

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #68

### COMMENTARY ON: 16:1-5

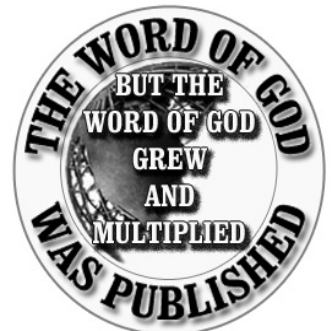
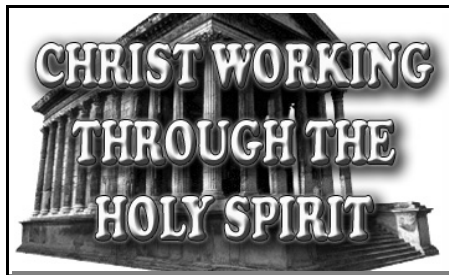
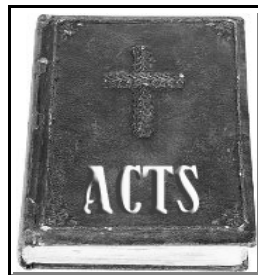
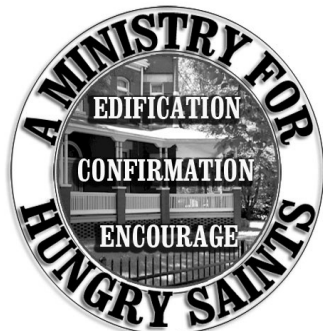
#### THE INTRODUCTION OF TIMOTHY

In the body of Christ, every member has access to God. There is no member that is not particularly placed, or lacks a specific gift that is designed to profit the whole body. All of the saved have been given a "new man," are reconciled to God, and have peace with God. From the standpoint of their acceptance by God, there is no difference among them, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free. However, there are areas in which an equality does not exist among the members of Christ. Some, for example, are referred to as "first," "second," and "third" (1 Cor 12:28). It is possible to "excel" (1 Cor 14:12), be "of reputation" (Gal 2:2), and be "of note" (Rom 16:7). Our text introduces us to such an individual - Timothy, also referred to as "Timotheus," the Greek form of his name. Here is a young man who was noted among the brethren, and was immediately recognized by Paul as worthy of involvement in the work of the Lord.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

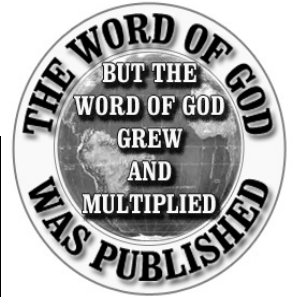


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 68



**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.LITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----  
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# THE INTRODUCTION OF TIMOTHY

16:1 "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: <sup>2</sup> Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup> Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." ..... (Acts 16:1-5)

## INTRODUCTION

In the body of Christ, every member has access to God through Jesus Christ. This access is through the very same faith by which they were justified. Because it was "given" to them to believe (Phil 1:29), and the grace of God that brought salvation (Tit 2:11) "was exceeding abundant with faith" (1 Tim 1:14), there is no question about faith's effectiveness. No member of the body of Christ is denied this access to God through faith. This means that everything required for growth and stability are well within the reach of

those who are in Christ Jesus. This is something of what is involved in Divine power giving us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). However, rarely, if ever, is a "newborn babe" aware of these marvelous realities. These are matters that are opened up through teaching. If this is not done, and the Word of God is not regularly ingested, they will not be obvious to the child of God. In such a case, the person begins to live just as though the abundance that is provided in Christ does not even exist. For this reason, the individual begins to

live as though mastering life in this world is really the mark of spiritual excellence. To assist such people in living out such a delusion, the professed Christian community is filled with professed experts in human behavior. None of them, however, are capable of doing what is affirmed in our text to have taken place: the establishment of the churches in the faith.

Also, there is no member that is not particularly placed in the body of Christ, or lacks a specific gift that is

## CONTENTS

- TIMOTHY DISCOVERED IN THE AREA OF LYSTRA AND DERBE (16:1a)
- BUT HIS FATHER WAS A GREEK (16:1b)
- HE WAS WELL REPORTED OF BY THE BRETHREN (16:2)
- PAUL DESIRES TO GO FORTH WITH HIM (16:3)
- THEY DELIVERED THE DECREES (16:4)
- THE CHURCHES WERE ESTABLISHED (16:5a)
- AND INCREASED IN NUMBER DAILY (16:5b)
- CONCLUSION

designed to profit the whole body (1 Cor 12:18). **These abilities are developed as the individual lives by faith, walks in the Spirit, and maintains the fellowship with Jesus into which he has been called.** This manner of life is helped along by continuance in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). No person in Christ can be built up, strengthened, or established, independently of these involvements. While this appears very evident to the person who is participating in these things, it is not at all apparent to the fledgling youth and the immature. That is one reason we are given a record of these things actually being lived out.

**It will become apparent in this text that those in Christ are expected to avail themselves of the resources provided for them, and thus advance toward spiritual maturity and productivity.**

### AREAS OF INEQUALITY

However, there are areas in which an equality does not exist among the members of Christ. Some, for example, are referred to as “*first*,” “*second*,” and “*third*” (1 Cor 12:28). It is possible to “*excel*” (1 Cor 14:12), be “*of reputation*” (Gal 2:2), and be “*of note*” (Rom 16:7). The church in Jerusalem had those who “*were of reputation*” (Gal 2:2), and were “*pillars*” (Gal 2:9). Jesus gave Peter “*the keys of the*

*kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 16:18-19). The church in Antioch had certain among them who were “*prophets and teachers*” (Acts 13:1). Distinctions such as these are owing to at least two factors.

