

**SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK**

Acts 20:28-32; 1 Peter 5:1-4

**Intro:** One of the most prominent figures of speech used in Scripture, both OT and NT, to show God's relationship to His people, is that of a Shepherd and sheep. Surely the best known and most loved of all OT Psalms, and possibly the best known passage in all of the OT, is the twenty-third Psalm, which begins, as you all know, with the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Psalm 80 begins with these words:

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

And then there is that wonderful passage in Isa. 40:10-11:

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

— In Ezekiel 34 is a passage that is not as well known, but again we hear the Lord speaking about His people as sheep:

11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

— 16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the

strong; I will feed them with judgment (Ezek. 34:11-16).

— When we turn to the NT we find the same teaching, applied in particular to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. While He was still on earth, and before His death, He gave His disciples that wonderful teaching that we have in John 10. For example, see John 10:11:

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

And then He continued in John 10:14:

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

And who can forget those wonderful verses words found in John 10:27-30?

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

— Going on to Heb. 13:20-21 we have these two precious verses:

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

As a last passage I would call your attention to one of the two Scriptures which I have taken as my text for tonight: 1 Peter 5:1-4:

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

— 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a

crown of glory that fadeth not away.

In this last passage we not only learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is “the chief Shepherd,” but that He, through the Apostle Peter has conunished the elders of the church to be shepherds. And we see this in the words, “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” The word “feed” means *to tend as a shepherd*, which means that the elders were to do everything for “the flock of God,” the church, that any shepherd would do for his sheep. But it actually goes beyond that because they were to do what the Lord Jesus would do if He were present on earth. He is “the chief Shepherd.” Our Lord is the Head Shepherd, and the elders are to work under His direction. This is why you will sometimes here elders referred to an “under-shepherds.”

Even the word “pastor” means *a shepherd*.

Now, since we are in 1 Peter 5, let us begin with this passage before turning to Acts 20.

## **I. THE APOSTLE PETER’S INSTRUCTION TO ELDERS AS SHEPHERDS (1 Pet. 5:1-4).**

From verse 4 we have seen that our Great and Primary Example of what a Shepherd should be, is our Lord Jesus Christ. But, in the second place, we have the example of the Apostle Peter as well. When he said, and very truthfully that he was an elder, it was just the same as saying that he was a shepherd.

So we follow the example of our Lord and the example of the Apostle Peter. This is a tremendous help in knowing what our responsibilities are to the people of God.

But then you will notice that Peter said in verse 2, “taking the oversight thereof.” This is the verb from which we get the word, bishop. Bishops are elders, and elders are bishops. They are two words for the same office. But a bishop is an overseer. And this is what a shepherd is. He oversees the flock of God. He takes everyone into account. He seeks to familiarize himself with each member of the flock.

One man cannot do it all, and that is why there are multiple elders in most

churches. It is hard for me to believe that churches with thousands of members are really churches in the NT sense of the word, and if people are attracted to church organizations by the entertainment that is put on, there are probably a good percentage of the people who are not sheep in God's flock.

But here Peter was speaking to the elders, telling them what was to characterize them as shepherds. They were not to do it because they had to do it, but they were to do it willingly. Nor were they to do it because they were being paid to do it, "but of a ready mind." This means *cheerfully and promptly*.

Neither were they to act "as being lords over God's heritage," that is, trying to control, to subjugate, or to dominate the Lord's people who are His "heritage." God's people are His inheritance, those whom He has chosen out of the whole human race to be His very own, and He is the Lord. And there can be only one in that position.

But shepherds over God's flock have a unique responsibility toward the sheep that ordinary shepherds do not have. *Those who are shepherds over the flock of God are to be EXAMPLES "to the flock."* That is a novel idea, isn't it? And the word "ensamples" (Old English) in Greek is the word from which we get our word *type*.

This is the idea that the Apostle Paul had in mind when he told the believers in Corinth, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

This is the whole idea of leadership in the Word of God. Christ is our Chief Shepherd, and we all are to be like Him. But we also have men like the Apostles, Peter, John, and Paul, to name just a few who followed Christ, and so we follow them as they sought to follow Christ.

Parents, you are to be examples to your children. The older children in a family are to be examples to the younger members of the family. And we all are to be examples to each other. *But it is supremely important that the elders set the pace, leading the sheep, pointing the way.*

This morning we saw what a tremendous example David was to the people of Israel. It runs all through the Bible. And how thankful we can all

be for those in our lives who have shown us by their lives what we are to be and how we are to live.

— And by the way, remember that it was about shepherding the sheep that the Lord spoke to Peter in John 21:15-17.

But now with all of this fresh in our minds, let us go to our second text: Acts 20:28-32. (Read.)

Here we have:

## **II. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS (Acts 20:28-32).**

Paul knew that he was not going to be with them again, and so we can be sure that he took full advantage of this last time with them.

Notice first that in these five verses Paul began and ended on the same note. *He spoke to the elders about themselves!*

— “Take heed to yourselves” meant that he wanted them to pay close attention to what was going on in their own lives first, and then to do the same as far as the people of God were concerned. In a way it was a warning! Leaders are not exempt from temptation, from laziness, from trouble. Paul here was emphasizing what Peter emphasized. And they were set their minds also on “the word of his grace.” What a wonderful way to refer to the Word of God! Why was this so important? Because they needed to continue to grow, and Paul linked their growth to their usefulness and fruitfulness with the people of God. Every elder, every pastor, needs to pay constant attention to these words from the Holy Spirit through Paul. How different the church would be today if all elders and deacons were paying attention to these words from Peter and Paul which we are looking at tonight!

