

**Remove Not
the
Ancient
Landmarks**

Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks

by

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“Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks”

The command, “Remove not the ancient landmarks”, occurs twice in the book of Proverbs (22:28; 23:10), and twice in the book of Deuteronomy with reference to “thy neighbour’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it” (19:14), “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen” (27:17).

The removal of ancient landmarks was a serious matter in the old world. They represented boundaries around a property, in a day when an area was marked out by stones. They were a distinguishing feature, a distinct characteristic in the inheritance of the people of God. It enabled others to recognise immediately, what was familiar territory. It brought comfort and reassurance, that the old boundaries of distinction remained unchanged.

In contrast to landmarks which remained unchanged through the centuries, Job had to say of some in his day, “Some remove the landmarks...” (24:2a). These people were strong personalities (v2b), who specialised in this "work" (v5). They caused people to “groan ... They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof” (vv. 12,13). This produced a sense of helplessness, especially among orphans, widows, the needy and the poor, who lacked the strength and resourcefulness to withstand them and resist their advances (vv. 3,4).

It is not difficult to see the way in which this answers to a movement in our own day, where the distinctive features of assembly testimony and hall-marks of the children of God are under attack and sadly, in too many instances, have disappeared. There are areas where they are now largely a thing of the past, as also the men and women who practiced them and the men who taught them. Even where these features have been preserved in a measure, there is an ever present danger that they can begin to lapse or be given up. This is especially applicable to Scriptural terms, names and “the form of sound words”, which are used to describe the people of God and the churches of God, Scriptural principles and practices. There is a tremendous need to “Hold fast *the form of sound* [‘healthful’] words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2Timothy 1:13). There is also a need to resist attempts to remove them and where possible to recover them, as in the case of Isaac in his conflict with the Philistines, when he “waxed great and went forward and grew until he became very great; ... And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham and *he called their names after the names by which his father had called them*” (Genesis 26:12-25).

The Landmark of the Form of Sound Words

In the first main section of Paul's second epistle to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 13, Timothy is exhorted to "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me." The word "form", *hupotuposis*, is 'the impression left by a seal, a pattern,' an example to be followed.

K.S.Wuest enlarges upon the meaning of the word "form" – 'a pattern by which one can maintain the sameness of a thing ... that is, he is to hold to the doctrinal phraseology he received from the great apostle. Particular words are to be retained and used so that doctrinal statements of the truth may remain accurate and a norm for future teachers and preachers. This is vitally connected with the doctrine of verbal inspiration which holds that the Bible writers wrote down in God-chosen words, the truth given by revelation.'

Paul's conversion was a pattern conversion, "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to everlasting life" (1Timothy 1:16). In 2Timothy 1:11-13, he is a pattern servant. His teaching is described as "the form of sound words", an outline or model, a pattern that Timothy must hold to and to which his ministry must conform. Timothy represents the next generation who are responsible to follow the pattern which has been established. The outline of sound words represents a series of landmarks by which the testimony is recognised, and which must not be removed.

H.A.Kent Jr writes, 'The ministry of the great apostle was a proclamation of the good news of salvation. This he had done by preaching, teaching and writing as well as by consistent Christian living. Now Paul was leaving the earthly scene. There remained the possibility that others coming later might alter or destroy the truth as Paul had taught it. Timothy must regard them ["that which thou hast heard of me"] as a model or pattern to be carefully copied. The modern idea of reinterpreting Christianity for the man of today, by setting Christian principles in new forms or moulds, is at variance with Paul's injunction. The gospel proceeded from God to man. Hence man is not at liberty to change the meaning or the forms or the words in which God gave it through His chosen apostles. Therefore Timothy is encouraged to guard the gospel message which was entrusted to him.'

The words "in faith and love" are connected with "Hold fast..." The connection is, Hold fast 'with the strong conviction of faith and fervour of love.' This is another reminder of an important balance in Paul's service. We need to remember too that love is primarily love to God and like faith, it is governed by the Scriptures and Scriptural principles (1Corinthians 13:3; Galatians 5:6; Romans 14:23; Hebrews 6:10; Ephesians 6:23; 1Thessalonians 1:3; 1Timothy 1:4c,5,14; 2:7c; 2Timothy 1:13c; James 2:14-18).

"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep..." (v14). "That good thing" is the

form of sound words, the deposit of truth. There is a difference between the subject in verse 14 and in the comparable language of verse 12. In verse 12, God is the subject of the verse, and the keeping of the deposit is committed to Him. In verse 14, the guarding of the deposit, is the subject of the sentence and Timothy is to guard the deposit of truth committed to him.

“Guard”, *phulasso*, ‘to guard, protect’ (G.V.Wigram), is translated “observe” (1Timothy 5:21), “beware”, ‘to be on one’s guard, beware of’, (2Timothy 4:15; 2Peter 3:17). Cp. “O Timothy, keep [‘guard’] that which is committed to thy trust...” (1Timothy 6:20). The deposit of truth must be guarded as a banker guards the money deposited with him. It must not be lost, changed, or altered in the face of pressure. This is only possible “through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.” Paul uses the present tense of the verb *enoikeo*, ‘to be at home in’, which indicates a present, continuous experience. This implies that the Holy Spirit must not be grieved in the life of the individual believer or quenched in the collective gatherings of the assembly, if the truth is to be guarded. Conditions among the saints affect the condition of the assembly. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can preserve the truth. This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the epistle but it is an important one.

2Timothy 1, verse 13, is one of ten occasions in the New Testament where we are told to “hold fast” certain things. “Hold fast” is the translation of a derivative of the verb *echo*, ‘to hold, to have, to cling to, to adhere steadfastly to.’ In a day when many matters are being held lightly or given up, we need to pay special attention to those matters which we are to hold fast. This must not be confused with holding the traditions of men, which are handed down from one generation to the next, and acquire weight and an aura, which it is difficult to abandon, and frequently makes the word of God “of none effect.” There are apostolic traditions, which are one of those matters we are exhorted to hold fast.

Paul’s second epistle to Timothy takes the form of a series of exhortations. His first exhortation reminds Timothy to “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee...” (v6,7). The second exhortation in verse 8, sets the background to chapter 1, with its exhortation, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” The testimony is described in verse 13, as “the form of sound words.” And in verse 14 as “that good thing”. We are not to be ashamed of it or shrink from the reproach associated with it.

As Paul writes the last of his Divinely-inspired epistles, he obviously feels the responsibility which he is passing on to his younger fellow-servant. The epistle should be seen in the context of the responsibility falling on the rising generation and the need to continue to maintain those matters which the older generation have been responsible to hold fast in their day. The younger generation cannot expect to learn what is necessary for them to pass on to their generation without the help provided by the previous

generation. There is an outline of doctrine to be passed on without change or adaptation – “And the things that thou hast heard of me ... the **same** commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2:2).

Paul had committed the form of sound words to men like Timothy. Timothy was responsible to commit it to “faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Faithfulness or trustworthiness is placed before ability. Both are necessary but faithfulness is the priority. It is within this overall context that we should give serious thought to the practical considerations of the exhortation in 2Timothy 1:13, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.” These are spiritual landmarks, committed to our trust in the form of sound words, which must be guarded.

