing here is the inner, practical consciousness that God loves *me*. God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom. 5:5). It remains alive and strong, when my heart focuses on that love, occupying itself with it. But this I can only do when there is nothing between my heart and God; when there is practical fellowship. This is why the two preceding things, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit" were mentioned as prerequisites for it; they are the means whereby we can do it. In Romans 8:31-39 we see someone, the apostle Paul, keeping himself in the love of God. Yet, there it concerns more the general love of God to all His own, rather than the practical awareness of the love for me personally.

It is a great thing to live in the inner consciousness that God loves me. It is the secret of a restful and blessed happiness in the presence of God. Who can be unhappy, no matter what the circumstances are, when he realizes within his heart that the Father loves him with the same love with which He loved the Lord Jesus (Jn. 17:23)? Such consciousness causes the heart to have holy sentiments both toward God and toward the brothers and sisters (cf. Jn. 15:9-12).

Awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Speaking of verse 2 we saw that grace is connected with the disposition of God towards guilty persons, whereas mercy is connected with our needs. These needs in turn are connected with the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We live in the midst of a general decline. Things will not become any better but rather worse, until the Lord comes to take us out of these circumstances and to bring us into His glory. It will, therefore, become more and more difficult for us unless the Lord comes soon. We ourselves have no strength to remain standing or to conquer the difficulties. But we can count on the mercy of the Lord. He was once in the same circumstances. He too was in the midst of those who called themselves the people of God but who were in reality in open rebellion against Him. He knows what that is for the human heart that desires to be faithful. He also knows by experience with what wiles the devil tries to draw us away and to mislead us. He was in all things tempted, apart from sin. Therefore He can be the Leader of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), and a faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16). He knows our needs in these circumstances, and His mercy will give us all we need. We can be sure of this. God calls whomsoever He wants to His house. He has called me on the basis of His mercy. It is His mercy that has made the distinction between those who remain standing and those who fall (Ex. 33:19). This is my security. He who has called me is responsible in every difficulty. I may not know how to cope with all difficulties, but He who calls will provide all that is needed. I will certainly reach the end and enter into heavenly perfection.

Some limit the extent of this sentence to the coming of the Lord to take His own to Himself in glory. There is indeed reason to think so. The Greek word translated by "awaiting" is usually used in this sense in the New Testament (See Ti. 2:13; Acts 24:15; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 2:25; 12:36; 22:51). And when we look at the circumstances in the world, and more particularly at those in Christendom, and our position in the midst of them, will it then not be mercy when the Lord delivers us out of it? Peter speaks of "the grace which will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). Paul writes about "the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ [as] Saviour, who will change our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory" (Phil. 3:20-21). What a moment that will be, when His voice will sound, and we will put on incorruptibility and immortality; when we, leaving all here behind, will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him forever (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Th. 4:15-17).

Yet, I think we should not restrict it to this. When we keep ourselves in the love of God, we may expect the help, the mercy of the Lord in every circumstance, until we have entered eternal life (the full revelation of eternal life in glory). As far as I see, it is said in view of the entire pathway, from today until we are with the Lord.

From this verse we see that Jude, just as Paul, sees eternal life more in its perfectness, as a future thing. In the epistles of John it is presented as the present possession of every believer, of the babies in Christ as well as of the fathers (e.g. 1 Jn. 5:11-13).

We could perhaps say that in verses 20 and 21 we have faith, love and hope, the three great moral principles which, according to 1 Corinthians 13:13 and other places, characterize Christendom. Yet, it is not entirely the same, for 1 Corinthians 13 speaks about *our* faith, the moral power within us that accepts what God says, that which is presented in Hebrews 11:1. But we saw that here it speaks of *the* faith; the content of faith, that what we believe.