But now let us turn to the sheep.

— God calls His people sheep because in reality that is what we are. Some of us may be shepherds, but before the Lord we are sheep too. Why does He call us sheep? There are many reasons, but here are some of them. He calls us sheep because sheep cannot survive without a shepherd to care

for them. They are defenseless by themselves. They tend to wander away. They need a shepherd to feed them, to bring them to green pastures. I think it is generally agreed that they are not too smart. One thing they learn quickly is to identify the voice of the shepherd.

The church is a flock of sheep, and the Lord has purchased every single one of us, not with money, but with “His own blood.” So we are very precious to Him. He knows us all by Name, and leads us in and out where we will find pasture.

But the sheep need to be protected from outsiders who come in who are not sheep, and from insiders who have in mind taking some of the sheep away. Paul called the outsiders “grievous wolves.” I don’t think any of us need to be told what even one wolf can do to a flock of sheep. Thayer says that this word “grievous” means *violent, cruel, unsparing*. The word even suggests that they are heavy, able to overpower sheep without any difficulty.

Insiders speak “perverse things.” This means that they misinterpret the Word, they distort the truth, and that they themselves are often corrupt. How are the sheep to know what is true and what is a lie? There is only one way: *They need to know the Word!*

And so from verse 31 we see that the under-shepherds are to “watch.” This meant concerning shepherds watching over their flocks that at no time could all of the shepherds be asleep. Someone always had to be on guard, making sure that all of the sheep were there, and that no wolf or other predator was on the outskirts ready to carry off his prey.

Paul also in speaking to the elders reminded them that this is a work in which we are not always successful. Paul had ministered among them in the past, and they were familiar with seeing tears running down his cheeks because some sheep had gone astray, sometimes never to come back. Notice also Paul’s reference to “tears” in verse 19 of this chapter.

Nobody can be in the ministry very long without knowing what Paul was talking about. In spite of all of the warning we do, some get away. And some never come back.

**Concl:** Let me close by asking you to notice how Paul left those elders in

— Miletus. Look at verse 36 in particular. Paul prayed for them as he left them, and I doubt very much if he needed a written list in order to remember all of their names. And here he was following the example of “the chief Shepherd.” Every true under-shepherd knows that we need to be examples to the flock, and we need to be faithful in teaching them and warning them of the dangers in the Christian life, but all of that is not accompanied by prayer where we invoke the blessing of the Lord, our work will not prosper as we want it to. In John 17 we have a most important example set by our Lord. There the Lord was praying for His sheep, even for you and for me.

It used to grieve Spurgeon when he would hear his people say that they were not going to church at a certain time “because it was only a prayer meeting.” When we get to heaven we may learn that the prayer meeting was equal with the preaching of the Word, and maybe more important because it was in prayer that the people sought God’s blessing upon the ministry of the Word. Remember that the Apostles in those early days needed help because they felt that their calling was to be faithful *in prayer and in the ministry of the Word*.

— May the Lord help all of us to realize what it means that “we are the sheep of His pasture” (Psa. 100:3). That tells us how much we all are in constant need of “the chief Shepherd” who is both “good” and “great.” And since He has called some of us to be His under-shepherds, let us seek to do our work with something of the same diligence and care that He cares for all of us.

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**THE CHURCH WORSHIPING**

Philippians 3:3

**Intro:** The word “church” occurs twice in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians. In one of them Paul was writing about his opposition to the Church, the body of Christ (see Phil. 3:6), but in the other he referred to those to whom he was writing as a “church,” a local body of believers. But even if we did not have that reference, we would have to say that this epistle was *to the church in Philippi* because in his greetings at the beginning of the book, he mentioned that he was writing “to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” *That is the church which was at Philippi.* So, while the truth contained in this epistle was applicable to all of the individuals in the church, it seems that generally Paul had the whole church in mind. In 1:5 where he thanked the Lord for their fellowship, he wrote “you all” (plural) in verse 4, and “your” in verse 5 is also plural. So he was thinking of them *as a church*. This is important to remember when we come to our text for tonight: Phil. 3:3.

This is confirmed by his use of “brethren,” as well as “we” at the beginning of verse 3 where he identified himself with them.

This is very important because most of us are inclined to read the epistles as though they were only written personally to us as individuals. It is not wrong to do that because there definitely is a personal emphasis. But it even strengthens what Paul had to say when we realize that his message was to each individual in the church at Philippi, but as members of that local church.

So, since we are thinking in this service especially about the corporate worship of the church, we must recognize that corporate worship, that is, the worship of the whole church, can only be what God intends that it should be when we not only know individually what worship is, but that we are actually practicing worshipers individually, as well as in our families.

From what Paul said at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that the church at Philippi was being bothered by false teachers. He had warned them before about those among them who were corrupting the truth. And because of the reference to circumcision at the beginning of verse 3, I



think we are safe in assuming that the false teachers were the Judaizers who were seeking to bring the believers back under the Law of Moses as a way of life. But Paul knew, regardless of the claims that they made for themselves, that these teachers were not true believers in Christ. And so he used some very strong words in verse 2 to describe them. This was not at all characteristic of the Apostle Paul *unless he felt that the truth of the Gospel was under attack. And at the moment it was under attack in Philippi!* Fortunately they had not gained a foothold in the church, but that was their goal. Their emphasis on circumcision made Paul call them “the concision” – which means *mutilators of the flesh*. False teachers, whatever their emphasis, are always trying to make us think that we are missing out on some things, and that they can help us get straightened out.

