

YPS

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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to YPS August 2019. It's the summer so, hopefully, you will have more time to study YPS and the main magazine thoroughly. If you are like me, that 'more time' scenario never quite materializes.

There is always something else that demands our time and attention.

So, instead, will you make time to read? The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to 'give attention to reading' in 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 13. I do think that this was reading publicly in the gatherings of the church, but the principle is a good one to observe.

Will you make it your business to focus on reading and equipping your soul so that you know the Lord better and, as a result, worship and serve Him for His glory?

May the Lord help us all to do this.

Yours through grace,
Stephen Baker

Edited by
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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed*, 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*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.



The Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times

BY TM SE ASIA

5. LAW

'What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made', Gal. 3. 19 NKJV.

In the opening sixty-nine chapters of the Bible, mankind was tested by God under various stewardships. Under innocence, conscience, government and promise, man failed.

In Exodus chapter 20 God introduced a brand-new administrative system, a means of regulating His dealings with mankind, specifically through the nation of Israel.

This stewardship, the **dispensation of law**, was given especially to Israel. Although it was a new system, it did not completely replace the three previous systems. The law was **added** to the promise which was still in effect, Gal. 3. 19-21. Nations still had governments and individuals still had consciences. The Lord said to Israel,

'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation', Exod. 19. 5, 6 NIV.

Despite His special choosing of Israel, God did not want to make it difficult for Gentile nations to worship Him, so He chose carefully where to place Israel – at the axis of three continents. The law, proclaimed and practised by Israel, was to be a witness to the nations of God's holy standards, Deut. 4. 6-8. There was even provision in the law for Gentiles to be brought into the family of Israel and be counted among the chosen people, Exod. 12. 48.

However, the nations largely continued to reject God. A few individuals believed, like Rahab and Ruth. For brief periods, some nations recognized Israel's pre-eminence, such as Tyre and Sheba in 1 Kings chapters 5 and 10. These examples prove the system was a good system – it could have worked. But most of the Gentiles did not respond as God required. They did not come to Israel to worship the God of Israel. They worshiped idols, and some nations actively opposed God's people.

Not only did the nations fail, Israel also failed under the law. The 'house-rules' for Israel were very clear. The commandments were written out in great detail so that everyone knew exactly what they must do, Deut. 30. 11-

14. The law codified God requirements, showing sin for what it really was.

God promised to bless Israel if they kept the law, but punish them if they disobeyed. The unconditional promises to Abraham were unshakeable, and will be fulfilled one day, but national blessing was conditional on obedience.

Israel failed again and again. Initially they failed by ignoring the law, flagrantly disregarding its commandments. And, instead of teaching the nations to worship Jehovah, Israel followed the gods of the nations! In response, God disciplined His people, sending them into Babylon.

But, after the exile, they failed again, this time by adding to the law, inventing rules and traditions of their own. Sometimes they obeyed the letter, but not the spirit of the law.

'He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men"', Mark 7. 6, 7 NKJV.

But the Lord was merciful. Even though Israel deserved to be punished a second time, God sent His own Son to save them. But they rejected and killed Him, Luke 24. 20. During the period of the Acts, Israel continued to live under the law, 1 Cor. 9. 20, but in rejecting the One who is the fulfilment of the law, resisted the Holy Spirit, Acts 7. 51.

The system of law did not work. The fault was not with the system. Romans chapter 7 verse 12 affirms that the law is holy, righteous and good. Rather, the problem was with the people, Heb. 8. 8.

So, God punished Israel for failing to do what He had required. This judgement took place in AD 70. Jerusalem was destroyed; the Jews scattered. The law administration was rendered obsolete. As the word 'till' in Galatians chapter 3 verse 19 makes clear, it was only ever intended to be temporary anyway.¹

But God is gracious. He had already begun to establish a new and better arrangement.

¹ The law **as a declaration of God's standards** abides forever, Ps. 119. 152. The law **as an administrative system** has been discontinued, Heb. 8. 13.

Principles for Progress

BY ERIC M. BAIJAL, WICK, SCOTLAND

Introduction

In this series of articles, we are going back to basics for individual and corporate Christian growth. Most intelligent young believers accept that local assembly testimony is much weaker than it should be in the United Kingdom. There are exceptions, for which we give God thanks, but, in many places, ground has been lost in terms of love for God and His word, evangelical witness, and general commitment. Things do not need to be like that. However, recovery starts with each of us individually!

