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## Editor's Introduction

Another year has come! How has it started for you? I hope that rather than make New Year resolutions that you have committed the year to God and asked for His guidance about how to spend your time, money, energy, etc, this year.

The articles in this issue will hopefully help. Steve Buckeridge asks the searching question - what can I do in my local church to serve the Lord? The answer is clear - there is plenty to do!

We have a character study from a new writer, Paul Squires. Paul McCauley continues to lead us through Daniel's writings, and Jack Hay gives a very interesting study on people who attended the prayer meeting in the New Testament.

Enjoy the read.

*Stephen Baker*



**YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED** is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by Precious Seed, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.



# The Prayer Meeting Register

BY JACK HAY COMRIE, SCOTLAND

It is interesting that God notes the names of those who are at the prayer meeting! Acts 1. 13 - 14. When He marks the register for your assembly prayer meeting, are you 'present' or 'absent'? Here are some who were present on this occasion.

## Mary

She was the privileged vessel through whom the Son of God came into the world. You are greatly privileged spiritually, and it is good to express gratitude by being at the prayer meeting.

## The Lord's brothers

They had been unbelievers and fairly hostile to the Saviour, John 7. 1 - 9. One day they trusted Him and now they were attending a prayer meeting. You should never give up on anyone – keep praying. One day, seemingly hopeless cases could be sitting beside you at the prayer meeting!

## Peter

He would become a mighty preacher, and some of you may be budding preachers. Don't miss the prayer meeting to do your preparation. Preparation involves prayer. Preparing the man is more important than preparing the message!

## James

Although a young man, he had only ten more years of life, Acts 12. 2. While he was young he learned the value of the prayer meeting. Good that he did not postpone his attendance to a later stage when life would be more leisurely. For him, that period never came.

## John

John is always mentioned in association with his brother James. There was harmony between them, seen here at the prayer meeting. 'Two of you' agreeing is necessary for answers to prayer, Matt. 18. 19. If James had a relatively short life, John's was long. His last days were spent on the barren island of Patmos, a difficult environment for an old man. Having lived long, he faced deterioration and infirmity. His experience of prayer stood him in good stead for old age.

## Andrew

He had a great aptitude for personal witnessing. The Lord promised that he would be a 'fisher of men', Mark 1. 17, and he was constantly busy at his task, John 1. 40 - 41; 6. 8 - 9; 12. 20 - 22. Andrew had learned that personal evangelists can never operate independently. He knew the importance of gathering with others at the throne of grace.

## Philip

He had experienced a trial that none of the others had to undergo. The Lord had asked him, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' John 6. 5. The following verse explains that this was a test for Philip, but why Philip? Why not any of the others? There is no answer except that the Lord is sovereign, and He puts some to the test when others are exempt. When going through a testing time, meeting for prayer is vital.



## Thomas

On one occasion he had been absent and had missed meeting the Lord, John 20. 24 - 25. He had learned his lesson; never again did he risk missing an encounter with his Saviour. When we are absent we miss out on the blessing.

## Bartholomew (Nathanael)

The Lord described him as a guileless soul, John 1. 45 - 51. Such character traits are rare, but like other qualities they can be lost through lack of prayer. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation', Matt. 26. 41. Bartholomew had learned that attending the prayer meeting was necessary if a sweet Christ-like temperament was to be maintained.

## Matthew

He had been a greedy tax collector. Money had been big in his thinking, but he learned that security is found in prayer and not in healthy finances. He was seeking God's things first by being at the prayer meeting, and he knew that God would supply his needs.

## Simon Zelotes

The Zealots were freedom fighters. Their objective was to see the Romans expelled. Simon had joined the armed struggle, but an encounter with the Saviour transformed his life and he followed Him only to discover that one of his fellow-apostles had actually been a tax collector who had colluded with the Romans! Amazingly, the former terrorist and the former tax collector sat down together 'with one accord' at the prayer meeting. What a transformation the grace of God makes!