But here at the beginning of this chapter Paul exhorted them to do one thing that is probably the greatest safeguard that we have against false teachers. He told the church to “rejoice in the Lord”! This is another way in which false teachers seek to damage people. They turn people away from the Lord, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. They try to make us think that either the Lord is not enough for us, or that we really don’t need Him at all. So if we love the Lord, and if we are learning about the Lord, and if we rejoice in Him as the One Who has brought us into full acceptance with God, and the One Who meets our needs day by day, then we will turn a deaf ear to anyone who in any way seeks to turn us away from Him, or to add anything to what we have in Him. It is impossible to add anything to Christ. And it is equally impossible to add anything to the work of Christ in salvation. So let us make sure that we are rejoicing in the Lord, and that we know that He is sufficient for everything that has to do with our relationship to God. What people need is Christ alone, not Christ plus a lot of other things. In Him we are a new creation. In Him we have perfect and eternal acceptance with God. It was at the Cross that we were reconciled to God through the death of our Savior.

But now turning to our text that the Apostle Paul said, “For we are the circumcision” – not that we have been circumcised, but “we are the circumcision.” And there is a world of difference between the two expressions. “Circumcision” was a symbol in the OT for moral purity. But the rite of circumcision did not produce such purity. A person can be circumcised in the flesh, but uncircumcised in heart. But when Paul said that “we are the circumcision,” he was indicating that those who have put off

the impurity of their hearts by putting on Christ, are the circumcised. And this applies equally to those Jews who were circumcised in the flesh, as well as those Gentiles who were not circumcised.

The Apostle Paul discussed this in his letter to the church at Rome. Cf. Rom. 2:25-29:

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

So even in OT times circumcision could mean nothing if the heart were not right. In Lev. 26:41 we read about “uncircumcised hearts.” In Jer. 6:10 the Lord spoke to the people of Judah about an ear that was uncircumcised, ears that could not hear the word of the Lord. Even the Apostle Paul learned that, although he had been circumcised in the flesh, that was “but dung” in obtaining salvation for him. It is by “the circumcision of Christ,” His total and absolute purity, yes, His Deity, that he has procured purity of heart for us through His death on the Cross. This is what he explained to the church at Colosse in Col. 2:9-13:

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven

you all trespasses.

But now we are ready to ask, How can we identify those who are the circumcision, that is, those who have been cleansed from their sins, and made pure before God? In the remainder of our text Paul mentioned three distinguishing marks of the people of God.

## **I. THEY “WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT.”**

It is unfortunate that the translators of the KJV did not capitalize the word “spirit,” because it surely is a reference to the Holy Spirit. In fact, the words, “in the Spirit are given the place of emphasis in the Greek text, saying, “Those who by the Spirit are worshiping God.” True believers worship God, not types or ceremonies or the traditions of men. Even God is emphatic in the Greek text. True believers are God-centered in their worship. They adore Him. They serve Him with their worship. They delight themselves in God. They want to please Him by their obedience. And all of this comes from their hearts. And so their worship is not by rites and ceremonies, but as David said in Psalm 103:1-2, they bless the Lord with all that is within them.

Now we are talking about worship in the church. What do we do when we meet together as a church?

One of the first things that we do, and true churches have always done this; *we sing hymns! Often we sing psalms, the psalms of Scripture.* But it is important that we notice the words that we sing, and that we make the words our own. We need to sing from our hearts. It has been said that there is as much lying that goes on behind the hymn book as any other place in the world. If we are to worship God, truly worship Him from the heart, it must be by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit Who causes us to make the words of our hymns just as much our own as if we had written the words of the hymns ourselves.

What else do we do when we come to church? We pray. Sometimes we pray in prayer meetings. At other times someone may lead all of us in prayer. When that happens, we all need to pay attention to the one who is praying so that unitedly we are lifting our hearts to God in prayer.

And then we all know that when we worship the Lord as a church we do

it through the ministry of the Word. The Word of God is read, and we drink it in. And then the Word is explained to us, and we pray that God will enable us to understand what we are hearing, and apply it in obedience to our lives. And the very hearing of the Word, and its exposition, opens our hearts in worship to God. We turn the Word into prayer, or we turn the Word into praise. We sense that God is ministering to us, and we, in turn, worship Him.

So the meeting of the church is where we worship God.

However, if we are to get the greatest possible blessing from the meeting of the church, we need to be prepared for that worship by our personal worship at home where quietly and privately we meet with the Lord. And we need to be worshipping the Lord as families together. Children should learn what it is to worship the Lord by listening to their parents as they worship the Lord. And then we come together as a church to unite our hearts in worship through singing, through praying, and through receiving the ministry of the Word.

Now as we do this, what is taking place in our hearts? We find that in the depths of our souls our hearts are drawn to, as Paul expressed His Name here, to Christ Jesus. We “rejoice in Christ Jesus.” And so we come to this second distinguishing mark of a true believer in Christ.

## **II. HE IS ONE WHO REJOICES “IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

In the epistles of Paul we notice the variety of ways he used the Name of the Son of God. Often he calls Him by His full Name, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes it is just, “the Lord.” At other times only “Jesus.” And then often just “Christ.” He may call Him “the Lord Jesus,” or “the Lord Christ,” or “Jesus Christ,” or as in our text, “Christ Jesus.”

