

## WHICH PROGRAM?

When we think of the many, many Christians who prefer the program of Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark and Luke to the message and program of grace which the risen Lord later revealed to Paul, we are not surprised that most church members act as though they were Old Testament religious Israelites instead of members of the Body of Christ in this age and economy of grace.

Is it not significant that the apostle Paul was the only servant of the Lord to speak of the Church of the Mystery as "the Body of Christ," the Joint-Body? Paul wrote about one-half of the Books from Matthew to Revelation. In all of his writings and recorded oral ministry, Paul never referred to the kingdom parables of Jesus of Nazareth, the Sermon on the Mount, the "Our Father" prayer, nothing in detail as to what Christ did and taught while He was a Minister of the circumcision. On the contrary, Paul wrote: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:16-19).

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I once was blind and did not see  
 What Christ, the Lord, had done for me:  
 But by God's grace I now have sight,  
 Through faith in Christ, Who is my light.

J. C. O'Hair

Notes:

## "GRACE" PREACHING

No minister of Christ, who is a faithful steward of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4:1-4), would, during this age and dispensation of Grace, preach water baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins, as did John the Baptist. Nor would such a minister preach for today Acts 2:38, "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." No Bible-taught evangelist, led by the Holy Spirit, would tell a sinner, seeking eternal life, to keep the commandments and sell his property, as Christ on earth told the man in Luke 18:18-26. Nor should he or any other Christian preacher tell the people to sell all their houses and lots and personal property and place the proceeds in the hands of the preacher, as was done in Acts 2:44, 45 and 4:34, 35. No "Grace" messenger of the Lord is told to raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, preach "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" and journey without cash, as Christ instructed His apostles in Matthew 10:5-9.

"Grace" messengers know the difference between Matthew 6:15, 18:23-25 and Ephesians 4:32, forgiving a fellow-man as the *condition* for God's forgiveness and forgiving in the Name of Christ because we have *already* been forgiven by God for Christ's sake. No "Grace" messenger today expects the angelic visitations, miraculous jail-deliverances, supernatural demonstrations and visions, physical healings and speaking with tongues, such as were experienced and practiced by God's people during the "Acts" period. As we compare Matthew 5:9 with Colossians 1:20, we see the difference between the human peacemakers and the Divine Peace-Maker.

The Pauline truth, or Christ's truth given to and through Paul, concerning "the dispensation of the Grace of God" and "God's eternal purpose in Christ" is the cure for almost every ill and ism with which the Church of God is afflicted. This final truth given to complete the Word of God (Colossians 1:24-26) and recorded in Paul's prison epistles is the death blow to all cults and isms.

J. C. O'Hair

Notes:

**IN THE HEAVENLIES**

Note in the Lord's message and ministry of grace that the believer is taken out of anything that pertains to earthly blessings or worship in a worldly sanctuary or the religion of Israel: "And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Our sanctuary is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. We are identified with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. We are joined to Christ, one flesh with Christ. We belong to the One New Man of Ephesians 2:15. We are members of Christ's Body. Christ is our righteousness, our holiness, our redemption, our life, our peace, our hope.

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The blessings of God's love are daily mine;  
 The riches of God's grace; His power Divine:  
 I'm trusting in the work that Christ has done:  
 I'm accepted and complete in God's eternal Son.  
 Help me, Lord; help me, Lord, in all I do and say;  
 May Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, have control today;  
 Help me, Lord; help me, Lord, to be faithful, kind and true;  
 For others, Lord, are watching me in what I say and do.

*J. C. O'Hair*

Notes:

**THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY**

The Holy Spirit was first WITH the disciples, who lived with Christ on earth, and later IN them. When Christ went back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit down from heaven (I Peter 1:12). Members of the Body of Christ, saved during the reign and dispensation of grace, could not have an experience like that of the disciples who lived with Christ both before and after His resurrection. Today the very moment the sinner believes the gospel of grace and receives Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit within and is immediately sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30, 1:13 and 14). The moment the believer comes to Calvary, he is sealed, anointed, and baptized with the Holy Spirit; and in this age of grace, the sealing, anointing and baptizing with (or in or by) the Holy Spirit is always a past experience and not a religious experience to strive for or pray for or tarry for.

But the believer may and should obey Ephesians 5:18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

In I Corinthians 12:13, we learn of the Holy Spirit's work in baptizing the believer into the Body of Christ. In Ephesians 1:19, we learn that the mighty power of God is for every member of the Body of Christ, who is also blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1:3).

Notes:

*J. C. O'Hair*



## TOUGH BUT TENDER

Scripture Reading: *I Thessalonians 2:11*

Paul was the kind of leader who could be both tough and tender. When writing to the Thessalonian believers, he reminds them of his ministry among them. On the one hand, Paul was tough! He writes, "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (I Thess. 2:2). Yet, Paul could also be tender: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (I Thess. 2:7).