“In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod ... And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew’s language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them” (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

The Landmark of Scriptural Names for the People of God

In our consideration of The Landmark of Scriptural Names for the People of God, it is important to remember that we are dealing with Divinely-inspired words. The “form” of sound words is ‘a pattern by which one can maintain the sameness of a thing ... Particular words are to be retained and used so that doctrinal statements of the truth may remain accurate and a norm for future teachers and preachers. This is vitally connected with the doctrine of verbal inspiration which holds that the Bible writers wrote down in God-chosen words, the truth given by revelation’ K.S.Wuest.

There are a number of Scriptural words in the New Testament which are used to describe all the people of God. If we read the Scriptures carefully, we will find that they are called believers, disciples, Christians, brethren and saints. Each of these five words is deeply significant, in the same way that the five Scriptural terms used to describe the churches of God are significant. This is a mark of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures and adds emphasis to the need to "hold fast" to them, and repudiate all human names. It is a contrast to denominational titles and names. If we believe in the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, we will repudiate all human names. We will not accept the denomination of Brethren, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterian, national churches – the Church of England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales, Roman Catholic, or any other of the many modern designations.

The terms used to describe the people of God individually and collectively, are a firm line of demarcation, which must be maintained by the distinctive testimony of the churches of God. The testimony is, in itself, a condemnation of the world system of denominationalism. Where there is a failure to maintain this distinctive testimony, it is equivalent to the removal of the ancient landmarks.

BELIEVERS – There are two references to the people of God as “believers” – Acts 5:14 and 1Timothy 4:12. The same idea is expressed in another way as “he that believeth”, in contrast to “unbelievers”, “he that believeth not” (Mark 16:16; John 3:18; 2Corinthians 6:14,15; 1Timothy 5:7,8,16; 1John 5:10).

The first occasion this term is used, confirms the main idea, that the people of God are believers in contrast to unbelievers – “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (And they were all of one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest [‘of the people’] durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women)” (Acts 5:12-14). This distinction gives the term a practical application, which is seen in two of the references given above (2Corinthians 6:14,15 and 1Timothy 5:16).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: ... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel [‘unbeliever’]?” (2Corinthians 6:14,15). The distinction between a believer and an unbeliever as a result of conversion must be evident in a different manner of life and life style. This distinction means that the believers must be separate from unbelievers and come out from any association with them, which is an unequal yoke. The words “unequally yoked together” are literally “diversely yoked together”, ‘diametrically opposed to being a child of God.’ See Deuteronomy 22:9-11.

In 2Corinthians 6:14,15, the prohibition of an unequal yoke with unbelievers, is applicable to marriage, business partnerships and religious associations. It would prohibit marriage to an unsaved person, trade union membership and service in the world’s religious systems.

Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, chapter 5, deals with arrangements for the care of widows. “If any man or woman that believeth have widows” (v16), they are to provide necessary relief. It is a personal responsibility rather than an assembly matter. Failure to do so, is to be “worse than an infidel [‘unbeliever’].” Many unbelievers set an example of care for the elderly. This responsibility can be very demanding but it is a responsibility which must be undertaken, consistently with being a believer.

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [behaviour, manner of life], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Timothy 4:12). This reference in Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, gives us a clear idea of some of the characteristics which are expected in a believer and which will distinguish him or her

from an unbeliever. Timothy is to 'Continue becoming a model', which would remove any ground upon which his youth could be despised, looked down upon. The example to be followed covers six areas – speech, conduct, and love towards God and towards others, in spirit, faith and purity. Timothy sets an example of what is expected in the lives of the people of God as believers. As we look back, we remember men who did more for us by their example than many have done by their teaching. Both are important.

The term “believer” marks the distinction from an unbeliever, which must be evident in practice. ‘Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man or woman obeys God, he/she gives the only possible evidence that in his/her heart, he/she believes God’ W.E.Vine. In reality, we only believe what we put into practice.

DISCIPLES – In the book of Acts, Luke uses the word “disciples” to describe the first occasion when they were also called “Christians” (11:26). The new designation “Christians”, bore testimony to the true discipleship of the believers at Antioch. In order to appreciate this more fully we need to consider the word “disciple” and the meaning of “called Christians.”

The word “disciple” occurs in the Old Testament in Isaiah 8:16; 50:4, “learned”; 54:13, “taught”. In the New Testament the Greek word *mathetes*, means ‘lit. “a learner” (from *manthano*, “to learn”, from a root math – indicating thought accompanied by endeavour) in contrast to *didaskalos*, “a teacher”; ...A disciple was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher; cf. John 8:31; 15:8’ W.E.Vine.

The word “disciples” occurs 28 times in the book of Acts. It is the first term used to describe the first company (1:15) and also, the first description of Timothy, even before we know his name (16:1). It does not occur after 21:16 or in Paul’s epistles. This does not mean that it has ceased to be a description of those who belong to Christ. The verb to learn, *manthano*, ‘akin to *mathetes*, a disciple’ (W.E.Vine), occurs in the language of discipleship in Romans 16:17; 1Corinthians 4:6; 14:31,35; Ephesians 4:20; Philippians 4:9,11; 1Timothy 2:11; 5:4; 2Timothy 3:14 [twice] and Titus 3:14.

Acts 14:20-23, shows the way in which the apostles carried out the Lord’s commission, when they “taught [‘made disciples of’] many ... Confirming the souls of the disciples...” The Lord’s commission in Matthew 28:18-20, shows clearly that making disciples continues to the end of the age. “Go ye therefore, and teach [lit. ‘make disciples of’] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [‘age’].”

The responsibility of making disciples includes “baptizing them” and teaching the observance of “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The first step of

discipleship is baptism, followed by the observance of the Lord's command to "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19,20; 1Corinthians 11:23-26). The remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of bread can only be carried out as a result of being in fellowship in the local assembly. These are the first steps of discipleship. What follows is a lifelong discipleship of learning, continuing in His word, loving fellow-disciples and following His example.

CHRISTIANS – "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26c). The three references to "Christian" in the New Testament show us three things, (i) that it is our 'chief business', (ii) it is a term of reproach, and (iii) while it involves suffering we should not be ashamed, but "glorify God on this behalf." It was not a name which the world called them and which they accepted without Divine approval. We must be careful not to allow the world to give us labels or use them ourselves, e.g. Christian Brethren.

The verb "called Christians" is *chrematizo*. W.E.Vine writes, 'which occasionally means "to be called or named," (Acts 11:26 – of the name "Christians") and Romans 7:3, the only places where it has this meaning. Its primary significance, "to have business dealings with", led to this. They "were [publicly] called Christians", because this was their chief business.'

