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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 International*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is also available separately from the main magazine.

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Editor's Introduction

If I were to give this issue of YPS a theme it would be 'tools for better Christian living'. Not a very trendy title you say but hopefully it gives a taste of what we have focused on in this issue.

I am sure that most of us get frustrated at times and feel that we are not making a lot of spiritual progress. The articles in this issue will hopefully be a help.

Dan Rudge's article on giving the Lord central place in our lives majors on the fact that the local assembly has been designed by God to be the centre of the believer's life. As the Lord Jesus is the reason the believers meet, i.e., to the name of the Lord Jesus, this article will highlight for you how special it is to be a part of a New Testament church.

We also have a brief portrayal of the book of Esther, it will make you think! The rest of the articles highlight areas of our lives that need constant attention – prayer, how to stay close to the Lord and how to be what God has made me, i.e., holy. Enjoy reading and remember to give us some feedback through our Facebook page, you will get the link through our website <http://www.youngpreciousseed.org>.

Stephen



Building Blocks of the Christian Faith

Sanctification

By **JEREMY SINGER** Bridge of Weir, Scotland



The -tions (phonetically, the -shuns) of the Christian life are a good theological study. The first -shun we experience is salvation, although, on the divine timescale, election comes first. In the previous issue of *YPS*, Jack Hay explained *separation*. This time, we are going to think about *sanctification*. Whereas separation focuses on what we should be removed *from*, sanctification focuses on who we should be attracted *to*.

We will consider two different aspects of sanctification in this article:

- 1) positional sanctification – what God has made me to be
- 2) practical sanctification – what I must become for God

Positional Sanctification

When Paul writes letters to groups of Christians,

he often reminds them that they are ‘called saints’, e.g., Rom. 1. 7; 1 Cor. 1. 2. This is how God refers to His people in the Bible, ‘Gather my saints together unto me’, Ps. 50. 5. Saints are not colourful pictures in stained glass windows; they are God’s people in general. All true believers are saints. Literally, a saint is a holy person, i.e., someone who is marked out by God, set apart for God. When God saved us, He made us different to everyone else. ‘The Lord has set apart the godly man for himself’, Ps. 4. 3 NASB.

One delightful KJV description of believers that always makes me chuckle is ‘peculiar people’, 1 Pet. 2. 9. Peter claims the same designation for Christians as God used for His people Israel in the Old Testament, Deut. 14. 2. Other translations render this along the lines of ‘a people for His own possession’, e.g., JND, NASB. The key idea is that we are God’s own, special, treasured, people. We belong uniquely and entirely to Him. This is the concept of positional sanctification. We are God’s, because He has made us His own by a sovereign act of grace.

Practical Sanctification

Peter quotes another Old Testament verse that was originally God’s command to Israel, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy’, 1 Pet. 1. 16; Lev. 11. 44. This is practical sanctification. In view of what God has done for us and how God sees us, a certain standard of behaviour is expected of us. We must walk in a way that is compatible with our God-given character, Eph. 2. 10. In



response to God's grace, we should dedicate our lives to Him. This is the force of Paul's logical argument to the Romans, Rom. 12. 1-2. When we think of God's mercies, we should present our bodies as 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God'.

Christians who are practically sanctified will want to live in purity, and engage in regular confession and intimate communion with their Lord. Such people are 'meet for the master's use', 2 Tim. 2. 21, ready for a work He has for them to do.

Old Testament Examples

There are two examples of Bible characters, one to demonstrate each aspect of sanctification. Both men were at home in God's house: Aaron and Samuel.

Aaron was the first high priest of Israel. He was directly nominated for this position by Jehovah Himself. God called Aaron to be a priest, in a similar way that He calls us to be saints. Aaron was holy by virtue of his divinely appointed position. He wore a golden badge on his hat, engraved with the phrase, 'Holiness to the Lord', Exod. 28. 36, as a visible reminder of his positional sanctification.

Samuel was a man of God. He was not from the Levite tribe and did not serve as a priest. However, he was given by God to Hannah and given back by Hannah to service in God's house, 1 Sam. 1. 27-28. This is practical sanctification. Samuel did not need to be in the tabernacle at Shiloh, but he was offered voluntarily to God's service. First, the dedication was his mother's decision, but, as he grew to maturity, he maintained that same commitment his mother had made, and continued to serve the Lord faithfully, 1 Sam. 7. 15. Samuel's life is a great example of practical sanctification. He was close to God, and always ready to receive a word 'in his ear' from heaven, 1 Sam. 9. 15.