## James the son of Alphaeus Judas the brother of James

Of James the son of Alphaeus we know nothing, and all we know of Judas the brother of James is that he asked a question in the upper room, John 14. 22. These men were background people and yet they attended the prayer meeting. It is a place for all the people of God, men and women, v. 14. The men pray publicly, 1 Tim. 2. 8, but the presence of sisters is vitally important. Like Hannah they speak in their hearts; their lips may move although their voice will not be heard, 1 Sam. 1. 13. I ask again, are you marked 'present' or 'absent'?

## CHARACTER STUDY

# The Life of Timothy

BY PAUL SQUIRES SALTASH, ENGLAND

## His Salvation

The first mention of the man is in Acts chapter 16. verse 1. Paul had come to Derbe and Lystra and there was a certain disciple called Timothy. He was Paul's true child through faith, 1 Tim. 1. 2 – it seems that he was saved when the apostle first visited the area.

Indications are that his father, a Greek, was an unbeliever but his mother, a Jewess, believed. From childhood he had known the holy scriptures, 2 Tim. 3. 15. Personal and genuine faith had dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and it was now in Timothy, 2 Tim. 1. 5.

## His Start

As we've already noticed, at the beginning of Acts chapter 16 he's described as a disciple. He was a follower of Christ and so had made a fine start which is what God wants of course. The next verse tells us that he was 'well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium'. A good reputation was a requirement for the work of the Lord that he would carry out.

## His Service

Paul wanted Timothy to be with him; that happened, but in this article we're not going to trace his movements or consider the nature of the work he undertook, although there's profit to be found in that. Let's look at the following so far as his service was concerned.

## How Paul described him

- his fellow worker, Rom.16. 21.  
It's good when a young man can serve with an older man.
- his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, 1 Cor. 4. 17 and one who, like him, does the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. 16. 10  
Like the people in Nehemiah's day, he 'had a mind to work', and he was marked by faithfulness to God.
- a bondservant of Jesus Christ, Phil. 1. 1  
He served willingly and loyally because he loved his Lord.
- our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, 1 Thess. 3. 2  
He had a deep concern for the lost around him and worked to win them.
- a 'man of God', 1 Tim. 6. 11  
Despite being young (1 Tim. 4. 12) Timothy was the only person in the New Testament to be described in this way.

He did more than start well - he continued well.

## How Paul commended him

- Note the verses in the above section.
- Take a look at Philipians chapter 2 verses 20 - 22. Paul knew that he would care for them 'with genuine feeling' (J N Darby's New Translation). He had a shepherd heart. And while others sought their own things, he sought 'the things which are of Christ Jesus'. Timothy had a spiritual outlook and went in for the best things.



## How Paul encouraged him

- He referred to 'the words of faith and of the good doctrine', which he had 'carefully followed', 1 Tim. 4. 6.
- Timothy had 'confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses', 1 Tim. 6. 12.
- He told him 'you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions', 2 Tim. 3. 10 - 11.

## How Paul exhorted him

This could be a long list! Go through Paul's two letters to Timothy. Carefully consider the exhortations, and ask God to help you to apply them to your own life.

Here are some things to note:

- Be an example to your fellow christians, 1 Tim. 4. 12
- Don't neglect your gift, use it, 1 Tim. 4. 14
- Keep your gift burning brightly like a fire 2 Tim. 1. 6
- Protect the truth, 1 Tim. 6. 20
- Work hard to gain God's approval, 2 Tim. 2. 15
- Go on well, 2 Tim. 3. 14
- Fully perform the service God has called you to, 2 Tim. 4. 5

## Some final comments

- Don't squander your youth.  
The years are precious and quickly go - give them to God, the experiences you'll have will really help you in the future if the Lord has not come.
- Don't make excuses for not serving.  
Although Timothy had 'frequent illnesses', 1 Tim. 5. 23, he was still able to serve the Lord - he didn't make them an excuse for not carrying out His work.
- Don't leave the work to the few.  
See all your responsibilities and live them out.

DANIEL 3

# Take a bow...or



BY PAUL MCCAULEY BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

This is the one chapter in the book of Daniel in which Daniel doesn't actually feature. It may be that Daniel was away on business and thus was not involved in this incident.