The Apostle does not do this for the sake of variety, or just by chance. He does it deliberately and meaningfully. What does “Christ” mean? Well, it is the Greek for the Messiah, or the Anointed one. And it not only identifies our Lord as the One the people of God were looking for in the OT, but the One Who came from heaven as the Son of God, Deity. The Apostle John said that he wrote his Gospel around the signs, or miracles, that the Lord performed while He was here on earth, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have

life through His Name” (John 20:31). So the Name “Christ” expresses the Deity of our Lord.

“Jesus,” on the other hand, is His human Name, the Name given to Him when He was born. But that Name, too, speaks of Him as the One Who came to save His people from their sins.

So when Paul said that a true believer rejoices “in Christ Jesus,” He meant that He honors the Lord, and rejoices in Him, as the only Savior for sinning human beings. He is not one of many saviors; He is the only One Who can save us, and He does it through His death upon Calvary’s Cross.

And then this leads us to our third and final point:

### **III. A TRUE BELIEVER HAS “NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.”**

By nature we are inclined to be self-sufficient. By nature we all have a major dose of self-esteem. We are disposed to talk about ourselves and what we have done that we think will give us points with God. But the child of God who consistently worships God in the Spirit, and who rejoices in Christ Jesus, will be brought to the place where he will have a true understanding of himself. And Paul expressed this in Rom. 7:18 where we read what he wrote about himself: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18a).

In verses 4 through 6 of Phil. 3 Paul tells us what he gloried in before the Lord met him on the road to Damascus. And how the Lord changed all of his boasting into glorying in the Lord. It became “dung” to him, worthless in its ability to move him one step closer to God. And God changed Saul of Tarsus from a boasting, self-confident hater of Christ, into a person whose greatest purpose in life was to know the Lord and to live for Him.

How tragic it is today to hear people who claim to be Christians talking about self-worth and self-esteem rather than humbling themselves before the Lord who know that the only reason that God would have anything to do with them was because He is a God of infinite mercy and grace.

**Concl:** Now let me point out one important truth in conclusion.

None of us really worships God as we should. Nor do we rejoice in Christ Jesus as we need to. And unfortunately there is still too much of the flesh in most of our lives, too much pride, and too little humility. And yet, as imperfect as our worship may be as we gather together in the meeting of the church, and as much as we fail to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and how often we find pride rising up in our hearts, yet for a true child of God all of these traits will be there! And it ought to be the desire of every single one of us that we worship the Lord more devoutly, and rejoice in the Lord more consistently, and that we abhor every evidence in our lives which witness that we still trust too much in ourselves.

As we continue to meet together as a church, if God is really working in our hearts, our worship will increase, our joy in the Lord will grow, and we will put less and less confidence in ourselves, and more and more confidence in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Who all are working to perfect us in the likeness of Christ Himself. May we be submissive to all that the Lord is doing in our lives to humble us, and to exalt Himself. And to God alone be the glory as we see what He is doing in our lives. Don't stay away from church; it is a marvelous place to meet God, and to worship Him.

**MINISTERING TO ONE ANOTHER**

John 13:34-35

**Intro:** Anyone who reads his NT carefully has surely noticed verses where the words “one another,” or “one to another,” or “one toward another,” occurs. Sometimes the words “one” and “another” are separated by other words. Most of these have to do with our relationship to each other as the people of God. They are words which belong to our fellowship with one another. Both Rom. 12:5 and Eph. 4:25 state that we are “members one of another,” and this is the reason for these exhortations. We have dealings with many who are not believers, but our relationship with others in the body of Christ, are special relationships. Paul brought out the special character of our connection with each other when he wrote to the churches of Galatia, and said,

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,  
especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

In the verses I have chosen as my text for tonight, we have an example of this:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

You can count three times in these two verses where the Lord emphasized that the disciples were to love each other. Cf also John 15:12, 17.

Several weeks ago when I spoke about *the meeting of the church* from Heb. 10:19-25, we had two verses with this emphasis – the last two verses. And this is what they tell us:

24 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 (Heb. 10:24-25).

In the book of Romans we have these verses: Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14. There are several verses in the epistles which emphasize that believers greeted each other with a holy kiss. See Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14.

We can add to this list, 1 Cor. 12:25; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 32; 5:21; Col. 3:9, 13, 16; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11; Heb. 3:13; Jas. 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 4:9, 10; 5:5; 1 John 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5.

I think that I have most of them, but if I have overlooked some because of a slight difference in the wording, these that I have mentioned combine to tell us that we have many different responsibilities toward each other. As I mentioned before, we are members one of another. The Bible makes it very clear that there is a great difference between those who know the Lord, and those who do not. We are living in a world that is hostile to what we believe and the way we live. The world has its own code of right and wrong, but the principles that we are to live by are laid out in great detail in the Word of God – *and by God's grace we must abide by them.* We belong to a great fellowship, a fellowship of people who belong to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. God has left us here in this world to be a testimony, not just individually (although our individual testimonies are supremely important), but as members of the body of Christ, the Church.

When the Lord gave the words which are found in John 13:34-35 to His disciples, there was no church. But the men to whom He gave these words were destined in the providence of God to be the leaders of that church. And they were to see the spread of that church as they reached out into the Gentile world with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it would be their responsibility in the beginning of the church to see to it that the teachings of our Lord were followed by those who would be added to the church. *But in order for their teaching to be accepted by those who would be saved later, the truths which they had been taught by the Lord had to be evident in their own lives.* This is the reason I have chosen John 13:34 and 35 for my message because this is where the Lord really began talking like this, and it is important for us to see where He began.