In our text for today, Paul compares his ministry among them to a father and his children. In doing so, he continues the *tough and tender* theme. "As ye know how we exhorted (Gk. *parakaleo*) and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children" (I Thess. 2:11). First, Paul called them alongside (*exhorted* them) for the purpose of comforting them. This word carries with it the idea of personally instructing or tutoring someone. How important it is for fathers to be personally involved in the lives of their children! This is true with both physical and spiritual children. The second reason Paul called them alongside was to *charge* them. This word means to bear witness, or testify to someone. Where the word *comfort* indicates a more intimate instruction, *charge* suggests a more formal (and perhaps a bit more stern) word with the individual. Again, both physical and spiritual children need this at times! What a fine example Paul sets for parents to follow.

Joel Finck

Notes:

## HOW CAN WE ALL SAY THE SAME THING?

Scripture Reading: *I Corinthians 1:10*

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." How can we say the same thing when there are so many different positions on remarriage after divorce, Scripture versions, contemporary music, and ecumenical evangelism.

It is not enough to say that we must follow Christ Who is the Head of the Body, because all claim to follow Him! Neither is it enough to say that we should follow the Apostle Paul as he follows the Lord Jesus. Certainly most Bible-believing people claim that the Epistles of Paul are extremely important to them! The solution actually lies in what the Lord Jesus gave to Paul to instruct us about our personal attitudes. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think (Romans 12:3). "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another... Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Romans 12:10-16).

We must determine the essential doctrines of the Bible and obey from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to us from the Lord Jesus by His true teachers! At the same time, we cannot fuss with one another. We must submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God. Read Romans 6:17 and Ephesians 5:17-21 in the context. By the grace and wisdom of God, we must find that balance between standing firm for the Truth (as we have been taught it) and getting along with those who are saved and walking orderly according to the Word of God.

John McKay

Notes:

**THE NEED FOR DISCERNMENT**

*Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 5:14*

During these perilous times that we find ourselves in, Paul's admonition to us in I Thessalonians 5:12-22 could not be more timely. In our text verse, Paul tells us to "warn...[the] unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, [and] be patient" with all.

We are told to warn or rebuke the unruly—those who get out of line and are disruptive. The word has the military connotation of someone breaking ranks. We are to deal firmly with those who would cause dissension in the ranks of the church. We are to comfort the feebleminded—those who tend to give up easily. When fellow believers are faint-hearted, beaten down, and ready to give up, we should encourage them to "hang in there." (I Corinthians 15:58 is a good verse to use.) We are to support the weak. The weak ones referred to here are those who have a tendency toward certain sins. The word used for support speaks of placing yourself opposite the other person in such a way that you become his support. This requires personal involvement in the lives of others. It must extend beyond the walls of the church. They need your practical support in helping them stay pure, not just the quotation of a few Bible verses to them in between church and Sunday School.

Lastly, Paul tells us to be patient toward all. Patience toward that person who seems to constantly grate and disrupt; patience toward that brother who is always on the verge of giving up; and patience toward the one who struggles with besetting sin. What we are called upon to do is not easy. May the Holy Spirit give us the discernment and ability to fulfill this timely exhortation.

*David Havard*

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**HOW YE OUGHT TO WALK**

*Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 4:1*

In our daily walk as saints of God, we are urged to always perform over and above normal expectations. Paul refers to "the exceeding greatness of [God's] power" (Ephesians 1:19), "the exceeding riches of His grace" (Ephesians 2:7), etc. He writes, in verse 14 of I Timothy 1, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." God's limitless love and grace toward us deserve no less than our maximum endeavor to serve and glorify Him to the uttermost. We are thus exhorted by the apostle Paul, as written to the Thessalonian church, "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." Having been properly instructed by Paul and his companions, the Thessalonians are admonished to live and act accordingly.

The enormity of God's boundless mercy and grace has bestowed a treasure beyond comprehension. Through the death, burial and resurrection of His beloved Son, He has provided the only possible redemption from eternal damnation and torture in the fiery pit. It would be utterly beyond our capacity to return in kind the indescribable measure of kindness that we have received through the finished work of the cross. The only course open to us, then, is to exercise our maximum effort in the attempt to approach as closely as possible the level of gratitude commensurate with our gift from above. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15).

Our primary concern is aptly defined by our apostle... "Giving thanks unto the Father... Who hath delivered us..." (Colossians 1:12, 13).

*Robert E. Hanna*

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**ESTEEMED AMBASSADORSHIP**

*Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:20*

Our sacred obligation is to be ambassadors for Christ. It is a pleasure to represent our blessed Lord Jesus Christ! The original words begin in this manner: "IN BEHALF OF CHRIST..." Think of it! **Phil. 1:29** allows us to see this great truth. Is it not Paul who *testifies*, "...I am what I am by the grace of God"? He certainly acted in Christ's behalf.

Each born-again believer is God's ambassador, whether he knows it or not. It is immediate, as soon as our relationship with Christ begins. If we fail to obey Paul's beseeching in Romans 12:1, we will not know the will of God in Romans 12:2.

Then, as time moves on, how we wear the yoke of ambassadorship is important. Paul had trouble with this. He nearly despaired on one occasion (II Corinthians 1:8). Andrew Murray of South Africa spoke of this by saying, "We need to adapt to the yoke, instead of rebelling against it." It will wear well if we do so. If we do not, it chafes and irritates.

Imagine an ambassador who doesn't know the will of the one who sent him. Do you represent Christ's will in this strange land?

*Harland L. Shriver*

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