'Christians do not seem to have adopted it for themselves in the times of the apostles. In 1Peter 4:16, the apostle is speaking from the point of view of the persecutor; Cp. "as a thief," or "as a murderer." Nor is it likely that the appellation was given by Jews. As applied by Gentiles there was no doubt an implication of scorn, as in Agrippa's statement in Acts 26:28. Tacitus, writing near the end of the first century, says, "The vulgar call them Christians. The author or origin of this denomination, Christus, had, in the reign of Tiberius, been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate" – Annals xv44. From the second century onward the term was accepted by believers as a title of honour.'

Although the name of Christian was used reproachfully by the world, the description had Divine approval and this is seen on the two other occasions, in Acts 26:28 and 1Peter 4:16, where it is firstly, a name used scornfully by Agrippa and then with honourable approval by Peter. We should ask ourselves the question, Is it our first business to be a Christian? Are we known for it? Are we prepared to suffer reproach for it?

BRETHREN – The name "brethren", *adelphos*, has the sense of 'a community based on identity of origin or life' W.E.Vine. The collective term is "brotherhood" (1Peter 2:17; 5:9 [margin]), which in certain references includes sisters (Romans 1:13). The Greek word for sister is *adelphē*, the feminine form of *adelphos*. The compound word, *philadelphos*, *phileo*, to love and *adelphos*, fond of one's brethren (1Peter 3:8), and *philadelphia*, "brotherly love" (Romans 12:10; 1Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1Peter 1:22; 2Peter 1:7), shows its important association with love and the responsibility for love of the brethren as members of the same family. Brotherly love is distinct, as a special aspect of love (1Peter 1:22, "love of the brethren"; 2Peter 1:7 ["brotherly kindness" AV]). This

emphasis is seen, for example, in the epistles of John. Cp. "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1Thessalonians 4:9).

In spite of the many difficult matters which Paul had to deal with in his first epistle to the Corinthians, he uses the word "brother, brethren", thirty seven times. It was an appropriate word for an assembly where carnality had robbed them of so many features of this important characteristic. It is significant that Paul associates Sosthenes with himself in the opening verse and describes him as "our brother". In the original Greek text, it is "the brother". He associates Timothy with himself in the second epistle to the Corinthians and describes him as "Timothy the brother" (2Corinthians 1:1). Sosthenes and Timothy were examples of what being a "brother" means and what the Corinthians should have been. Cp. "Quartus the brother" (Romans 16:23), "brother Apollos" (1Corinthians 16:12). As brethren, we are responsible to show brotherly love and be brethren in practice.

SAINTS – There are 35 references in the Old Testament where the people of God are described as saints, e.g. Deuteronomy 33:2,3; 1Samuel 2:9. Cp. Matthew 27:52. There are 60 references to "saints" in the New Testament. Six New Testament letters are addressed to "the saints" – Romans 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:2; 2Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2. These epistles were written to living saints. They were all designated "saints" by Divine calling, "called saints", *hagioi*, i.e. 'sanctified or holy ones.' The designation saints is not a sainthood conferred on a few carefully chosen persons of supposedly exceptional holiness, which is recognised after death. 'This sainthood is not an attainment. It is a state into which God in grace calls men; yet believers are called to sanctify themselves consistently with their calling (2Timothy 1:9; 1Peter 1:15)' W.E.Vine. Those who are "called saints" must give evidence of it and live "as cometh saints" (Romans 16:2; Ephesians 5:3).

When the Lord Jesus comes again, "all His saints" will be caught up into His presence (1Thessalonians 3:13) and all His "saints" of every age, will appear with Him in His manifestation in glory – "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2Thessalonians 1:10; Zechariah 14:5; Jude 14).

The opening verses of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians help us to appreciate the significance of being "called saints". The apostle has addressed the epistle to the church of God in its geographical location, "the church of God which is at Corinth", a recognisable company to whom an epistle could be sent, and not a general vague description of all believers in a locality, whether gathered in the company or not. He now addresses the same company, viewed positionally, "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints."

Two sections of 1st Corinthians deal with two closely related subjects, the Assembly and

its Unity [3:5-4:21] and the Assembly and its Sanctity [5:1-6:11]. The third figure to be used as an illustration of the character of the assembly in chapter 3 is “temple of God” – “Know ye not ... the Spirit of God dwelleth in you [collectively]? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (3:17). These two sections provide the basis for what follows in the way of deeply instructive teaching, showing us what it is to be “saints” in practical terms.

Amidst the corruption and licentiousness for which Corinth was famed, there was a gathered out company of those who were sanctified positionally “in Christ Jesus” and responsible to lead sanctified lives, as those who are “called saints”, i.e. ‘sanctified ones.’ The additional description “called saints” is not superfluous. It confirms the reality of the position into which they have been called.

We have already been reminded that the numerous references in the epistle to the believers as “brethren”, shows that we are responsible to be brethren in practice. The reference to our being “them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints”, reminds us that we are responsible to live sanctified lives in separation from the world in all its aspects.

The Landmark of Scriptural Terms for the Churches of God

“...And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: ***and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them...***” (Genesis 26:12-25)

In addition to the five Scriptural names for the people of God, there are five specific terms used to designate the churches of God, the collective testimony of “all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours.” The five terms used, are (i) “the church of God”, (ii) “the churches of a local area or region, e.g. Macedonia, Asia, Galatia”, (iii) “the churches of Christ”, (iv) “the churches of the saints” and (v) “the church of the Thessalonians” or “the churches of the Gentiles”. The number five reminds us of the “five smooth stones out of the brook”, which David chose, to arm himself for the battle with the giant Philistine, after rejecting Saul’s armour. Holding fast to these landmarks will enable us to defy the giant Philistine world, and remain separate from its unreality, its false claims to occupy Christian position and its opposition to the people of God (Genesis 26:12-31; Philippians 3:1-3,17,18).

“CHURCH of GOD” is possibly the most important of the terms used for the collective testimony of believers. This description of the local assembly at Corinth (1Corinthians 1:2), is found in the singular form elsewhere, in Acts 20:28; 1Corinthians 10:32; 11:22; 15:9 [Galatians 1:13]; 2Corinthians 1:1; 1Timothy 3:5; and in the plural form, “the churches of God”, in 1Corinthians 11:16; 1Thessalonians 2:14; 2Thessalonians 1:4. These references provide us with important instruction concerning the significance of the term “Church of God” and its plural form.

The plural form, “the churches of God”, distinguishes the local assembly from “the Church which is His body” (Ephesians 1:23). “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4), which is the complete Church, composed of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). There are many “churches of God” in many localities, which are “body of Christ” in character and function [the definite article (KJV) is not in the original Greek text]. “Now ye are [the] body of Christ and members in particular [individually]” (1Corinthians 12:27).

The significance of the term “the church of God” commences with the first reference in Acts 20:28. Paul charges the overseers at Ephesus [“elders”, v17] with the pastoral care of “all the flock, over [in] the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed [as shepherds] the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood [the blood of His own (Son)].”

The “church of God” belongs to God. It is His by purchase. It is not Pastor —’s church or anybody else’s church. It is “the church of God” and is infinitely precious and valuable to Him, even if it is a “little flock”. There are a number of important points to be noticed here.