I want to begin with what might seem a strange question. Do you pray that God will be glorified in seeing spiritual development in the assembly? You see, it is possible that we are sadly comfortable in a materialistic Christianity and do not want the commitment that progress will require.

While a desire for spiritual progress is evidence of the new life, 1 John chapter 2 verse 3 teaches that an evidence of salvation is keeping the commandments of Christ. The spiritual development of an assembly requires individual saints to take responsibility for their own personal development. Responsibility will vary with age, experience and the purpose God has for a particular believer. However, even when we are young it will certainly involve taking responsibility for our personal walk with God. We cannot expect the assembly to be in a healthy spiritual condition if the believers in fellowship are consumed by materialism, worldly ambition, sport, pleasure etc., or anything else that is governing their lives rather than living for eternity. In Hebrews chapter 11 verses 13 to 16, we see an example of saints who did live as 'pilgrims and strangers'.

Problems in assembly life are not just the result of the rejection of truth, although, sadly, in some places they are caused partially by a failure to obey the word of God. Instead, assembly development and progress have often been stymied by believers unwilling to put God first, and, instead, having selfish priorities. This can be seen in practice in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. What are you like?

The local assembly primarily has a two-fold role according to the Bible:

1. To offer spiritual sacrifices, worship and service to God. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 5 teaches us that we function as Holy Priests in that connection; and
2. To testify to God's greatness and glory, and the salvation available through the Lord Jesus Christ, to the outside world. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9 teaches us that we function as royal priests in that connection.

The function of both roles is to fulfil God's purpose, that as saints we become more like Christ. That is the primary fruitfulness that God is looking for in my life. Galatians chapter 5 verse 22 gives a nine-fold description of the fruit of the Spirit.

Topics to be explored

I genuinely believe from the word of God that every individual believer can make a difference to the fruitfulness and progress of the assembly. In this series of articles, we will consider six areas where an individual, and particularly a young believer, can, by taking their responsibility seriously, enhance local assembly testimony.

1. The reading and studying of God's word;
2. Praying;
3. Attending and participating in the assembly gatherings;
4. Worshipping;
5. Giving; and
6. Evangelizing.

We will see that all these topics have individual responsibility at their heart. Perhaps you are genuinely disappointed at the apparent lack of life and fruit in the assembly where you are. Perhaps the saints have let you down. I want to encourage you, from the Bible, that if your personal relationship with God is right it can have a really positive effect on the spiritual health of the assembly of which you are a part.

Am I more interested in what I can get out of the assembly, or am I prepared to build into the assembly? Please read the rest of 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and take responsibility for your spiritual progress! We will be discussing these issues in more detail in later articles.

Elements of Church Truth

BY HUW REES, CARMARTHEN, SOUTH WALES

In a day and age when an ecumenical spirit pervades modern Christendom, ecclesiology is relegated to individual preference, and people take a pick-and-mix approach as to what church they should join. We all need reminding of what the Bible teaches on this particular topic.

Is church truth up for grabs or has God mandated how His people should gather?

Fellowship

After a person is saved and baptized, they often wonder how they are to live for God and serve Him. Some think that it's God's will for them to attend a Bible College or Seminary, while others consider social causes and para-church organizations. However, New Testament Christians considered none of the above. Rather, they became part of a fellowship of believers in a local church. This was designed by God to provide the perfect balance of spiritual care and nourishment for His people as well as the opportunity to flourish and exercise their gifts – there is nowhere else like it. The local church is the school of God and He desires that every Christian attend.

The word 'fellowship' means 'a relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other'.¹ The first time we read of this particular use of the word is in Acts chapter 2 verse 42 at the birth of the church, where 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship', ESV. They shared a common salvation and adherence to the whole counsel of God (the apostles' teaching) – there can only be fellowship with both. This was the foundation that bound them together and from which they worked – it affected and instructed everything they did.



Fellowship in the early church was not casual, haphazard or lukewarm, rather they devoted themselves entirely to it. The idea of fellowship is close to being a partner in a business. The partnership involves complete commitment in one enterprise, Luke 5. 10. Loyalty cannot be divided. These early Christians did not have one foot in their careers and hobbies and another foot in the local assembly, but every other interest was subservient to their partnership in the spiritual enterprise called the assembly.