Similarly it is sometimes stated that we find here the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But this too is, strictly spoken, not correct. True enough, there is mention here of the Holy Spirit, of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is true that we know the Father only as God. We know the Lord Jesus also as the One who in infinite grace became Man. We know the Holy Spirit also, as condescending, taking voluntarily a place of lowliness, as the One who let Himself be sent by the Father and the Son. But the Father we know only as God in His absolute glory and majesty. But this is not to say that every reference of God speaks of the Father. If the context does not somehow make it clear, we must understand the expression God to be the triune God. For instance in 1 Corinthians 15:24 the Lord hands the kingdom over to the Father. This is repeated in verse 28: "Then the Son also Himself shall be placed in subjection to Him who put all things in subjection to Him, that *God* may be all in all." This latter reference to God is not the *Father* but God, the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Similarly, it doesn't say in Jude :21 "the *Father*," but "God." If we read this verse together with for instance John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:8-10, I believe that it will be clear that we have here a display of the love of the triune God.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (17)

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea 11 — The calling of God that is without repentance.

Comparing His earthly people Israel to a vineyard, God can testify that He has done all that was required to secure plenty of good fruit. Yet, Jehovah had to say by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah that the vineyard produced only wild grapes and therefore is given up to be wasted (Isa. 5:1-7).

But then Christ, the Messiah, comes on earth and presents Himself before God producing *perfect fruit*. It is as if with Christ Israel's history begins all anew. In Him we have before us a history of sheer moral glory. He is the *true* Vine. When it is a question of God's counsels, God had Christ in view from all eternity. It is through Christ that Israel will eventually be revived. For Christ's sake God will show grace to an unfaithful and guilty nation, and gloriously restore it.

vv. 1-4.

When Israel was still a child, which means when *Israel's existence as a nation was at its very beginning*, God loved the people and called His son, Israel, out of Egypt, saving him out of Egypt with power and might. This entirely agrees with the words which Jehovah had spoken to Pharaoh by means of Moses: "Thus says Jehovah: Israel is My son, My firstborn... Let My son go" (Ex. 4:22-23). On the basis of Christ's work of redemption and salvation to be accomplished centuries later, God could act this way toward Israel. The blood of the Paschal lamb killed in the night they were delivered from Egypt speaks convincingly about this. How wonderful too, that it could be said literally, both of the nation Israel and of the Son of God, "Out of Egypt have I called My son" (Mt. 2:15). But, among other things, there is this distinction: the son Israel was called from Egypt *to be delivered*; Christ the Son, *to be the Deliverer*.

It is touching how God reminds the unfaithful people, attached as it was to its idols and sins, how He loved it in the beginning of their existence as a nation. But even more touching is it to note *how God, as it were, reminds Himself of this earlier love*, and that at a time when the condition of the people was hopeless, and judgment stood at the door.

Hosea introduces Jehovah speaking. In a monologue, we hear of the love that fills the heart of God. This love deliberates, looks back, considering Israel in its first existence. To this nation Jehovah had attached His name. He had shown mercy to this enslaved nation, known their sorrows, listened to their cry. And He had come down to deliver these people. What a love is therefore encompassed in this first verse! How should it have made the people blush.

Verse 2 is not very clear. The sense is this: They, the prophets, called the people, but the more they were called, the more the people turned away from the prophets. They, the people, sacrificed to Baal and burned incense to carved images. The verse therefore shows how much God had already done to the people.

Despite all the unfaithfulness of the people, Jehovah had not withdrawn Himself from them. He had taught Ephraim to walk, carried the nation on His arms, but they did not recognize that He healed them. With the ties of men, with cords of love He had wanted to draw them to Himself. He had broken their yoke and fed them. His love had thought of everything, but their response had been indifference and unthankfulness.

vv. 5-7.

When the people experienced difficulties during the wilderness journey they longed back to Egypt. They wanted to appoint a leader to bring them back there. And so it had been after their entrance into Canaan. Ephraim as well as Judah, sought time and again help from Egypt. They did not take into account that *God* had called them out of Egypt with the intention that they would never again return there. In verse 5 the prophet says therefore that nothing will come of their returning to Egypt. As judgment upon their idolatry and other sins they would be carried away to distant lands where the Assyrians would rule over them. This was because they did not want to repent. Had they judged themselves and turned repentantly to Jehovah, God would have spared them this judgment, this definite termination of the ten-tribe nation. But now the sword, war, would come over their cities and fortresses (the bars to lock the gate), consuming and destroying everything; all because of their counsels (v. 6).