Personal Challenge

There are two sides to salvation. We initially chose to trust God, but, as we continue to grow as Christians, we realize that the first choice was His, not ours. In the same way, there are two sides to sanctification. God has made us His (positionally); now we need to live this out in our daily experience (practically). 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification', 1 Thess. 4. 3. I am always challenged by the words of Frances Ridley Havergal's hymn:

Take my life and let it be
 Consecrated Lord to Thee
 Take myself and I will be
 Ever, only, all for Thee.

Further Reading

E. L. LOVERING, *Sanctification in Treasury of Bible Doctrine* (J. Heading, C. E. Hocking, eds). Precious Seed Publications, 1977.
 G. E. HARPUR, *The Christian Path in The Faith, A Symposium of Bible Doctrine* (F. A. Tatford, ed). John Ritchie, 1999.
 W. W. WIERSBE, *Key words of the Christian Life*, chapter on *Sanctification*. Baker, 2002.
 P. COULSON, *Great Truths of the Bible*, chapter on *Sanctification*. John Ritchie, 2004.



EDITOR'S NOTE

In Jeremy Singer's article he states that 'Samuel was not from the Levite tribe and did not serve as a priest'. My question is, 'Was Samuel a priest? Are Shemuel (a variation of Samuel) and Elkanah of 1 Chron.6. 33, 34 the same people as in 1 Samuel? Did he act as a priest in 1 Samuel? Does 1 Samuel 2. 18 help here?' It would be good to get your feedback in writing or through our Facebook page.

What can I do for God?

PRAY

By **STEVEN BUCKERIDGE** London, England

What is it?

There are different things that we can do in prayer and they should normally be in the following order.

Praise: Thank God for His greatness (many of the prayers in the Bible start this way, e.g., 1 Kgs. 8. 23; Isa. 37.16)

Repentance: confess known sin and shortcomings (Ps. 66.18)

Appreciation: give thanks for the many blessings we enjoy (1 Thess. 5.18) and for answered prayer

Yielding: the genuine surrender of our own will, including how and when God will answer

Everybody else: pray for others - the lost, those in authority, those that are sick or persecuted, fellow-saints (1 Tim. 2. 1-4; Philem. 1. 4; Heb. 13. 3)

Requests for ourselves: these should be in accordance with His will (John 16. 23, 24; Col. 3.17)

Why do it?

- It is a direct divine command, Luke 11. 9
- The Lord Jesus is our great example (e.g., John chapter 17)
- Great spiritual characters have been characterized by prayer
- We should want to spend time speaking with our greatest friend
- Prayer is an expression of faith, and thereby honours God
- Because even when words are difficult, the Lord understands, Rom. 8. 26

How to do it?

- Privately:** Find somewhere quiet, away from distractions. Matthew chapter 6 verse 6 includes being away from our computer, mobile phone, etc!
- Regularly:** At 'routine' times, set aside in a disciplined way for that purpose (e.g., Daniel) such as morning/evening, mealtimes
- Always:** use 'free moments' to pray about whatever you are doing (1 Thess. 5. 17)
- Yourself:** use your own words not those in books, or what you think others would expect you to say
- Earnestly:** Jas. 5.17
- Repeatedly:** persistent without empty repetition, Luke 11. 9

Practical advice

- A notebook can list things to pray about and record how God answered
- Stay awake! Kneeling is good for reverence or standing if necessary, Matt. 26. 41
- Praying out loud may help you when praying but if doing this be aware that Matthew chapter 6 verse 6 teaches that you are praying to your Father in secret and that this matter is to be behind closed doors and between you and God
- The Lord reads our heart – sincerity and purity matter more than oratory, Luke 18. 9-14



The Book of Esther

A CAMEO OF A BOOK

By **JOHN MITCHELL** Cardiff, Wales

Esther is a book which clearly emphasizes the providence of God. One of the features of the book is that the name of God does not appear in the Hebrew text. However, on closer examination we can find the Lord's name in acrostic form* in the narrative. On four occasions, 1. 20; 5. 4, 13; 7. 7, this structure is used. When each of these contexts is examined it becomes apparent that the writer is stressing critical points in the plan of the book. Surely, this cannot be by chance but is evidence of divine design, demonstrating the truth of divine providence.

We know who really does rule and over-rule!