The idea of fellowship involves the privilege of building together with God, 1 Cor. 3. 9, 10. Although it can be time consuming and hard work, God will reward faithfulness to the local assembly at the end of time, v. 14. Such is the value that God places upon the local assembly that we read that He has purchased it with His own blood, Acts 20. 28. Does our commitment and devotion to the assembly reflect that high evaluation?

Ownership

One of the great themes of the Bible is that God desires to dwell amongst His people. After redemption from Egypt, God told Moses, 'let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle . . . so you shall make it', Exod. 25. 8, 9 ESV. Not only does God desire that His people dwell with Him but He expects that they meet with Him on His terms. God did not leave the construction of the Tabernacle to the imagination of the people but gave Moses specific plans about how to build it.

Although the church is significantly different to the Tabernacle, there is an underlying principle that is exactly the same; God's house is regulated by God's rules. The design of the Tabernacle was ornate and detailed, but the design of the church is minimalist and simple. God's design for the church is not to be added to or detracted from; we cannot go outside the pattern. When the New Testament is silent regarding certain issues, this doesn't give us licence to fill in the blanks. God's pattern is positive and prescriptive, and because He owns the local church we need to obey humbly.

Paul explains as much to Timothy by saying, 'I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God', 1 Tim. 3. 15 NKJV. Simply put, it is God who owns and occupies His house. It is a tremendous privilege to meet with Him, but this also confers great responsibility upon each individual in assembly fellowship. We should respond as Jacob did by saying 'surely the Lord is in this place . . .

how dreadful is this place!' Gen. 28. 16, 17. We do not merit God's presence but, by His grace, when we obey the pattern laid out in His word He deigns to meet with His people. The Lord Jesus said in the context of a church gathering, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them', Matt. 18. 20. Just as there is one way of salvation, there is only one way to gather: it is not to the denominations or systems of men, but to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we appreciate that Christ is in the midst, it will affect everything we do. The thought of the house of God thrilled the heart of David when he said, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth', Ps. 26. 8. May it thrill our hearts too, as we seek to meet where God has placed His name.

¹ M. R. VINCENT, *Word Studies in the New Testament*.



A to Z of Priests – Phinehas

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

Phinehas was the grandson of Aaron and the son of Eleazar, 1 Chr. 6. 3, 4. As such, Phinehas became the third man to wear the High Priest's holy garments 'for glory and for beauty', Exod. 28. 2. However, Phinehas did not merely look beautiful – he possessed a beautiful character.

We presume that Phinehas was under twenty years old when Israel commenced their wilderness journey, Num. 14. 29, so he was a relatively young man in the service of God. We see him on the frontline of the battle, 31. 6, 7, fighting the enemy. The presence of the priest reminds us that Israel needed to rely on God in every circumstance, if they were going to triumph.

'Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask Who that may be?
Christ Jesus, is it He;
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle!'¹

When we engage in spiritual conflict, we have a heavenly Phinehas, a great High Priest, who helps us, Heb. 4. 16.

Phinehas' greatest day, which is accorded the most biblical column inches, was a different kind of battle altogether, Num. 25. 1-15. As a young man, he achieved victory over immorality and idolatry; Phinehas demonstrated how to 'overcome the wicked one', 1 John 2. 13, 14.

The prophet

Balaam, a renegade prophet for hire, attempted to curse the Israelites at the instigation of Balak,

Num. 22-24. After this strategy failed, Balaam tried **corrupting** Israel instead of **cursing** them, Rev. 2. 14. Although God had chosen them and saved them, Deut. 33. 29, His people were susceptible to temptation. Balaam was aware of their weakness. So, he advised the Midianites to attract Israel with immorality, Num. 25. 1, and idolatry, v. 2. The people of God formed an unholy alliance with their enemies, v. 3. Immorality expresses unfaithfulness with our bodies, 1 Cor. 6. 18-20. Idolatry expresses unfaithfulness with our spirits, 2 Cor. 6. 14-18. Both activities are frequently linked when God's people disobey Him, 1 Cor. 10. 6-8.

The Lord pronounced immediate judgement on the leaders of Israel, Num. 25. 4, who seem to have incited this sin. The death sentence was carried out at once, v. 5. Evil must be extinguished. We observe a similar sentiment in the Lord Jesus' words, Matt. 5. 29, 30, where He commands direct disavowal of evil, and removal of the cause of sin. We might translate this into the modern world – do we need to cancel our Netflix subscription, or avoid certain acquaintances?