His message here in this text was that they were to love one another. And as I have gathered the various verses which speak of “one another,” or similar expressions, there are more that speak of love than of any other subject, that is, the love that they were to have in their hearts for each other. So this in John 13 was not only the starting point, but here the Lord made the point that really was the foundation of all of the others. For example, if you are going to exhort another believer, it is very important that you love that believer, and that that believer knows that



you love him, or her, as the case may be. I think we can all understand that. We are not inclined to accept advice or exhortation from someone whose relationship with us is not a good one.

In speaking of “love” the Lord called it:

**I. “A NEW COMMANDMENT” (John 13:34).**

Let me call your attention to what the Apostle John, who was present when the Lord spoke the words of our text – what he said about it years later. I am reading 1 John 2:7-8:

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

The Apostle John said that this matter of believers loving each other was not new, and yet it was new. It was not new in that the people of God have always been responsible to love each other. This was expressed as far back as Lev. 19:18, but it was new in the sense that there was a new feature which the Lord added to the command. It was “that ye love one another as I have loved you.”

Before we were to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We were to show the same care and concern for our neighbors as we do for ourselves. But to love each other as Christ has loved us, raises the standard for all believers higher than any of us can reach by ourselves.

While we are thinking about how Christ loves us, let me call your attention to another passage which says much the same thing. It is found in Eph 5:25-27. Most of you know what I am thinking about:

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Now we all know that we cannot love one another in exactly the same way that the Lord loves us. If we were to die for another brother or sister in Christ, we couldn't do for them what the Lord did for us when He died on the Cross. But our love for each other ought to mean that we will go to any lengths to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. *But what kind of help are we talking about primarily?*

Well, we should be ready to assist each other in any way that we can. It is not for us to tell others who they should show love for us. The Lord did not say that that was our business. So every believer is to do what he can for others who are in need. *But from the Ephesians passage which I have just read to you, what we need to be most concerned about is the help we can give to each other that will result in our spiritual blessing.*

Years ago I either read some place, or heard some servant of the Lord say, that we should always seek to leave people better off spiritually than they were when we met them. This is why the Scriptures talk about comforting each other, and exhorting one another. We all need help in our walk with the Lord. We all have our trials. And one of the most important reasons for each of us to have our own time with the Lord each day, reading His Word and praying, is because it may be that what the Lord gives us on any particular day may not be just for us, but it may be that the Lord has given us a blessing because someone we are going to be with that day may need just what the Lord has given us.

The Lord died for us to meet our spiritual need. We can't do that, but we can devote ourselves to helping others spiritually in any way that we can, and, as far as the church is concerned, *this is why we are here in this world, and this is one big reason you and I are a part of Trinity Bible Church!*

Every one of God's people is a special person to God. He set His love upon us in eternity past. He loves us with an everlasting love. And there are no people who are dearer to the Lord in all the world than we are! And so when we love those whom the Lord loves, it always brings His blessing.

You parents know how your heart goes out to anyone who loves your children. That in a very limited way is how the Lord feels about us when we show our love and our concern for His children. Do you remember

what Heb. 6:10 says? Let me remind you. Here it is. I will read verse 9 with it:

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister (Heb. 6:9-10).

But I am not finished with my text. Verse 35 gives us:

## **II. THE MESSAGE OF OUR LOVE TO THE WORLD (John 13:35).**

Here is the message: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

On the other hand, what is the message when believers can’t get along with each other. Or what about trouble in the church itself. We are “ambassadors for Christ.” People aren’t reading the Bible these days. They have no way of learning about Christ, or God, or the church, except from what they see and know of us. And it is often the love that the people of God show for each other, that opens the hearts of people to God’s love for sinners. If a person is in Christ, he is a new creature, a new creation, a work of God. And the change that has taken place in his life is apparent first in his relationship with God, and secondly, in his relationship with the people of God.

I get very concerned about people who claim to know the Lord Jesus Christ, but have little or no time for the church. What is the church? It is a group of believers banded together for the worship of God and for their mutual edification. And the Lord would never have established churches if we did not need them.

We can devise all kinds of methods of reaching people with the Gospel, but if we don’t have what the Lord was speaking about in John 13:34, 35, our efforts will never be as fruitful as we want them to be.

**Concl:** The Lord was using the verb ἀγαπάω as He spoke the words we have in John 13:35. And it is the Lord Himself, His teaching, and His work for us, that gives meaning to that important verb. If we

want to know what ἀγαπάω means, then look at our Lord Jesus Christ. He lifted that verb to new heights when He came to redeem us. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the meaning of love.

His love, God's love, has been "shed abroad in our hearts," in order that we might love each other in the same way that He loves each one of us. The world knows nothing of this kind of love, and that is why it carries such a powerful message to them when they see it. May the Lord use us in these days to give this evidence that we are the Lord's disciples, and that we live the way we live, for each other, because this is the way He lived when He was here on earth.

**WIVES AND HUSBANDS, THE CHURCH AND CHRIST**  
or  
**A GLORIOUS CHURCH**  
Ephesians 5:22-27

**Intro:** When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, he was writing to a predominantly Gentile church of people who knew nothing, or practically nothing, about God's purpose for husbands and wives in their relationship to each other. He may have taught them when he had been with them, some of the truth that we have here in Ephesians 5. But in the epistle he was making a permanent record of his teaching for them to have. And, if it is true, as many believe, this was to be a circular letter which would have been passed around to several churches, this made the letter even more important. This is because it would have touched many more lives than if it had been addressed only to the church at Ephesus.