- (i) The “church of God” belongs to Him. As a “golden lampstand” (Revelation 1:20c), it conforms to a Divine pattern which distinguishes it from all that is not “of God”. We are responsible to follow the pattern and build upon the foundation of teaching laid down by Paul and the apostles (1Corinthians 3:10-16; Exodus 25:8,9; Hebrews 8:5).
- (ii) The diminutive form of the word “flock”, *poimnion*, is used here and in 1Peter 5:2,3. It distinguishes the local assembly from the “one flock” [rendered incorrectly, “fold” KJV] (John 10:16), composed of all believers in the Church age. Again, the distinction between the local assembly and “the Church which is His body” is maintained, as already noted.
- (iii) It is cared for by overseers who are also called elders and shepherds. There is no one-man ministry in the churches of God but a plurality of overseers, who must meet the Scriptural qualifications (1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- (iv) There is no humanly ordained or appointed ministry in the churches of God. Their leaders, guides [“them that have the rule over you” – KJV] (Hebrews 13:7,17,24), are appointed by the Holy Spirit.

- (v) Elders in the church of God are a recognised body of men (v17), who are responsible to the risen Head of the Church, to whom they will give account of their stewardship. They are not responsible to another man or body of men or organisation. As Paul took his leave of them, he simply commended them to “God and the word of His grace.”

Each of these points is confirmed in the first epistle to the Corinthians, the epistle of the church of God. An additional characteristic of the church of God is dealt with in this epistle. It is the truth of Divine Headships. The passage in which this is taught (11:2-16), closes with the words, “But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (v16). An important aspect of this truth is observed in the uncovered head and short hair of the man and the covered head and long hair of the woman. It was not customary to allow the teaching of what is clearly Divine order, to be the subject of controversy in the churches of God. Where it is set aside, the company cannot be recognised as one of the churches of God.

If we grasp the significance of these references, it will deliver us from much that is not “of God” in the confusion of Christendom. It will deliver us from the use of unscriptural terms, such as ‘evangelical church’, which breaks down the distinction between the assembly and the wider evangelical world, and the unscriptural idea of ‘the church of God on earth,’ which confuses the distinction between local churches of God and the Church, which is His body, composed of all believers during the Church age.

Another term used to describe local churches occurs when we read of a plurality of churches in a region or country, e.g. “**CHURCHES of GALATIA**” (1Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2); Asia (1Corinthians 16:19; Revelation 1:4); Macedonia (2Corinthians 8:1); Judæa (Galatians 1:22). This is not only descriptive of their geographical location but also their individual and separate identity. It describes their governmental autonomy, as not belonging to any national or regional body, e.g. Church of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, or indeed any form of human organisation. No jurisdiction is exercised by one assembly over other assemblies in the area or further afield. They are each gathered on the ground of the word of God, in fellowship with one another and with all other Divinely-constituted “churches of God”, who are similarly gathered into the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. They retain their individual identity and direct responsibility to the Lord Himself but are also responsible to recognise matters of discipline exercised by other churches of God, in accordance with the word of God (Revelation 1:12,16,20; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14).

“**The CHURCHES of CHRIST**” (Romans 16:16) describes the way in which the churches belong to Christ and are precious to Him, in much the same way that the church of God, describes the relationship with God. As the “churches of Christ” they are responsible to Him, and governmentally independent. We should not use the expression “the church of Christ” to describe the Church which is His body. The churches of Christ recognise His

ownership and authority and that He is the centre of gathering, their Lord and their Head. Paul captures something of the spirit of this term when he writes to the Corinthians, “for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Corinthians 11:2).

“The CHURCHES of the SAINTS” (1Corinthians 14:33,34) may have the primary sense that they are all saved persons, separated from the world of the unsaved. The secondary emphasis is upon a manner of life and behaviour which “becometh saints.” The features which are becoming in the saints has already been considered and are a characteristic landmark of “the churches of the saints.” The designation “churches of the saints”, points to the conduct and order which is becoming saints in the assembly gatherings.

It seems likely that 1Corinthians 14:33,34, should read, “As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches”. Corinth must not think that it was a law to itself and that it could originate an order of things that was different to the pattern followed by all the churches by allowing sisters to take part publicly (v36-38). No company can be recognised as one of the churches of the saints where there is a mixture of saved and unsaved or where the sisters are allowed to take part publicly.

“The CHURCHES of the GENTILES”; “the church of the Thessalonians” (Romans 16:4; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:1) are terms used to describe the membership of the churches of the Gentile world and the church at Thessalonica.

These descriptive terms can be used to describe all believers, in contrast to sectarian names which are only acceptable to the sectarian parties themselves and are a source of division. Sectarian names should be strongly repudiated. This includes such names as Christian Brethren or Plymouth Brethren.

The multiplicity of sectarian names in denominationalism has produced the evil of sectarian divisions. The practice still continues in the collective names given to companies of believers such as Evangelical Church, Christian Fellowship or a change in the name of meeting place to chapel, with its only occurrence in Scripture, identifying it as the place where there is no room for the word of God (Amos 7:12,13). This usage is simply an imitation of the sectarian world, to say nothing of Roman Catholicism. These terms cannot be used by believers because they are unscriptural and divisive, producing the Babylonish confusion which is such a stumbling block to believers and to an unbelieving world.

The Landmarks of Christian Experience

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content. ... I can do all things through [in] Christ which strengtheneth me.”

(Philippians 4:11,13)

The landmarks of the old world marked out the personal property boundaries of Israel’s inheritance in the land. They were lines of demarcation, distinguishing features associated with personal possessions. Today, they answer to distinctive features marking the testimony of God in the world. There are distinguishing features which are possessed by the people of God and the assemblies of God, lines of demarcation which show they are different from the world and the world-system. It should be a matter of spiritual exercise to see them preserved and maintained and to be an influence to counter the movement away from these Scriptural characteristics. If it is possible, we should seek to recover these ancient landmarks, where they have been removed or departed from. This can only be brought about in the measure in which our own lives and teaching, are consistent with the word of God and in which we ‘possess our possessions’ (Joshua 1:3).

The landmarks in Israel’s inheritance represent what we have possessed and what marks us, in terms of Christian experience. It is something that we need to maintain. Landmarks of Christian experience are important because they mark stages of development in Christian experience, in apprehending and obeying the teaching of the word of God. Not all the experiences of Christians are Christian experience. We must be careful to see that they are not removed. This aspect of our subject is personal to us all.

In speaking of the landmarks in Christian experience, we have in mind those occasions when we passed through spiritual experiences, which represented a milestone in our spiritual history. They act as markers in the past but must be maintained, if we are to advance further in the things of God. There is no standing still in Christian experience and no room for complacency. If progress is not maintained, former landmarks can be removed. We can even re-cross boundaries that have been established in the past and begin travelling in a wrong direction. More than likely, we will then become part of the movement away from the Ancient Landmarks which distinguish the people of God and the churches of God, from the world, and all that is not “of God”.