HELPFUL BIBLICAL GUIDANCE FOR BELIEVERS

Giving the Lord the central place

By **DAN RUDGE** Bracknell, England

In the August 2010 edition of *Precious Seed International* I wrote an article entitled 'Fellowship'. In this I suggested that there were six aspects of local assembly fellowship which are vital for every believer. These are our commitment, continuity, conduct, contribution, care and compliance. There is however another aspect of local assembly fellowship that is the most important – the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the sole reason why we gather together. He is the centre of attraction in every assembly gathering. It is to Him that we gather.

In Matthew chapter 18 the Lord Jesus speaks about the local church, Matt. 18. 15-20. In particular the passage is about one brother who has a complaint or argument with another brother. In this setting the Lord Jesus says, *For where two or three are (having been and currently) gathered together in (unto) my name, there am I in the midst of them*, v. 20. This verse is very precious to many believers as it speaks about the presence of the Lord Jesus in the centre of a local assembly gathering. I would like to think with you about the teaching of the verse about the **principle, promise and practice** of 'Christ in the central place'.

The Principle

The simple principle is this. Wherever at least two believers, the smallest possible gathering, have been gathered together, by the Holy Spirit, unto the name of Christ, then He graciously is present among them.

Many believers say that the application of this verse to every gathering of the local assembly is not appropriate as the context of the verse is that of one specific meeting, i.e., for discipline. They are right about the context, but wrong about the application. What some fail to notice is that the presence of God dwelling among His people is a principle which begins in the Old Testament and runs throughout the Bible.

It has always been God's **desire** to dwell or fellowship **among** His people. This is seen in the past in the Tabernacle, Ex. 25. 8, the Temple, currently in the local assemblies, 1 Tim. 3. 15 and in the future in the Eternal State, Rev. 21. 3.

Secondly, it has always been God's **right** to dwell among His people. That is, He should be the focal point and attraction of their gathering. He has this right because of who He is. No wonder then that Christ is often to be found in the midst, Luke 2. 46; 24. 36; John 1. 26; 19. 18; Rev. 1. 13; 5. 6.

The Old Testament shows us that as a result of this desire God chose a place where all His people could gather unto Him. Deuteronomy chapter 12 verse 5 declares, *'But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come'*.

Note four most important similarities in this verse to our verse in Matthew chapter 18 verse 20.



Deut. 12. 5 (OT)	Matt. 18. 20 (NT)	Similarity
'the place which the LORD your God shall choose'	'where two or three are'	The place was chosen by God. Likewise the local assembly gathers in the place where the Spirit of God has brought them together.
'thither thou shalt come'	'gathered together'	The place was where the nation of Israel gathered together to worship God collectively. Likewise, the local assembly gathers together for this purpose too.
'to put his name there'	'in my name'	The place was where God had set His name as a testimony. Likewise, the local assembly gathers unto the name of the Lord Jesus.
'his habitation shall ye seek'	'there am I in the midst'	The presence of God was in this chosen place. Likewise, when the local assembly gathers the Lord Jesus presents Himself in their midst.

Clearly then, God dwelling among His people is a scriptural principle. It is interesting that the place where God set His name in the Old Testament was marked by worship, Deut. 12. 6, commemoration, Deut. 16. 2, reverence, Deut. 14. 23, joy, Deut. 12. 12 and obedience, Deut. 12. 14. The local assembly should be marked by these things when we gather too!

We should also notice some important differences. There is no longer **one** place where God has set His name, but many. There is now no separate priesthood, but we are all priests, 1 Pet. 2. 5. We no longer offer blood sacrifices but spiritual sacrifices, 1 Pet. 2. 5. Furthermore, instrumental music which marked the services of the Temple has gone! We now sing accompanied by the Spirit and understanding, 1 Cor. 14. 15.

The Promise

The wonderful promise of the Lord Jesus to presence Himself in the midst of His gathered people appears to come attached with two conditions.

The first condition is that the company must have been gathered by the Holy Spirit, not by men. This is indicated by the Greek of Matthew chapter 18 verse 20. The gathering must be of a permanent nature and established in times past by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. It is not a temporary gathering, for example, a few believers meeting to remember the Lord Jesus on holiday, in a hotel room.

The second condition is that Christ is glorified. Our verse says the saints are gathered 'unto his name'. That is, when we meet we do so with the purpose of glorifying and uplifting the Person of Christ. We are representing Him and therefore must gather according to His character, 2 Tim. 2. 19 and His instructions as laid out in the New Testament.

Never forget that Christ's presence among us is as a result of grace, and nothing to do with anything in us.

The Practice

So what does all this mean in practice? It might help to consider this question: What would our assembly gatherings be like without Christ in the midst? Dead? Self centred? Meaningless formality? Powerless? The simple truth of the matter is we need Him powerfully present in our midst.