There are various readings of verse 7. To me the sense seems to be: My people continue to turn against Me. They, the prophets, do indeed call the people to come to the Most High, but none of them rises up¹, everybody turns a deaf ear and remains where he is. The measure of unrighteousness was full indeed.

vv. 8-11.

Verse 8 is a beautiful transition. *It brings God's unchangeable counsels to our attention.* When God, in judgment, must go deep ways with a people that He loves, and to whom His honour and name are attached, then everything in His heart revolts against it. Thus Jehovah speaks, "How shall I give thee over, Ephraim? [How] shall I deliver thee up, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah?, how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"

Would God do with Israel what He has done with the Canaanitish kings of Admah and Zeboim in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:2; Dt. 29:23)? No! Though the sins of Israel, which consisted largely of non-born again persons whom God had called out of Egypt, compelled God to judge this nation, since He is the Holy One, who cannot see sin. But even so, this judgment did not spell the definite end of Israel's existence as a nation. *God had another, a new Israel before Him*, the Object of His counsels. In the Person of Jesus Christ God called a new Israel out of Egypt. For His sake God can show grace to this new Israel that would be a nation fulfilling all God's righteous and holy requirements. The vine, the *former* Israel, called by the Lord and planted in Canaan, had only produced wild fruits, fruit for itself. Therefore the judgment had come over this people. But in His time, God will plant the *true* Vine, called out of Egypt. By putting the judgment over sin upon Him, upon Christ, the basis for the existence as a nation of the new Israel has been established. Through the work of Christ on the cross it is possible to show grace to the remnant out of Israel without shortchanging God's holiness and righteousness. The full result of this grace will be seen in the Millennium.

Looking at this remnant, the Lord says therefore, "My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together." The NASB has here, "My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled." We believe that the latter gives the true sense; it not a question of repentance on the part of God.

God's counsels are applicable to this remnant of Israel. Nothing can hinder God's faithfulness. The gifts and the calling of God [are] not subject to repentance (Rom. 11:29). He will perform truth to Jacob, loving-kindness to Abraham, which He has sworn unto the fathers, from days of old (Mic. 7:20).

Verse 9 says that God will not execute His anger towards the remnant of the new Israel, destroying Ephraim again. A time will come in which God's ways with Israel will change. If now it is still under the judgment of the Lord, later He will give

¹ *Translators Note: The KJV, NASB, and NT give variations of the thought: None at all would exalt the Lord. The NIV renders it: "He [i.e. the Most High] will by no means exalt them.*

free rein to His loving-kindness toward this people. He is God, and not a man. Wrath is not a part of His Being. He was the Holy One in the midst of Israel, and the people did certainly experience this. But God is love and He is moved with compassion.

The end of verse 9 is in the KJV, "I will not enter into the city"; that is with the purpose of destroying it. The NT has, "I will not come in anger." God can do so, for He looks upon Christ who has suffered for sin. For His sake, God will not show wrath but mercy to the remnant of Israel (Isa. 10:21-22).

This mercy of God is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to Israel as God, as Immanuel, not to judge the nation, but to reveal to it what was found in the heart of God. What a change, therefore, has been brought about by the coming, or rather by the death of Christ, not just for the future, new Israel, but for all men.

Verses 10 and 11 present the outcome of the Lord's ways with His people. Evidently both Israel, the ten, as well as Judah, the two tribes, are referred to here. The result will be, *that a new Israel of twelve tribes will be brought back to the land*. Jehovah will thereby fulfil his promises to Abraham. He will make a new, eternal, covenant with the remnant of the twelve tribes, which will be cleansed from sin when there will be "a fountain (a provision) opened... for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). The entire blessing of this remnant rests solely on the sovereign grace of God. Under the covenant of Sinai, Israel had acted unfaithfully from the very beginning. But the new covenant with this people — actually an entirely one-sided covenant, for all emanates from God alone — is based on the blood of the great Shepherd of the sheep (Ezek. 37:26; Isa. 55:3; Heb. 13:20).