In our study of the word of God, we cannot fail to notice that there were landmarks in the spiritual experience of the men and women of God, in all ages. Time would fail to tell of them all, but we should take note of some points in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives.

“Altars” and “wells” marked important stages in Abraham’s life. “Wells” feature prominently in Isaac’s life. “Altars” and more especially “pillars”, marked important points in the life of Jacob. “Altars” were significant in the lives of Abraham and Jacob,

especially in connection with Bethel, “the house of God”, twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Each of these patriarchs was a tent-dweller.

Altars, tents, wells and pillars were important landmarks in the lives of the patriarchs. Altars represent approach to and communion with God, the exercises of priesthood and the enjoyment of Divine provision (Hebrews 13:10-16). The tent is a testimony to pilgrim character, living for the resurrection world (Hebrews 11:9,10). “Wells of springing water” represent the free, sovereign flow of the ministry of the Spirit in worship, and in the opening up of streams of refreshment for the people of God, as place is given to the Presidency of the Holy Spirit (John 4:13-15,21-24). This is characteristic of the people of God and the churches of God (Romans 8:1,2,5,6; 1Corinthians 12:4-11). “Pillars” are associated with witness and answer to the testimony to be maintained by behaviour in “[the] house of God, which is [the] church of the living God, [the] pillar and ground of the truth” (1Timothy 3:15). These Ancient Landmarks have been practically removed in many areas of assembly testimony and many of them are frequently in danger of failure in practice and of disappearing in others.

ABRAHAM – Abraham’s obedience in leaving Ur of the Chaldees in response to the revelation of “the God of glory”, was rewarded by a further appearance of the Lord to him, when he reached the land. The land was possessed by the Canaanites but it was promised to Abraham and his seed. He now received much needed confirmation of the sevenfold, unconditional promises given to him, when he left Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 12:1-3). He “passed through the land unto the place of Sichem [‘shoulder’, dependence], unto the plain [‘oak’] of Moreh [‘Teacher’]. And the Canaanite was then in the land” (Genesis 12:6).

Shechem [Sichem] and the plain of Moreh, were the first significant landmarks in the life of Abraham. At Moreh, “the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.” At Moreh, he raised his first altar and worshipped in the light of Divine revelation. He moved on. “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Hai [‘the heap of ruins’] on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called on the name of the LORD.” Abraham built his second altar in the land, with Bethel [‘the house of God’] on the west, and Hai, [the heap of ruins] in view. Here, his tent marked his pilgrim character and his calling upon the name of the Lord, marked his prayerful dependence. Again, he moved in the light of Divine revelation, “and called upon the name of the LORD” (13:3,4).

Under severe testing, Abraham moved away from the landmark he had established “between Bethel and Hai” and went down into Egypt (12:9-13:2), where he acted in such a way that, among other things, he incurred Pharaoh’s rebuke. In order to recover his former position he had to go back to “the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD” (13:3,4).

Abraham also built an altar “in the plain of Mamre [‘From seeing or From the vision’], which is in Hebron” (13:18) and on that never to be forgotten occasion, on Mount Moriah [‘The manifestation or sight of Jah or Jehovah’]. Moriah was the place where he offered the ram “for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh [Jehovah will see or provide]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen” (22:1-18). Mount Moriah was the climax of landmarks in Abraham’s life, when he was “justified by works”, as he demonstrated that Jehovah and obedience to His word, were more important to him, than the dearest of earthly possessions. He learnt that God is no man’s debtor, when he received Isaac back from the dead, “in a figure”, and the promises were renewed to him in an enlarged way, “because thou hast obeyed My voice.” Landmarks are steps of obedience.

The altars which Abraham built, represent the priestly exercises of communion with God (1Corinthians 10:18-22), worship and prayer, and the exercises of priesthood Godward. Other characteristics of priesthood, are worshipful, sacrificial service in living "unto the Lord" (Romans 1:9, “serve”, worship, as a priest), succour, sympathy, and sacrificial giving, in ministering to others (Hebrews 13:15,16). All believers have been made “a kingdom of priests [kings and priests] unto God and His Father” (Revelation 1:6), “a holy priesthood” Godward, “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ” (1Peter 2:5) and “a royal priesthood” manward, “to show forth the praises of Him” who has called us “out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1Peter 2:9).

The public exercises of priesthood can only be carried out in association with the local assembly, outside the camp of organised religious systems where there is a humanly ordained priesthood, which functions contrary to the word of God (Hebrews 13:13-15). We never cease to be priests unto His God and Father, although we can become unfitted for the exercises associated with priesthood (Leviticus 21:16-23).

It is not difficult to see at this stage, the lessons which the life of Abraham has for us. In those early halcyon days of conversion, we were deeply impressed with the glory of the One who had called us “to [‘by His own’] glory and virtue” (2Peter 1:3). Dependence, submission to the teaching of Scripture, and early growth, were comparatively easy. We will never forget, the time when we learnt the truth of the house of God and that everything else was “a heap of ruins.” We “built an altar” and experienced the joy of worshipping the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of Divine revelation.

It was an important landmark in our soul’s history, when we learnt the truth of the priesthood of all believers (1Peter 2:4,5,9,10). Each morning, we gave priority to the “place of the altar” in our daily reading and prayer times. Later we were privileged to set up and maintain the family altar. Communion and prayer were precious realities. This was reflected in the assembly gatherings, which we learnt was “none other than the house of God” and where “none shall appear before Me empty.” Pilgrim character marked us. No doubt many of us would acknowledge the pull to return to the spiritual equivalent of Egypt, when we were tested on the position we had taken. The world out

of which God had called us, reasserted its power. We had to learn in a practical way, that “no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2Timothy 2:4). This did not mean that we should neglect necessary matters in our responsibilities in the world and to the world. If we allowed the world into our lives, we knew that recovery was only possible by returning to the place where we were “at the beginning ... at the first...” (Genesis 13:3,4; Revelation 2:4,5; 3:3). We learnt to “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23).

ISAAC – There is only one reference to Isaac’s building an altar (Genesis 26:25). A landmark was established in his life at this point, when he made a stand against the Philistines. He added to his possessions, which were the envy of the Philistines, the “wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father.” The Philistines had “stopped” the wells from flowing and “filled them with earth” (Genesis 26:12-15,18). There is no mention of the wells which his servants digged and which he named, in the record of Abraham’s life. The reference to it here shows that “wells of springing water” (v19), occupied an important place in his life, as well as “altars”.

“Wells of springing water” represent the free, sovereign flow of the ministry of the Spirit in worship, and the opening up of streams of refreshment for the people of God, as place is given to the Presidency of the Holy Spirit. This is characteristic of the churches of God.

Isaac had “waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great...” The Philistines had stopped up the wells which had been dug with much effort and hard work, in the days of Abraham. “Isaac digged again the wells of water ... and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them” (26:18; also v15). Isaac’s greatness is seen in the fact that he disputed with the Philistines and recovered these ancient landmarks. These verses are a good example of the way in which the Philistines made claims to a position and possessions in the land, to which they had no entitlement (v19-21). They represent empty profession, unreality. There is no record of the Philistines crossing Jordan to enter the land.