The priest

We have considered the background – evil was contaminating God's people. The Lord pronounced judgement. Then we see Phinehas spring into action.

A prince of Israel named Zimri, Num. 25. 14, was about to commit sexual immorality with a Midianite princess, v. 15. Zimri was either unaware of God's anger, or unafraid of God's judgement. That's what happens in our minds when we sin; we diminish God in our thinking – we reason that our wants are more important than God's commandments. This crooked logic has been operative ever since the original sin in Eden.

We notice that Zimri's actions were inconsistent with Israel in general, v. 6. They were weeping in repentance,

standing by the 'door of the tabernacle', the place where the sin offering would be brought and killed, Lev. 4. 4.

Phinehas made a prompt decision. He took a spear to wage war against sin. He felt a sense of holy outrage. Phinehas killed both man and woman, as they were engaged in immoral union. This brought an immediate end to the plague, Num. 25. 8, although there were tragic and widespread consequences, v. 9.

The promise

God spoke to Moses, vv. 10-13, to acknowledge the zeal of Phinehas. God delighted to see the priest's holy passion, in contrast to Zimri's immoral lust. Phinehas was motivated by sanctified fervour, a holy energy for God. This kind of zeal distinguishes true spiritual leadership, 'the one who leads, with zeal', Rom. 12. 8 ESV.

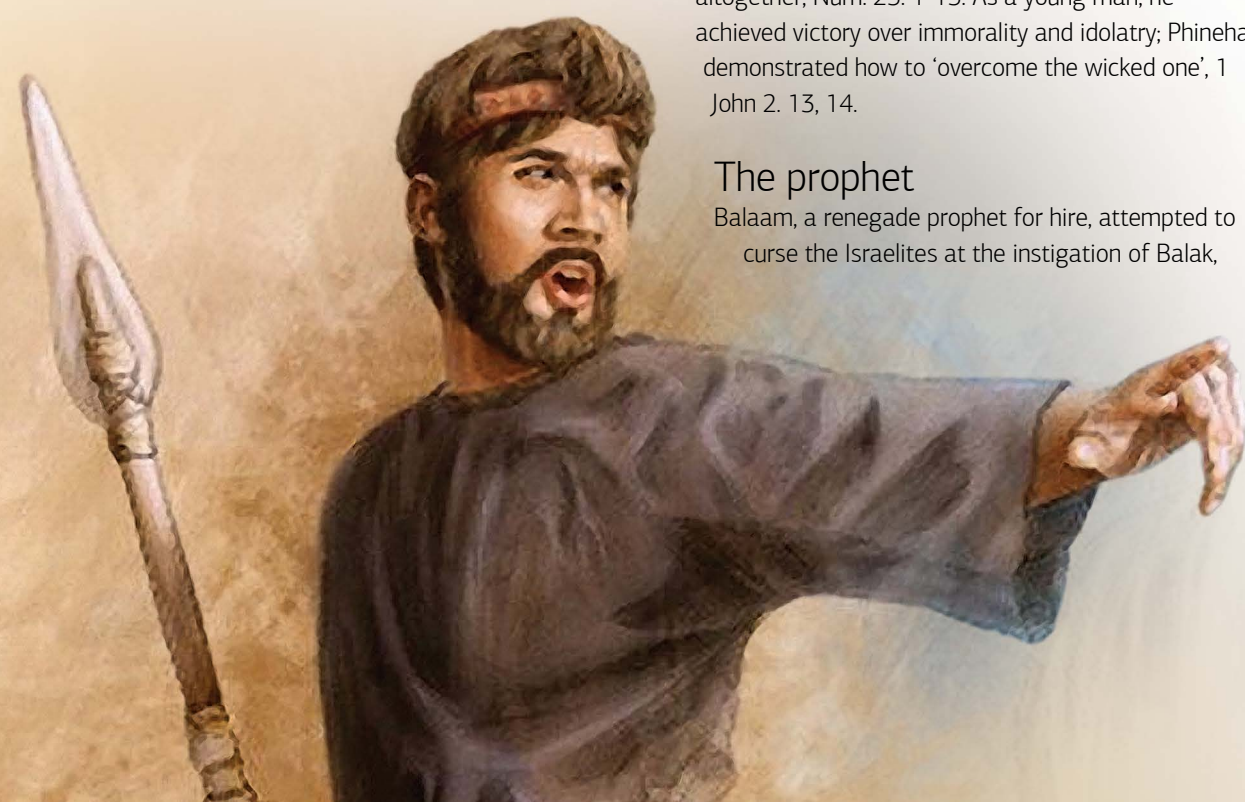
Phinehas received a special gift from God – the guarantee of 'an everlasting priesthood' for him and his family, Num. 25. 13. We learn that the Aaronic priesthood will continue into the millennial temple, Ezek. 44. 15, fulfilling the 'covenant of peace' with Phinehas.