The remnant will follow the Lord. Their desire will be to walk in the ways of the Lord. His thoughts will be precious to them, for God will write His law in their hearts. The Lord, the Lion of Judah, will roar, letting His mighty voice be heard. This roaring, however, will not be against the remnant, but against the nations who oppressed Israel. The "children," or "sons," will trust in this "roaring" of the Lord. For the demise of the power of the nations and the eradication of the great mass of the unbelieving Jews of the two tribes and of the unbelieving Israelites of the ten tribes signifies blessing and exaltation for the remnants. These "sons" will come from the west (Judah) and from the land of Assyria (Israel), but they will come *trembling*, shy as a bird, because of the Lord's majesty.

The chapter's closing remarks do therefore not speak of an all-consuming judgment over Israel's existence as a nation, but of compassion. This is because Christ would soon appear; this the prophet announced in veiled terms. But first the national return of the two tribes to the land will take place. At the time when these pages were written, this return had begun; after many centuries Israel is once again an independent nation. By far the greater part of the Jews who have returned don't believe, however; they are totally estranged from God. They will become a prey to the idolatry of the antichrist and will be eradicated. A remnant of these two tribes, however, will be saved; they will not perish in death, but will enter the blessing of Christ's kingdom.

The return of *the elect of the ten tribes* will only take place after the appearance of the Son of man in power and glory, when the kingdom of Christ has been established (Mt. 24:31). Then all Israel (i.e. *all tribes*, not person for person) will be saved (Rom. 11:26). Then the remnant out of the two and the ten tribes together will form the new Israel. All will know the Lord and be born again. They will dwell in their houses in peace.

This may seem impossible in the eyes of the world and of the political leaders, yes, even in the eyes of many of today's believers, but it is not impossible with God. The prophet Zechariah says it this way, "If it be wonderful in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be wonderful in Mine eyes? saith Jehovah of hosts: Behold, I will save My people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness" (Zech. 8:6-8).

Many may resist this solution to the age-old "Middle-East question," but this will be of little avail. The Lord of hosts addresses these know-it-alls: "Let all flesh be silent before Jehovah; for He is risen up out of His holy habitation" (Zech. 2:13).

The future of this new Israel is safe in the hands of Jehovah, the eternally faithful One. All that opposes it will be cast down.

With verse 12 of this chapter a new division begins. This is recognized in many foreign translations where verse 12 is verse 1 of chapter 12. Both the NASB and the NIV recognize this fact in their text arrangement, though they keep the traditional division between chapter 11 and 12. We will therefore consider verse 12 together with the next chapter.

To be cont'd

EDIFICATION (*A Composition*)

The Royal Priesthood

—*J. van Dijk*

In 1 Peter 2:5 we read that upon Christ, the believers are "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The exercise of this priesthood, though not restricted to the occasion when believers meet to remember the Lord in His death, is certainly more in evidence at that occasion than at any other time.

Now, we also read, "But ye [are] a chosen race, a kingly priesthood... that ye might set forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness to His wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Again, without being restricted to it, this royal priesthood is preeminently exercised when Christians meet together for edification as described in 1 Corinthians 14. Both our holy priesthood and our royal priesthood are exercised while the Lord's people are gathered around Himself. While in their midst, He uses the gifts with which He has endowed the Assembly to glorify the Father and to build up His people.

Within the Assembly proper exercise of either priesthood is dependent upon the liberty of the Spirit to use whomsoever He will (1 Cor. 12:11). If we recognize that any form of human arrangement hinders the exercise of our holy priesthood, we should realize that similarly it hinders the exercise of our royal priesthood. There is a complete parallel. But the Spirit is not only sufficient, more than that, He is the only one *competent* to lead in worship, and so He is when it comes to the edification of the body of Christ. The pattern He uses both for worship and edification is given us in 1 Corinthians 14. Finally, let us remember: As long as he is on earth, the Christian's need for edification will always be greater than his ability to worship.

Let us meet for prayer — acknowledging our need to Him.

Let us meet for edification — having our needs met by Him.

Let us remember our Lord — with humble hearts filled by and for Him.