But just think of the circulation this letter has had from that day until this. For almost 2,000 years the people of God have been reading this epistle, and, among other things, learning what husbands and wives are to be in their relationship with each other.

But he did another thing.

He used that relationship, husbands and wives, to teach what the final outcome of the church, the body of Christ, would be. And he likened the husband's position in the home to Christ's position in the Church. And he likened the wife's place to that of the Church. This is very apparent in the text.

(Read Eph. 5:22-27.)

From these verses it is very clear that the husband is the head of the wife, and, therefore, that the wife is to be submissive to her husband. But the husband is to love his wife, to love her in a unique way, to love her as he loves no one else. We read these words in Genesis 2:21-24:

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made

he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Then this is the important verse in what I am saying:

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

To “cleave” to his wife, meant that Adam was to stay with her, to be closer to her than he would be to any other person. Adam had no parents, but the Lord, anticipating all future marriages, said that this relationship between a man and his wife, superceding even the relationship that a husband has had with his parents.

And the Apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, defined *cleaving* as meaning *love*. And the Spirit of God placed that love on the highest possible level when He directed Paul to write:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

So we have God’s pattern for wives and husbands. The wife was to be submissive to her husband, as her head, and the husband was to love his wife – to love her as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. This is God’s plan, and no marriage can be truly happy that does not fit into that plan.

So you can see that every Christian home is to be a miniature of the church. And this is probably the main passage which has given rise to the teaching that the Church is the Bride of Christ.

Now it is not my purpose to speak about marriage tonight, but it is good for all of us to be reminded of the divine plan because every once in a while we need to make some adjustments in our marriages. We want God’s blessing, but, as in everything else, we have to remember that God’s blessing is given on His terms, not on ours. So all of us who are husbands need to check ourselves by this passage. We need to ask, “Does my love for my wife reflect the love that Christ has shown for His Church?” And those of you who are wives need to check yourselves by asking, “Am I being submissive to my husband as I as a believer am to be submissive to my Lord?” Every day is check-up time for husbands and wives.

But now let's think about Christ and His Church. His Church is the Body of Christ, and includes all of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior because verse 23 tells us not only that Christ is the Head of the Church, but that He is the Savior of the Body.

Now what was Paul's purpose in this passage as he wrote about the Church? It was to show what the Church will eventually be. It is going to be "a glorious church." See verse 27. And this is the work that He is doing in the Church today.

We have learned in our studies that there is the Church which is His body made up of all believers in this present age. But we have also learned that there are local churches, like the church at Ephesus, and the church at Philippi, and the Trinity Bible Church in Portland. The local church is not a pure church because it is possible for unbelievers to become members of local churches. But with reference to local churches, God is doing in each of them what He is doing in the Church at large because true believers in local churches are the Body of Christ on earth. So even though what Paul said here applies to the body of Christ, yet it involves all of us who really know the Savior.

We in the Church, in one way, have the relationship to our Lord as that of a wife. And so Paul spoke first about:

### **I. THE SUBMISSION OF THE CHURCH (Eph. 5:22, 24).**

All of us have a natural distaste for the word *submit* because it sounds like bondage, like slavery, and to some it sounds like the military. I doubt if there has ever been a child which has not rebelled against being told what to do, or not do.

This word means *to put ourselves under some else's authority*, but we overlook the fact that it also means that we are *to put ourselves under someone else's care*.

Think with me for just a moment about those words in Eph. 5:24, "For as the church is subject unto Christ . . ." And we all should ask, "Is the church really subject to Christ?" We would have to say, "Yes, but not always!" We are subject because He is our Head. We are subject because we are under His care. But we are not always subject, not always submis-

sive in our response to Him. We are utterly dependent upon Him. We are helpless without Him. He is our Lord. But He is our Lord Who loves us more than we will ever be able to understand – at least in this life! He is able to do more than we can ask or think, more than we will ever need. There is no situation <sup>(10)</sup>great for Him, but every situation is too great for us. And all Three Persons of the Godhead are continually watching over us so that everything, everything that touches our lives, turns out, first, for His glory, and second, for our eternal good! The One to whom we are to be submissive on a daily basis is the One Who died for us even though we didn't deserve such love. He set us free from the bondage of our sins. Don't we find that submission to our Lord brings us the greatest possible joy and peace?

If the Lord Jesus could come into this world saying that He had come to do the will of the Father, is it fitting that we should say anything less than that to the Father, and to our Savior, and to the Holy Spirit. Isn't it folly to do anything else? Look at how the world is going today, and you can see what a mess man makes of his life when he has no place for God or for Christ. How thankful we should be that the Lord has saved us, and brought us into a place where we are to be submissive to Him. And this is really the only thing that we have to be concerned about.

But what is the Lord Jesus doing with each of us individually, and with all of us together? This brings me to my second point.

## II. THE LORD IS TRANSFORMING US INTO A GLORIOUS CHURCH (Eph. 5:26-27).

Notice that there are three times that you have the word "that" in verses 26 and 27. And each time in the Greek text it is the same word which we can translate, *in order that*. It tells us why the Lord "loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

Now by loving us, and giving Himself for us, He saved us. Should we draw back from being submissive to such a Savior? <sup>(11)</sup>Think what He has saved us from, and what He has saved us for.

But the fact is to be faced that while our Lord is the altogether lovely One, we are all unlovely. There was no reason when you look at any of us as to why He should love us, and die for us. He didn't die for us



because we were so pleasing to Him, but He died for us to make us what He wants us to be: “a glorious church.”