The Philistines feature prominently in the Old Testament, as a constant source of danger and opposition to the people of God, in the Old Testament. In the language of the New Testament, they represent those who claim to have taken up Christian position but are not entitled to it because their spiritual history is not consistent with it. We can all become Philistines! They represent the movement which has opposed and stopped the free, sovereign movements and ministry of the Spirit of God, in the past century after it had been recovered in the movement of God in the 19th century. It is a reminder to us of the need to preserve this characteristic feature of the churches of God, wherever possible, and if possible, to strive to see it recovered, as Isaac did. If the Holy Spirit is given His rightful place in our lives and in the assembly, He will ensure that the Lord Jesus is given His rightful place and that He is glorified (John 16:14).

JACOB – Jacob could never forget the first time that he learnt about the house of God. In spite of his privileged upbringing, he appears to be uncomfortable in the presence of

God. He had lighted upon a certain place, where he dreamed of “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: ... And, behold, the LORD stood above it.” When he awoke, he said, “Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not ... How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: ... this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house...” (Genesis 28:11-22).

This was Jacob’s first acquaintance with Bethel, “God’s house”. Obviously, he had much to learn, but the impressions made, never left him. It would be about thirty years before he returned to the land and when the building of his first altar is recorded. At Shalem [Peace], a city of Shechem, he pitched his tent, bought a parcel of ground and “he erected there an altar and called it El-elohe Israel,” ‘God, the God of Israel’ (Genesis 33:20).

It was at Shalem, perhaps seven years later, after the shameful incident involving his daughter Dinah that the Lord appeared unto Jacob again. “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” After many years, Jacob has to face the moral and spiritual demands of being associated with “the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” He realised how much he and his family had accumulated in Mesopotamia, which was not consistent with the house of God. He ordered the putting away of “the strange gods”, which had taken God’s place in the heart of his family, “and be clean, and change your garments [the way we are dressed is important. Earrings had to go!]: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress...” (Genesis 35:1-3).

Jacob returned to Bethel and set up an altar, “and called the place El-Bethel [i.e. God of Bethel]: because there God appeared unto him...” (35:7). It was a landmark in his spiritual history. At Shalom, he built an altar which expressed his appreciation of God’s relationship to him. At Bethel, the altar he built to the God of Bethel, showed his appreciation of the truth of God’s relationship to the house of God and the moral and spiritual demands which it placed upon him. He is now in the enjoyment of what once made him fearful, the presence of God in the house of God. To mark the occasion, he “set up a pillar in the place where He [i.e. God] talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the place where God spoke with him, Bethel” (35:14,15).

Time would fail to tell of other landmarks in Jacob’s life, e.g. “the ford Jabbok” and the landmarks of his closing years when he “blessed Pharaoh” and truly the lesser was blessed of the greater. Another landmark was reached when he guided his hands “wittingly” and blessed his grandson Ephraim, before the firstborn Manasseh. “By faith

Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Hebrews 11:21). His blessing of his own sons and the faithful exposure of their history (Genesis 49), before he was gathered to his people, is a fitting end to the landmarks in his life, which had changed him from Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel, "a prince of God."

Equally important and instructive landmarks of spiritual experience are to be found in the lives of the patriarch's wives. These are often overlooked. A woman exercises such a significant influence upon her husband that it makes it imperative that she has experiences, and develops convictions, that are comparable to those of her husband.

SARAH – Sarah's experience in relation to the birth of Isaac was even more profound than that of her husband. Initially, the promise that there would be an heir "out of thine own bowels" was made to Abraham. He believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness. About fifteen years elapsed, and the promise was repeated on two occasions, with the additional information that "the set time" had come. They both laughed in unbelief, firstly Abraham (Genesis 17:17) and then Sarah (18:11-15). Both shared in the carnal and unbelieving attempt, to produce an heir through Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. "Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" and Abraham "said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Genesis 16:1,2; 17:18). Nevertheless, at the decisive moment, Abraham "being not weak in faith ... staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong ['strengthened'] in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform"; "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many..." (Romans 4:19-21; Hebrews 11:11,12).

During the years, leading up to the birth of Isaac, the landmark of a considerable exercise of faith was finally established. Both passed through the same experience and both shared in the final triumph of faith over unbelief.

One more example of landmarks of spiritual experience, which is also full of instruction, is found in a study of the life of David. One of many examples is David's experience in relation to the Philistines and the Philistine city of Gath.

The first occasion was his encounter with "Goliath of Gath" (1Samuel 17:4,23). This was a historic occasion and a remarkable triumph of faith in "the living God." It was a landmark that would never be repeated, and a never to be forgotten experience. However, it must be said, that there is a real sense in which the landmark established in the valley of Elah was removed, on two subsequent occasions. In 1Samuel 21:10, David "arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath." David fled to Gath after he had "fled from Naioth in Ramah" and came "to Nob to Ahimelech the priest..." where

the tabernacle was pitched (1Samuel 20:1; 21:1). At Nob, he was told by the priest, that "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that: give it me. And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath" (21:9,10).

It is not difficult to see here, that the landmark of faith, established in the valley of Elah, has been removed. This is not the same man who rejected Saul's armour and took "five smooth stones out of the brook" to face Goliath and his sword. The scene which follows, where David "changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall upon his beard", is painfully embarrassing.

Possibly four years later in the period of David's wilderness experience, he "said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; ... And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men ... Achish gave him Ziklag ... And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months" (1Samuel 27:1,3-7). It would almost seem that the landmark of faith established in the valley of Elah, has not only been removed but has disappeared entirely, never to be recovered. However under the overruling hand of God, the burning of Ziklag and the temporary loss of his wives, sons and daughters and the anger of his followers was a disciplinary measure, after which "David recovered all." He recovered the landmark of faith, as his subsequent history shows. 'Ziklag was the last touch of the master-hand that was preparing him for the throne, and must therefore be especially interesting to us. The first and last step to the throne is dependence and the only title for it which God owns.' J.B.Stoney.

About sixteen years later, "David smote the Philistines, and subdued them" in a remarkable series of victories, which foreshadow future events in God's prophetic programme (Isaiah 14:28 - 27:13), "...and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines" (2Samuel 8:1). Metheg-ammah is Gath!

The history of Israel in relation to the Philistines is very instructive. The key to victory over Philistine unreality is faith and dependence upon God. Faith is a living, active power. It is only by faith that we stand (2Corinthians 1:24). It is only too easy to lapse into unreality and still maintain a claim to occupy a position which can only be maintained through constant self-judgment and dependence upon God.

As we consider landmarks in the lives of the patriarchs, we remember occasions which were landmarks in our own soul's experience, many of which correspond, in a measure, to theirs. We would like to take the liberty to touch on a little of our own experience, which may well find an echo in the experience of our readers and act as an encouragement and incentive.

We remember early days when we practically lived in the epistle to the Romans and

especially struggled to put into practice the teaching of chapters 6 to 8. But it was an important step towards our being established "according to my gospel" (Romans 16:25).