I think the 'covenant with Levi', Mal. 2. 4-6, refers to this Phinehas promise. Malachi describes how a priest:

1. is governed by God's word – 'He feared me', Mal. 2. 5;
2. serves God's interest – 'He walked with me', v. 6;
3. preserves others from sin – '[He] did turn many away from iniquity', v. 6

These are priestly features – supremely evident in the Lord Jesus Christ. Could they also be developed in us, as they were in Phinehas?

¹ MARTIN LUTHER, Hymn: A mighty fortress is our God.



Fruit of the Spirit - Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness



BY GRAEME SMITH, WALLINGFORD, ENGLAND

This is a continuation of our YPS series on the fruit of the Spirit based on Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23.

Longsuffering

A recent news article about the appalling Syrian civil war, described how that the 'longsuffering' people of Aleppo had borne the brunt of the devastation there. The word 'longsuffering' accurately conveys the extended duration of their plight since the conflict is nearly six years old. However, the biblical word has a deeper meaning than this. This subject was clearly important to the Apostle Paul as he refers to it in most of his letters. Indeed, he presents himself as an example of one who has experienced the longsuffering of Christ.¹ Paul views himself as the 'chief of sinners', not deserving God's mercy due to his previous rebellion, yet God showed true longsuffering and saved him. We should be forever grateful that God has shown the same longsuffering to us. Paul includes it as one of the aspects of love in the first letter to the Corinthians and here in Galatians it is one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit.

A longsuffering person is one who can endure, but the endurance is also marked by patience. It is, likewise, generally applied in relation to people rather than to external events.

In the Bible, we are encouraged to show longsuffering towards sinners,² continuing to sow and water the seed of the gospel until God's 'early and latter' rain comes. Unsurprisingly, we are taught to display longsuffering to fellow saints too, being slow to judge and complain, and bearing with the foibles and differences of others.³

Gentleness

The Bible paints a picture of gentleness using the image of a weak bruised reed that you would see being buffeted by the elements on a river bank. Such a reed could easily be broken, unless handled with gentleness and this is exactly how Christ deals with us.⁴ So, gentleness is the soft handling, and kindness

shown to another, which is especially necessary due to that person's weakened state.

Another Old Testament illustration of this is David, and his gentleness with Mephibosheth, Jonathai's son.⁵ Mephibosheth was doubly weak. Firstly, he was weak as he was a member of the house of Saul, the former King, and then, secondly, he was lame in both his feet. But David showed him kindness, allowing him to sit and eat bread at his table, as one of the king's sons.

This word is sometimes translated 'kindness' in the KJV, as in Paul's description of the kindness and love of God towards man in his bruised and broken state.⁶ Christ Himself emphasized that He would deal gently with those that came to Him with their heavy burdens. When we are yoked to Him, we find that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.⁷

Young believers may not want to appear 'gentle' as this may make them appear weak and not 'smart'. Paul, however, used this approach in his dealings with fellow believers, whom he would be gentle with 'as a nurse (nursing mother) would cherish her children'.⁸

Goodness

We love to sing the words of Psalm 23, which tell us that 'goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life'. Elsewhere, the Psalmist says to God, 'Thou art good, and do good',⁹ being totally assured of God's intrinsic goodness. Biblical goodness stems from moral beauty and describes the character of one who will do more for someone than what is expected. Perfect goodness belongs only to God Himself, as the Lord Jesus would make plain to the man who called Him good.¹⁰ Paul taught the unbelievers in Lystra that God is seen to be good in the way that He provides rain, and fruitful seasons.¹¹

¹ 1 Tim. 1. 15, 16.

² Jas. 5. 7.

³ Eph. 4. 2.

⁴ Isa. 42. 3.

⁵ 2 Sam. 9. 7.

⁶ Titus 3. 3, 4.

⁷ Matt. 11. 28-30.

⁸ 1 Thess. 2. 7.

⁹ Ps. 119. 68.

¹⁰ Mark 10. 18.

¹¹ Acts 14. 17.