But let us start with verse 26.

We needed to be saved from the wrath of God. We needed to be saved from sin’s penalty. But after we are saved, we need to be sanctified. We need to be cleaned up, and this comes about “with the washing of the water by the Word.”

The Lord saves us through the Word, and forever after that the Word of God is a vital part of our lives. We read it, and we learn from it. We meditate on it, and are strengthened by it. It becomes a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. We see how wrong we have been about so many things, and we learn how to trust the Lord to make things right. It is the Word that cleans us, and keeps us clean.

Secondly, in verse 27 we learn that we need to cleansing, sanctifying power of the Word of God because we have a lot of spots and wrinkles, warts, and the like, that have been left on us by sin. You don’t have to listen to TV very long before there is a commercial telling us how we can get rid of blemishes and wrinkles, and see our skin restored until it is like new. I don’t believe them, but think of how many millions of dollars are spent every day by people who are trying to clean up the outside. But there is only one way to get rid of the spots and wrinkles caused by our old nature and by the sins which we have committed, and that is by the Word of God. The Lord Jesus told His disciples after He had talked to them, “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). And the Psalmist asked the question, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” The answer: “By taking heed thereto according to thy Word” (Psa. 119:9).

Finally, the Lord saved us “that we should be holy and without blemish.” What is a glorious Church? It is a Church that is perfectly holy, and without a single blemish upon the soul caused by sin.

**Concl:** You may say to me, “When will that be? Certainly you can’t be talking about something that we can look forward to in this life!” Let me explain. You have heard that there are three tenses in salvation: I was saved – past tense. I am being saved – present tense. I will be saved

– future tense. We were saved from the penalty of sin when the Lord drew us to Himself and made us new creatures. This is justification. We are being saved now from the power and defilement of sin. This is sanctification. We will be saved from sin itself when temptation will no longer be a threat to us, and where sin will no longer be possible.

Paul expressed it this way in his letter to the Philippians. I am reading from the NKJV:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21 Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

And when Paul said that He would transform our bodies that they might be like our Lord's body, that included inward cleansing as well as outward cleansing. Then we will be "holy and without blemish" on the inside as well as on the outside. Then, and only then, will we be "a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." And it is God Who will receive all of the glory.

But we are not there yet. We don't know when the Lord is going to come. It may be tonight. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all go to heaven together? But in the meantime, keep reading the Word, keep memorizing it, and keep obeying it. It is never easy to do any of this, but the Lord wants us to do it, and what He wants us to do, He will help us <sup>(to do)</sup> because this is one of the benefits of being under His authority. May we all know the surpassing joy, the joy of all joys, of being submissive each day to our Lord and to His precious, infallible, and living Word of God.

## THE CHURCH'S ENEMIES

### Part 1 – The World

Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1

1 John 2:15-17

**Intro:** In this series on the Church, I have been concentrating on just what the Church is, who is in the Church, the doctrines of the Church, the ministry of the Church to its members as well as to the world at large. We have considered the leadership of the Church, the meetings of the Church, the ordinances of the Church, and, of course, everything under Christ as the Head of the Church. It is one of the most wonderful truths in all of the Word of God.

Tonight I want to begin to answer the question which Isaac Watts asked in his great old hymn, “Am I a soldier of the Cross?” But I want to ask the question in the plural, “Are we His soldiers of the Cross?” I am sure that most of you remember the verses. Verses 2 and 3 are the verses that I am thinking about. Isaac Watts wrote most of the hymn in the singular, but I want to apply it to all of us in the Church. These are the verses:

Must we be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for us to face? Must we not stem the flood?  
Is the vile world a friend to grace, To help us on to God?

Nobody is truly saved very long before he or she learns that the Christian life is not an easy life. It is a glorious life, but not easy. We are involved in a spiritual warfare.

Our troubles come, first of all, from ourselves. We learn that while we are new creatures in Christ, yet we are still a lot like we used to be. And so much of our conflict comes from within ourselves. And we learn from the Bible that our trouble from our old nature, called in Scripture, *the flesh*.

And then we learn that we have trouble in *the world*. There are things that we used to do that we are not comfortable doing anymore. We find the world to be a source of great temptations. Many of our friends find out what has happened to us, and they don't really want to have anything

to do with us anymore.

— And then, depending upon our background, we become aware of the fact that there really is a Devil, and that he seems to thwart us in everything that we seek to do to please God.

Now it would be one thing if we could close the door of our lives, and not have anything to do with any of these enemies, and just live our lives in the quietness and peace of our homes, enjoying fellowship with the Lord. But that is not the way things are. We take the flesh with us wherever we go, and it cries out to us for the satisfaction of its lusts. We are bombarded constantly by the world with its temptations and sins. And the Devil is aggressively seeking to drag us down. He will do anything to keep us from pleasing God. So our enemies carry the battle to us *daily* and even *moment by moment*.

— And so our Bibles tell us that we have three enemies, and they work with each other to gain the victory over us. I think it is a rather neglected idea to think of these three enemies as enemies of the Church. To be sure each of us faces each enemy alone, but we face them also as fellow members of the body of Christ. And a very great part of the security that we have in the conflicts that we face is identified with the Church. The Lord intends that we are to help each other in this battle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. That is why we read in Hebrews 10, starting with verse 19, a series of exhortations *all in the plural*. Let me read verses 19 through 25 to you, and I want you to notice in particular the last verse.