When reading of the Seven Churches, Rev. 2-3, you might notice that five were bad and two were good. The Lord Jesus found it necessary to rebuke five of these churches for something that was missing. In Ephesus it was love. In Sardis it was life. In Thyatira and Pergamos it was light and in Laodicea it was loyalty. They were not demonstrating the character of Christ as they should have done. The other two churches however were marked by the power of Christ among them. Is it just coincidence that they were the churches marked by suffering (Smyrna) and submission (Philadelphia)? This is the kind of Christ-like character that needs to be demonstrated by us as we gather together and serve Him.

So, young brother, young sister, Christ is present among us when we gather. Does this affect the way you act? If you could physically see Christ in the centre of the gathering on a Lord's Day morning, would you remain silent? Scripture teaches that we are priests and should conduct ourselves in an appropriate way (the brothers audibly and the sisters inaudibly). If you could physically see Christ in the centre of the gathering in the midweek prayer meeting, would you still allow your mind to wander, or think about the things that you do? If you could physically see Him in the midst, would you still be late for the meeting or act in the way that you do when you are there?

EDITOR'S NOTE

It is really worth thinking about the challenging questions which are asked at the end of this article. Hopefully, as a result, we will become more conscious of the Lord's presence when we gather together.

How do I ensure that I stay close to the Lord?

By **GARETH EDWARDS** Perth, Scotland

Sadly, few of us can claim the testimony of an Enoch or Noah, who 'walked with God' closely and continuously. Often we are more like Peter, who 'followed afar off'. Yet it is true that each of us is as close to God as **we** choose to be. The purpose of this article then is to highlight some practical steps we can take to remain close to Him day by day.

Appreciation

Why do we need to, and why should we want to, be close to Christ? Firstly, we remember that through His work of redemption, Christ has **purchased our lives**, and that we are no longer our own. In the light of this, we must make Christ the **priority in our lives**, realizing that 'love so amazing, so divine, demands my heart, my life, my all' (*Isaac Watts*). Furthermore, we recognize that Christ is now the **purpose of our lives**; that we may know Him, make Him known to others, and become more like Him each day. Finally, we must remember that Christ is the only source of **power in our lives**, and that without Him we can do nothing.

'Alone' time

What a wonderful thing it is that Almighty God desires to speak and listen to us daily! Yet how often would we have to confess that we neglect this tremendous privilege?

There will no doubt be some Christians reading this who find **Bible reading** a bit of a struggle. If that's the case I would encourage you, as someone who spent many years in that position, not to give up and abandon the Bible, but rather make all the more effort to get into it. Read with an **open notebook**, trying to summarize what you've read, and noting down points of interest. Read also with an **open heart**, willing to live out what you take in. Taking in a small amount and living it out in practice is of greater value than reading a lot and doing nothing about it. As James encourages us, we must be 'doers of the word, and not hearers only', 1. 22.

Another area which may be a struggle for some is that of **private prayer**. Again, I encourage you to persevere in your private prayers. It is vital that we 'come boldly to the throne of grace' to receive

fresh power to live for God, while at the same time thanking Him for the salvation He has given us, and confessing our sins so that there is nothing hindering our fellowship with Him. Personally, I've found it helpful to pray aloud (albeit a whisper!) in order to remain focussed in prayer, as I'm sure you'll agree, it's all too easy to lose concentration.

Is it better to spend time with the Lord in the morning or evening? When we consider all that He has done for us, would we not want to do both? Even a short time alone with God morning and night will make a real difference in our lives.

So if you currently don't have a regular time alone with the Lord, why not do something about it now and make an appointment with Him this evening?

Accountability

Find a Christian friend you trust, that you can be **accountable** to, in relation to your reading, prayer life, personal holiness and service for God. This will flag up to you when things are beginning to go in the wrong direction and **focus your attention** on areas which need to be addressed.

Activity

Cultivating a close relationship with the Lord isn't just about making time for Him once, or twice, a day. We must think about how we can bring Christ into **everything** we do. Is it not true that most of us waste time on things of little value, at the expense of spending it with and for the Lord? Let us ask ourselves, 'Are the things we're living for worth Christ dying for?'

May we then draw closer to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, for it is true that to be much **for** God, we must be much **with** God.

Endnotes

- 1 Gen. 5. 22; 6. 9.
- 2 Luke 22. 54.
- 3 1 Cor. 6. 19-20.
- 4 John 15. 5.
- 5 James 1. 22.
- 6 Heb. 4. 16.
- 7 Leonard Ravenhill.