We can remember when we first considered the teaching of 1Corinthians 3:10-15 and chapters 12 to 14, in the weekly Bible Reading. We became established in the truth of the assembly as we learnt that Paul had laid down a pattern of teaching which formed the foundation of the assembly at Corinth and that we must take heed to it. This was necessary in order that our contribution to the work of building up the assembly was "according to the pattern", that had been left on record for us to follow. We learnt that eternal reward or loss of reward, were dependent upon our following the Scriptural pattern (1Corinthians 3:12-15).

As these studies progressed, we learnt the truth of Divine Headships, the Lordship of Christ (chapter 11), and the sovereign Presidency of the Holy Spirit In all the gatherings of the assembly (12:7-11). These truths were put into practice when the "whole church" came together "into one place" (14:23). We were taught that we were responsible to be present in these gatherings, to take our place and contribute to the spiritual welfare and edification of fellow-members (12:12-18,24-27; 14:26). There was nothing here to support the system of clerisy, nothing about a 'one-man' ministry, or an 'any-man' ministry, or one man controlling the spiritual exercises of the gatherings. We saw that there was no place for separate meetings for special groups within the assembly. The lambs fed with the sheep. The sisters kept silence, "as in all the churches of the saints" (14:33,34). We were taught to honour the Lord with our substance (Proverbs 3:9,10) and to set aside a proportion of income as He had prospered us, so that we could minister to the needs of others (16:1,2; Ephesians 4:28; Hebrews 13:16).

We can remember when we first heard ministry on the Levitical Offerings, especially the truth of the Burnt Offering as God's appreciation of the Person and work of His Son. Our appreciation of Christ in His sufferings upon the cross and as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah was increased, as we read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. We remember our first acquaintance with the truth of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, Divine sovereignty in election and human responsibility and our first reading in the Song of Solomon. We felt that our relationship with the Lord Jesus fell far short of the relation between the bride and her bridegroom lover, in this beautiful book. There was a time when we had gained sufficient experience to appreciate more fully the teaching concerning the Person of Christ and Paul's example of what he had "learnt", and been initiated into, in the epistle to the Philippians, the epistle of Christian experience.

We remember when we accepted engagements to speak but had no message to give and were too inexperienced to have material we could fill in with. This was painful but instructive because we learnt that it was necessary to wait upon God for a message and then take the opportunities which He ordered for us, and then, with His help to speak, even falteringly, from His word. This exercise took time to develop, especially as there

was limited opportunity at the time to move in this way. There were few that we knew who had convictions and exercise about what was taught clearly in the Scriptures.

It was also a significant experience when we developed an exercise to begin open air work in the centre of the city where we lived and were known, and then to reach out to souls in areas, “not where Christ was named” (Romans 15:20,21). This was especially relevant in the areas in and around where we were living. Articles written by Mr William Ferguson, month after month, as editor of Words in Season, exhorting young men to get away from assembly to assembly preaching and take a bag of tracts into ‘the backwoods’, left an unmistakable impression upon us, and contributed to this exercise, which is still a landmark in our service in the gospel.

These landmark experiences have continued and still continue. By the grace of God we learnt, sometimes in a costly way, to “Buy the truth and sell it not.” Lessons increase and become especially significant in later years, as we are able to build on previous experience and benefit from it. We do not expect the landmarks to cease until we reach heaven. Then, and not until then, it will be seen just how much spiritual progress we have made or not made (2Peter 1:5-11; Acts 20:32; Colossians 3:23-25). Meanwhile, there is still much land to be possessed!

The Landmarks of Christian Service

“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” (Colossians 4:17)

The first important landmark of Christian service is preparation. The lives of Moses, Joshua, David, John Baptist, the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, show us distinct periods of preparation before their public service. Some of these periods were extremely long in relation to the period of service but only served to enhance their public ministry. Quality is of major importance in service for God. The public service of the Lord Jesus as Jehovah’s Perfect Servant was brief in comparison with the period of comparative obscurity at Nazareth.

Moses is the example of the importance of time spent at “the backside of the desert.” Palace life and the university at Heliopolis meant that Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” but another forty years preparation was necessary and two thirds of his life [50 years in modern terms] had passed, before he was sent as the leader of the exodus. When that time came, he was marked by extreme diffidence. He finally ran out of excuses and it was only when he was left with no alternative that he took up his ministry. It has been pointed out that there are some thirteen years between Acts 9 and 13, before Paul was called to a wider sphere. ‘Let us ever be wary of thrusting gifted

young men forward in the limelight of public service before they are ready for it (1Timothy 3:6) J.C.Gibson.

All service, whether private or public, is first and foremost, “unto the Lord”, for His pleasure and glory. It is priestly service in communion with God, in which submission to the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit are a practical reality (John 15:4,5; Romans 1:9, “serve”, worship, ‘as a priest’; 6:11,13,22; 1Corinthians 12:4-11). The authority of the Word of God, its precepts and principles, must constantly be brought to bear upon ourselves personally, if we are engaged in serving others. “By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?” (Matthew 21:23-27). Conflict with human tradition and human wisdom in the things of God, are as much in evidence today, as in the Lord’s day and the days of the apostles. This is an issue which affects every aspect of Christian life and service.

A second landmark of equal importance, and vitally connected with the first, is Christian character. It is spiritual character which gives character and value to our service and will determine reward and loss of reward (2Peter 1:10,11; 1Corinthians 3:12-15).

In order to engage in the work of the Lord, it is necessary to recognise and stir up the development of spiritual gift and not neglect it (2Timothy 1:5; 1Timothy 4:14). Twenty four individual gifts are listed in Romans 12:6-8; 1Corinthians 12:7-11,28 and Ephesians 4:11. Some of these gifts were temporary sign gifts and associated with the foundation of the testimony and others envisage a wider sphere of service (Ephesians 4:11-13).

In a general way, the landmarks of Christian service are recognised in what is described as “the work of the Lord” (1Corinthians 15:58). This must be distinguished from work for the Lord. ‘Much may be done for Him which we imagine to be service rendered to Him but which is not conformed to His will and therefore is not His work in reality’ W.E.Vine.

There are a number of distinct characteristics of the work of the Lord, which need to be given fuller consideration, but the following summary will help us to keep in mind some of the issues involved. The work of the Lord is the work which God Himself is doing in conformity with His will. This must be distinguished from much that He is doing in His sovereignty, involving matters which do not have His approval. His service requires that His work is carried out in His way and in conformity with His word. It is primarily a work which He does in us and then through us (Philippians 2:13). It is the work which He gives specifically to each of us as His servants and where He provides all that is necessary, including ability and resources. Gifts are given sovereignly and directed in their exercise by the sovereign control of the Spirit of God, who also determines the sphere and occasion of their exercise. The work of the Lord calls for care and diligence and this includes secular employment, and what may be considered mundane, the daily round and common task. It is the only work which truly glorifies Him. It is “not in vain in the Lord” and will be rewarded (2Chronicles 15:7; Jeremiah 31:16).