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar has taken some exception with Daniel's interpretation of his dream in chapter 2. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold, but Nebuchadnezzar wants to make a statement that he is not merely a head of gold - he is gold from head to toe, so he constructs this golden image and commands everyone to bow to it.

Now this obviously presented a major problem to the Hebrews, and they were faced with a huge decision: would they just take a bow? You know, just nod their head at the right time, and then go and get on with life, or would they create a whole big fuss, come across as intolerant, lose their jobs and their lives, and then not be able to influence anyone for God and for good? It's amazing how we can justify just about anything, isn't it!

Let's look at the choice again: would they bow to the will of a godless man, give in to a pagan society, disobey their God, and defile their own souls, or would they obey God? That's the choice.

We can try to minimize our sins, and rationalize our actions, and excuse our behaviour, and say it doesn't matter, but be sure it does. These Hebrews knew that there would be massive consequences to offending the king, but they also knew that there would be far bigger consequences to obeying the king - they would have offended God, and to them, that was

much more serious. The enjoyment of God's presence and pleasure was worth more to them than a long life with a great job and a bad conscience. There is no such thing as a sin without consequence. Yes, some sins have huge and obvious outward consequences, but every sin has its effects upwards to God, and inwards to us. Our sins are an offence to God's goodness and holiness; they have a damaging effect upon the human soul, and they mar our communion with God. There is no benign sin.

What are you being pressured to bow to? There are pressures all around us in our society. Many people have lost their jobs or had their livelihoods threatened because they aren't prepared to bow to culture's moral standards. It is not enough in our society that you live and let live, it is demanded that we approve and applaud behaviour that God condemns. If you don't bow, then there are consequences. But if you do bow, then there are consequences - you'll lose your testimony, you'll lose your peace, and you'll lose the enjoyment of God's presence.

Now these three Hebrews weren't prepared to pay such a high price, so they would not bow.

It's quite humorous to read the way Nebuchadnezzar goes about trying to get Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to do what he wants. He literally asks them, 'Is it on purpose you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?' He thinks they obviously didn't get the memo or understand the instructions, so he goes over it again with them - what they have to do, and what will happen if they don't comply - it's their final warning, v. 14 - 15.



This is what a Government is like that doesn't recognise that there is a law above our law, that there is a power above those in power. If God is expelled from the national consciousness then those in power are free to make any laws they want and impose any penalties they like. Little wonder Paul exhorts us to pray for those in authority, 1 Tim. 2. 1 - 6!

Anyway, the Hebrews understood perfectly well what was expected, and they made that clear to Nebuchadnezzar. They knew that God was able to deliver from his hand, but they also recognized that it might not have been God's will for them to be delivered, and even if it wasn't His will for them to be miraculously preserved from the fire, they would still trust and follow God anyway.

This is so important for us to remember. We often hear the verse quoted, 'Them that honour me I will honour', 1 Sam. 2. 30, and this is usually quoted in connection with a story about someone taking a stand for God or resisting a temptation to do something dishonest, and then compensation following immediately or shortly thereafter. For example, he gets promotion, or a better job, or a pay increase, or something like that. Those stories are thrilling and encouraging, but can be misleading, because sometimes standing for God and doing what's right doesn't have a happy earthly ending - it is often the case that there is no higher position, there is no better job, there is no bigger wage packet. But the scripture is still as true in that circumstance - 'Them that honour me I will honour'. God doesn't honour His people today with earthly prosperity, but rather with spiritual enrichment and eternal reward. The day of honouring is at the judgment seat of Christ - 'Then shall every man have praise of God', 1 Cor. 4. 5, but until then the child of God can and often does experience dishonour in the eyes of the world. The Bible, church history, and a look around the world today, will combine to show us that not every Christian is delivered from a martyr's death.

We need to ensure we don't have false expectations and think that God will deliver us from the threats of the world around us so long as we are faithful to God. God is still faithful no matter what we go through.