(Read Heb. 10:19-25.)

— What did the writer mean, “as ye see the day approaching”? Well, he meant the day when the Lord will return. The time which Paul described in 2 Timothy 3, calling them “perilous times.” Paul told Timothy that the world was not going to get better and better, but that it was going to get worse and worse. Instead of the battle which we face getting easier, it is going to get more severe. The Devil knows that his time is short, and so he is going to use the full extent of his power to do all that he can, not only to bring us down in defeat, *but to destroy the Church*. This is why the work that Saul of Tarsus was doing before the Lord saved him was so significant in the plan that the Devil had. Paul was not only after every Christian, but he told us himself that *he was after the Church*.

So this is not a time for us to neglect the meeting of the Church, but it is time when we ought to be having more meetings, times for teaching, and times for praying, and times when we can exhort and encourage one another. Any soldier who goes into the battle alone, is facing certain defeat. But when the Church stands together, and becomes “a mighty army,” she is invincible. I personally believe that in the Church today we have ignored this truth in Scripture. No Christian in these days can afford to separate himself from the Church.

Surely this is one reason the Lord Jesus prayed so fervently in his prayer in John 17 for the oneness of His people. Doctrinally we must be united. This is of supreme important. But we must be united in our fellowship with each other, supporting one another, praying one another, and when necessary, rescuing one another. I hope these truths are firmly fixed in all of our minds and hearts. The more the Church is united as one body, the greater impact the Church will have in this world, and the greater will be her victories, and the more numerous.

Speaking of our enemies, I like to say that we have the flesh within us, we have the world all around us, and we have the Devil above us in the sense that he is wiser than we are, and more powerful than we are. But we always need to remember what the Apostle John wrote about the spirit of antichrist which is in the world. Listen to his words in 1 John 4:4:

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

So our hope of victory is not really in ourselves, but in God Who dwells within us – in us individually, and in us as the Church.

Let ask the question, first of all,

## **I. WHAT IS “THE WORLD”?**

We are not talking about the earth, the created world on which we live. That world declares the glory of God. It shows His handiwork. It is where “every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,” as one of our hymns states it.

No, we are not talking about the earth, but we are talking about what goes on in this world – the godlessness, the sin, the corruption, the pleasures

Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:11-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17 (4)

which mean so much to the people of the world. We are talking about the affairs of this world.

The best definition we have in Scripture of the world is found in one of the passages I have chosen as my text for tonight: 1 John 2:15-17.  
(Read.)

It is that kingdom which is called the kingdom of darkness. The Devil is called “the god of this world.” He brought the human race under his domain when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. And the people of the world have been going his way ever since. They don’t always like what happens to them, but they are His slaves and they live under His control.

And so the people of the world are interested in the power that they can gain, in the riches of the world. that they can gather. The world is a place where all kinds of human lust run rampant, and men live for this life and for themselves, rather than seeking to glorify God and to please Him.

But as John said, it is “passing away.” It is under the judgment of God, and God is the One Who is going to have the last word. So we are not to love the world and the world’s way of life. This means that the world is not ever to be our first choice. The Lord died to save us from this present evil world, as Paul told the Galatians. So we are not to set our affections on things below, but on things above. This is the first thing that we need to learn if we are to be victorious over the world.

But let me take you now to another text: Rom. 12:1-2.

We are thinking now about how we are to be able to live victoriously in such a wicked environment. John has given us our first point. Now let us see what the Apostle Paul had to say.

## **II. TWO IMPORTANT POINTS IN OUR WARFARE AGAINST THE WORLD (Rom. 12:1-2).**

### **A. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God” (Rom. 12:1).**

Paul had discussed this in Rom. 6. Turn with me to that chapter, and let

me read to you verses 11-13. (Read.)

There are three great truths here that we need to act upon. And acting upon them, we learn that they are what we need in our battle against the world. This is where we come down to the importance of individual obedience to the Lord.

But Paul made another point that is just as important:

**B. “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2).**

Giving ourselves to the Lord comes first, then we are prepared to stand against the world. But continued strength comes through the renewing of our minds through the Word of God.

But there is one more passage. This is in 2 Cor. 6:11-7:1. And this also gives us both a negative responsibility as well as a positive responsibility.

**III. VICTORY REQUIRES THAT WE REFRAIN FROM ALL UNHOLY ALLIANCES (2 Cor. 6:11-7:1).**

**A. The first exhortation (2 Cor. 6:17).**

This is what we are to do in our relationship with the world.

Notice the promises at the end of verse 17 and in all of verse 18.

**B. The second exhortation (2 Cor. 7:1).**

This is what we need to do in a positive way to safeguard ourselves from the attractions of the world.

How often in Scripture we see that we are not to do certain things, but we are to do other things. The tendency often with believers is that they will do one without the other. Both need to be done, and the blessing is that much greater if we are all doing what we should do together.

**Concl:** There is a closely knit relationship between the Devil, the world, and our old nature, the flesh. It is practically impossible to deal

with one without dealing with the other – the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The relationship between the world and the Devil is brought out very clearly by the Apostle John in the closing verses of his first epistle, verses 18-21:

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world (1 John 5:18-21) lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (1 John 5:18-21).

Let us never forget that we live in enemy territory. That we have an enemy within, and without, and above us. But God has made provision for our continual victory. The Word is very clear. We might think that other ways would be better, but they never are. Let us learn to walk in obedience to the Word together, that we might become a mighty force in the battle against the forces of evil. “And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4b).