The Open Ministry Meeting

—*J. T Mawson*

Having come together for edification, we must recognize, not that so many or so few gifted men are present and that our time of profit will be great or small in consequence, but that the Lord is there, and the Holy Spirit. If the Lord's presence is realized, songs of praise will surely rise and expectation from Himself will mark all present, and He will not disappoint those who wait upon Him. The ministry given will not be something labouriously prepared for the occasion as though this were a matter of individual service, but it will be fresh and spontaneous, because it is from the Lord for the moment. Five words given of that character will be better than ten thousand drawn from memory, for they will be a fresh springing up and flowing forth of living water, and not the pumping up out of a stagnant pool.

When should these meetings be held? This is an important question. In some places they are held once a month, or once a quarter, or once a year. But if we take our guidance from 1 Corinthians 14, shall we be satisfied with this? Is it not clear from the chapter that such meetings were the regular gatherings of that assembly and were held certainly not less than those for the taking of the Lord's Supper? They were not special occasions held when Paul and Apollos could be present, but the ordinary every week meetings of the local assembly. What warrant have we for taking up these meetings if we are not prepared to take them up according to Scripture? It is sad that in so many places there is neither faith nor power for such meetings now, but if there is faith and power for the gatherings together of 1 Corinthians 11, why not for those of 1 Corinthians 14? It is the same Lord who presides at both gatherings, and faith has to do with Him, and it is the same Spirit who is present at both, and all power is in Him. Much failure evidently marked this special meeting at Corinth, but the apostle did not tell the Corinthians to cease to hold it because of this, but instructed them how to conduct themselves in it. The chapter is there in the God-breathed Scriptures for our instruction also, and it is specially said to be the commandment of the Lord. It is a sad thing when it has become a dead or useless chapter to us because of lack of faith on our part.

Meetings for Edification

—*W. Trotter*

There are lessons as to the practical guidance of the Holy Spirit which can only be learned practically. It is often said that experience is the best teacher. This may perhaps be questioned, and rightly so; but there can be no question that experience makes us conscious of wants which divine teaching alone supplies. The doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in "the body, the Church," and its consequence of His presence and supremacy in the assemblies of the saints, is one of the most momentous truths by which the present period is distinguished. The virtual or actual denial of it constitutes one of the most serious features of the apostasy which we see around us.

Whatever takes place in a meeting for mutual edification ought to be the fruit of communion. If I am to read a chapter of the Word, I have no need to look through my Bible to find a suitable chapter; but being more or less acquainted with the Word, the Spirit of God brings to my mind the portions He would have me read. And so it is if a hymn is to be sung. I may, indeed, have a given chapter laid on my heart, and may, from imperfect acquaintance with my Bible, need to look for it — and so for a hymn — but this is clearly the only object one can rightly have in turning over the pages when assembled on the ground of mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit for mutual edification.

Also, it would follow that when any one was seen opening his Bible or hymn book, it would be known to be with the thought of reading a portion of the Word, or giving out a hymn. The word, "So that, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait for one another" (1 Cor. 11:33), would then preclude the thought of anyone else taking part in the meeting, till the brother who had evinced his thought of doing so had either carried it into effect or laid it aside.

Though 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of eating the Lord's Supper, and chapter 14 of ministry, the moral root of the disorder that Paul addresses in each chapter is in both cases the same. They failed to discern the body of Christ; each was occupied with his own individual self. If I come to the meetings, and sit in the meetings, thinking only of the chapter I am to read, the hymn I am to give out, the part I am to take, self is entirely in spiritual things the hinge on which my thoughts turn. Surely, the thoughts of our hearts in thus assembling should not be the part I myself have to take, but the wondrous bounty and grace of Him who has committed us to the Holy Spirit's keeping. He will not fail, if humbly waited on, to assign each his proper place and part, without any restless anxiety in us to know what it is.

If my soul realizes the precious unity of the body, and my own humble place in it, as but one individual member of it, I shall not be in such haste to act in the assembly as to prevent others acting. And if I feel I have a word from the Lord, or a call from Him for some service, I shall still remember that others may have the same, and leave room for them: and most of all, if I see another with his book open to read or to give out a hymn, I shall wait till he has done so.

In the 14th chapter we find that when prophets were speaking in the meeting by immediate revelation, there was to be so much deference of one to another, that if anything was revealed to another while the first one spoke, the first was to be silent. Certainly, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak" (Jas. 1:19), would teach us to tarry one for the other.