Paul’s final chapter in the first epistle to the Corinthians enlarges upon some of the ways

in which the principles of the work of the Lord are worked out in practice. Instruction is given concerning the ministry of giving, the stewardship of material things, which is vital in supporting the work of the Lord according to the Scriptural pattern. This involves deacon service where those who serve in handling material matters are chosen and approved by their fellow-saints (16:1-4). It is clear from the details of the movements of the Lord's servants (v5-12), that these were flexible, subject to the Lord's guidance, and without long term, fixed pre-arrangements. The household of Stephanas and others are an example of those who "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (v15-19). Paul writes concerning Timothy, "he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do" (v10).

Paul was a pattern servant and an example of "working the work of the Lord." In his three years of service at Ephesus he had set an example to be followed. From the first day, he had been an example of consistency (Acts 20:18), serving the Lord with all humility of mind, showing courage in enduring trials and facing constant danger (v19), and fearlessness and faithfulness as a teacher and an evangelist in private and public (v20,21,27). As he looked to the future, he was an example of being undaunted and unmoved by the prospect of suffering, an example of the supreme joy of finishing the course and fulfilling the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (v22-24). He was "pure from the blood of all men" (v26).

He had been an example of overseeing and shepherding the flock, faithfully warning them "by the space of three years ... every one night and day with tears" (v28-31). His life-style had been non-materialistic, and was marked by simplicity. He had set an example of engaging in secular employment in order to provide for his own needs, the needs of those with him, and to support the weak, while serving the Lord in the assembly and the region. The closing verses of the chapter show him as a man of warmth, who loved and was loved. The prospect of seeing his face no more was the greatest cause of sorrow at his tearful departure.

Women's ministry is an important subject in itself. The Scriptures teach clearly that it is not a public ministry (1Corinthians 14:34,35; 1Timothy 2:11-15). This is not to overlook the important contribution of sister's in public meetings of the assembly, which is seen in their spiritual character, their dress and deportment. There is no way that a proper evaluation can be placed upon this aspect of women's ministry. Her major sphere of service is in the home. Christian women are to "guide the house" (1Timothy 5:14), to be "keepers at home", 'caring for the home, workers at home' (Titus 2:3-5). Older women have a special ministry in teaching younger women. There are many "good works" among older and needy saints and in the community which can more than fully occupy a woman's time. These responsibilities, in which a sister can render a vital ministry, are 'far more important than earning enough money to have a foreign holiday or a larger car' J.C.Gibson. Their work will be rewarded.

Paul's example to the Ephesian believers, which was closely followed by Timothy, sets a standard that is hard for most of us to follow. We remember men who set us an example

as well as teaching us the truth of God. They taught us as much, possibly more, by example, as by their ministry. Our meeting with godly men and women was a landmark in our Christian experience.

“...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus...” (Acts 20:24); *“...I have fought a [the] good fight [of faith], I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me [as a recompense, Newberry marg.] at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing”* (2Timothy 4:6-8).

The Landmarks of Divine Order

“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” (Colossians 2:5)

God is a God of order. ‘Order and subordination pervade the whole universe.’ This is especially apparent in relation to “the house of God.” Paul corrected the major problems at Corinth in his first epistle but he wrote, “And the rest will I set in order when I come” (11:34). He wrote to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest [further] set in order the things that are wanting...” (Titus 1:5).

The order which characterises the churches of God is marked by three prominent features, the first two of which, are like the two pillars which dominated the approach to Solomon’s temple. These overriding characteristics are (i) the Supremacy of Christ, (ii) the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and (iii) the Sufficiency and Authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of doctrine and practice. One further overriding feature is Simplicity.

The following list is an attempt to give a simple summary of important landmarks of Divine Order, which have acted as marks of identification in the past.

- (i) **Gathered** “in” or “into the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ”, in separation from all sectarian names and organisations of the world system of denominationalism.
- (ii) **Baptism of believers** and steadfast continuance in “the apostles’ doctrine and in [the] fellowship, and in [the] breaking of bread, and in [the] prayers” (Acts 2:42). The apostles’ doctrine represents acceptance of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and their authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. In the English speaking world, the King James Version has been used for public meetings.

- (iii) **Recognition** of the Headship and Lordship of Christ and the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Headship is symbolised in the uncovered heads and short hair of men, the covered heads and long hair of women, and the silence of sisters. All believers in assembly fellowship are responsible to “come together into one place” and contribute in the exercise and development of spiritual gift (1Corinthians chapters 11-14).
- (iv) **Holiness.** The figure “temple of God” (1Corinthians 3:16,17) is used to describe the sanctity of the assembly as God’s dwelling place. Assembly discipline is exercised in order to preserve the presence of God in the midst of His people. When the tabernacle was God’s dwelling place, the enclosure of fine white linen curtains around the Sanctuary, created a first impression of the sanctity of God’s dwelling place, as it was approached.
- (v) **Priesthood of all believers**, exercised in worship and prayer (1Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 13:13-16; Revelation 1:5b,6). There are no choirs or musical instruments. These belong to the Old Testament order. In the New Testament, they are conspicuous by their absence.
- (vi) **Rule** by a plurality of elders, who are also overseers and shepherds, responsible to take care of the church of God and for matters of order and discipline (Acts 20:17,28; 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- (vii) **Governmental Autonomy.** Each assembly is responsible to Christ as head over all things to the Church, in fellowship with “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (Revelation 2 and 3; 1Corinthians 1:2; 2Corinthians 1:1).
- (viii) **Evangelism.** When the early disciples lost their homes and livelihood and were scattered abroad from Jerusalem by persecution, they made it their business to spread the gospel, “preaching [‘speaking’] the word...” (Acts 11:19-21). In this simple way the work of God made an important advance into Gentile territory. This must remain an important aspect of the evangelistic character of the assembly, as opportunities are given among relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. The testimony of the assembly at Thessalonica echoed and re-echoed throughout the region (1Thessalonians 1). If it is possible to maintain an open air witness in a local centre, it is surprising how many can be reached, including those outside the locality. This type of outreach, including sound, suitable gospel literature is essential, if souls are to be reached effectively. It seems that it was expected that “unbelievers” would come into assembly gatherings and this would provide an opportunity for them to be convinced of the truth (1Corinthians 14:23-25). The evangelist is a special gift. He is called to labour in the regions beyond where Christ has not been named.

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him” (Psalm 89:7). The language of the King James Version distinguishes between the singular “Thee”, “Thou” and “Thine” and plural pronouns, on over 14,000 occasions. It has been customary for this form of language to be used in addressing God, in worship and prayer. The reverent language and universally acknowledged, classical beauty, of this Version are no longer part of modern day language but accurately reflect grammatical precision and preserve a special form of address, which is in keeping with such an occasion. The King James Version was not the language of the day, when it was translated in the 15th and 16th centuries, but its pronouns ‘expresses a special relationship to human as well as Divine persons,’ following the normative practice in other languages and in civil life.

“The LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not **after the due order**” (1Chronicles 15:13).