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were thrown into the furnace. The men who threw them into fire were killed by it, but the fire didn't kill the Jews, it actually freed them from that which bound them. There are many believers who can testify to a similar kind of thing - the fiery trial they have had to pass through because of their fidelity to the Lord has given them a real freedom. What I mean is this, when a saint is presented with a temptation or a difficult decision, they often feel real anxiety, but when they make the right choice they feel themselves to be free - they no longer are bound by fear or held by anxiety - leaving it with the Lord gives a release from tension.

Another thing happened in the fire; they not only knew freedom, they knew nearness to the Son of God. The Lord drew near to them as never before v. 25. Again, many of the Lord's people would bear witness to the fact that in the hottest trials they knew the Lord's nearness in a special way.

The way the three Jews went through the trial in a miraculous way drew the attention and invited the enquiry of those who looked on. It is still the same today - the believer who goes through the trial with the Lord will make an impact on others and leave a mark for God.

Don't bow! - No matter the pressures they exert, no matter the prize they offer, no matter the punishment they threaten, don't bow. Nothing is worth sacrificing your integrity, losing your testimony, stifling your conscience, damaging your soul, and spoiling your fellowship with God.





**WHAT CAN I DO FOR GOD?**

# Contribute to the activities of the local church



**BY STEVEN BUCKERIDGE DATCHET, ENGLAND**

All Christians are part of the body of Christ, and it should be the norm that they demonstrate this by their active involvement in a local church, which gathers to the name of the Lord Jesus. Some circumstances, such as ill health, may mean not all of the following are always possible, but please prayerfully consider Romans 12. 3 - 8 and 1 Corinthians 12. 4 - 7 and 11 - 31 if you think you do not have a useful place in a local church!

## **What is it?**

The privilege and responsibility of being a part of a local assembly is for sisters, brothers, young and old, with different gifts and abilities to act in harmony for the glory of God, the showing of His character, witnessing to the world, and mutual spiritual blessing.

## **Why does it matter?**

- The assembly is very precious to God, Acts 20. 28.
- The Lord Jesus is present and assessing the contribution of all, Rev. 2 and 3.
- Our contribution should be for everyone's benefit, 1 Cor. 14. 12, 26.
- We will all be rewarded based on our input, 1 Cor. 3.

## **How can I contribute?**

- Use the specific gift and ability the Lord has given you. We should pray about, discover and develop this gift, 1 Tim. 4. 14, 2 Tim. 1. 6, so that we can fulfil the 'function in the body' that we have been given, 1 Cor. 12. 11, 12.
- Act with unity. The expression one accord is used repeatedly in the book of Acts; see also Rom. 12. 18, Eph. 4. 3)

- By being present at meetings whenever possible, Heb. 10. 25.
- Show care and love to others, Heb. 13. 1. This may include practical help, visiting, encouraging, sharing of experiences and giving guidance to others, Gal 6. 1 - 2, Rom. 12. 15. There is a wealth of opportunity to serve if we are willing, Rom. 16. 2.
- Pray at meetings, Acts 4. 24, 1 Tim. 2. 8 and everyday we should be privately praying for the assembly, Col. 1. 9.
- Spread the gospel, Acts 6. 7, 1 Thess. 1. 8.
- Give financially, Acts 4. 34, Phil. 4. 15 - 16.
- Learn from scripture, Acts 2. 42, 2 Tim. 3. 14 - 16. This will not only mean we grow in our understanding, but it will also help guard against error.
- Be supportive and helpful towards elders, Heb. 13. 17.

## **Some other practical considerations**

The importance of our personal contribution to the assembly should impact on decisions that we make about our:

1. Career - the spiritual prosperity of the local assembly is far more important than worldly success, Rev. 2. 9, 3. 17.
2. Home location - our ability to contribute to the local assembly should be a key factor in deciding where to live.
3. Lifestyle - being careful to ensure nothing we do spoils the holiness of the testimony, 1 Cor. 5. 6.
4. Travelling/holidays - should be seen as an opportunity to enjoy fellowship elsewhere, Acts 20. 6 - 7.
5. Time - our efforts and energy should be channelled into what will last, 1 Cor. 3. 10 - 15.