The object for our assembly is edification. This is the subject of chapter 14. The gift of tongues seemed to man the most wonderful, and the Corinthians delighted in displaying it. Instead of love seeking the edification of all, it was vanity seeking to display its gifts. Yet, they were gifts — gifts of the Spirit. And here is the solemn thing for us to weigh: there may be the power of the Spirit for service, without the living guidance of the Spirit in its exercise. The latter can only be there where self is crucified, and Christ everything to the soul. The object of the Holy Spirit is not to glorify the poor earthen vessel which contains His gifts. By the humble, gracious, self-renouncing use of these gifts He wants to glorify Christ from whom these gifts flow. And this is accomplished in the edification of the whole body.

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (29)

61. DAVID AND JONATHAN. DAVID PERSECUTED BY SAUL — 1 Samuel 18-20

Outline

1. David's and Jonathan's League 1 Samuel 18:1-5
2. David Hated by Saul 1 Samuel 18:6-16
3. Jonathan's Intercession 1 Samuel 19:1-7
4. Jonathan's Affection 1 Samuel 20:1-42

Explanation

1. David had in faith risked his life for God and for the people; thereby he had won Jonathan's affection and honour.
2. Saul owed the kingdom to David, but instead of being grateful he was full of jealousy and he furiously plotted to murder him. Jehovah protected David (Ps. 62:1-2; 91:1-4).
3. Jonathan's intercession on behalf of David was unselfish (Prov. 17:7).
4. He identified himself with David, but did not go so far as to share in his sufferings; he did not separate himself from Saul's court.

Lesson

The Israelites praised David for his works, but Jonathan loved his person. He gave all his personal belongings to David (1 Sam. 18:4). David is a type of the Lord; Jonathan is perhaps a picture of those believers who enjoy the Person of Christ, however not entirely wholeheartedly. If Jonathan had identified himself completely with David, he would not have perished in the battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:2).

62. DAVID AT NOB, IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM AND AT ZIPH — 1 Samuel 21-23

Outline

1. David and Ahimelech 1 Samuel 21:1-9
2. David and Achish 1 Samuel 21:10-15
3. David in Adullam 1 Samuel 22:1-5
4. Saul slays the Priests 1 Samuel 22:6-23
5. David at Keilah 1 Samuel 23:1-13
6. David at Ziph and Maon 1 Samuel 23:14-29

Explanation

1. David told a lie and used a trick to obtain the sword of Goliath from Ahimelech, and then continued his journey with the proof of his victory.
2. His fear for Achish shows that he was not guided by the Spirit but was acting in his own wisdom. Consequently, he experienced shame and contempt, like Abraham in Egypt
3. In the cave of Adullam, his mighty men gathered around him (2 Sam. 23:8), as well as the prophet Gad, who bore the word and witness of God.
4. Saul slayed the priests for the help they had given to David. This caused Abiathar to flee to David bringing the ephod with him, whereby David could seek God's guidance.
5. David saved Keilah, but the inhabitants failed to be grateful for their deliverance.
6. Also the Ziphites betrayed David, who then fled into the wilderness of Maon. When Saul was close to capture David there, the Lord saved David through an attack of the Philistines that called for Saul's attention.

Lesson

David did not act worthy of his calling while staying with Ahimelech and Achish (Eph. 4:1). David's experiences are related by him in several Psalms. Psalm 59 speaks of the time when he fled from his home. Psalms 34 and 56 describe his anxieties when in Gath. Psalm 57 he wrote in the cave of Adullam. His prayer in the cave is found in Psalm 142; "the righteous shall

surround me" we find in verse 7. Psalm 63 was written in the wilderness of Judah. Psalm 52 he wrote after Doeg's betrayal of the priests. Psalm 54 was written in the wilderness of Ziph.

In his exile David is the type of the rejected Christ; he is the center of his brethren and many others (Jn. 12:32; Mt. 11:28).

God uses the wickedness of Saul to bring about the fulfillment of God's judgment over the house of Eli. Yet in grace Abiathar is spared. Only in Solomon's day is Abiathar himself removed from the priesthood (1 Ki. 2:27).

To be cont'd