⇒ **DIVINE PLACEMENT.** Everyone in Christ does not occupy the same office. Just as the natural body “*hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ . . . For the body is not one member, but many*” (1 Cor 12:12,14). No member can assume they are not part of the body because they are not the same as others (1 Cor 12:15-18). Nor, indeed, can any member of the body affirm they have no need of the other members (1 Cor 12:21). The distinction of contributive abilities within the church is, in part, owing to their Divine placement within the body (1 Cor 12:18).

⇒ **EAGER ADVANCEMENT.** In addition to the distinctions traced to their placement in the body, there is also eminence that results from ardent and consistent activity. Paul was such a person, who “*labored more abundantly than they all*” (1 Cor 15:10). The household of Stephanus was also unique, in that they “*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*” (1 Cor 16:15). Paul and Barnabas were of note because they “*hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 15:26). In addition to where the Lord had placed them in the church, these brethren have uniquely availed themselves of the resources that are accessible all believers, doing so with uncommon eagerness and consistency.

I have noted over the years that the institutional church makes little room for the kind of people I have just described. Quite frequently such people are virtually ignored, and treated as though they had nothing more to offer than the rank and file of the people. This is because there really is no place in religious institutions for those who are wholly devoted to the Lord, and possess uncommon insight and devotion. Such people are generally regarded as oddities and misfits. If you happen to be such a person, and have been exposed to what I have termed “the institutional church,” you know very well

what I am talking about.

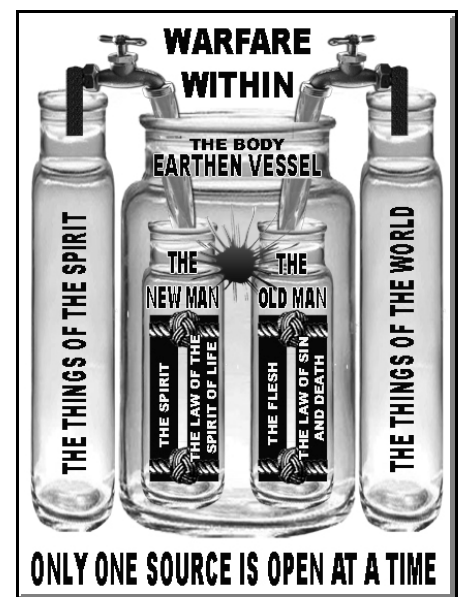
Our text introduces us to such an individual – “*Timotheus*,” the Greek form of his name, also referred to as “*Timothy*”

Here is a young man who was noted among the brethren, and was immediately recognized by Paul as being worthy of extended involvement in the work of the Lord.

### SOMETHING COMMON AMONG BELIEVERS

Additionally, all of the saved have been given a “*new man*” (Col 3:9-10), are reconciled to God (Col 1:20), and have peace with God (Rom 5:1). From the standpoint of their acceptance by God, there is no difference among them, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free (Gal 3:28).

Concerning “*the new man*,” very few, if any, who are first “*joined to the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17), are aware that they have two natures and two laws, or principles, resident in their bodies – but that is the case.



Two differing natures reside within the believer, and they are contradictory to one another. Further, this contrariety erupts in hostility. As it is written, “*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things*

that ye would” (Gal 5:17).

Speaking of his personal involvement in this inner warfare, Paul said, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:23). By saying “bringing me into captivity to the law of sin,” Paul does not mean that he is forced to sin, but rather that he is forced to deal with this recalcitrant law that militates against his real preferences.

James also speaks of this conflict, emphasizing the strength of the desires of the Holy Spirit for our spirit. “Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in

us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (James 4:5).

**THE POINT OF MENTIONING THIS**

The point of mentioning these things is to provide a proper context for the remarkable accounts recorded in the book of Acts. The advances and triumphs that were made were in spite of this inner warfare that is waged in all believers. However, fighting the war is not an end of itself. The triumph over the flesh and its desires – referred to as crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal 5:24) – is in order to personal involvement in “that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2). This, of course, is the great weakness in submitting to the “ordinances” of men that are related to

attempting to control sin. Those ordinances consider the subduing of sinful tendencies to be the will of God – and, in a sense, this is true. However, in the most precise sense of the word, the will of God is related to this: “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess 4:4). Sanctification and honor have more to do with Divine employment than controlling the flesh. The denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts is in order that we might engage in the “good works” for which we have been “created” – works “which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

It is the participation in these “good works” that is being reported in Luke’s record of the advance of the church. It is most blessed to consider it.

**TIMOTHY DISCOVERED IN THE AREA OF LYSTRA AND DERBE**

<sup>16:1a</sup> “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed . . .”

**THEN**

“Then . . .” Other versions read, “and,”<sup>NASB</sup> “He also,”<sup>NLT</sup> “From there.”<sup>NJB</sup>

The Greek word translated “Then” is δε, which means “but, moreover . . . universally, by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opposed to a preceding statement.”<sup>THAYER</sup> In other words this is not an explanation of the previous statement, but something that is compared with it. The previous statement is, “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (Acts 15:41). This suggests that Paul and Silas had already strengthened the churches in Syria and Cilicia, for Derbe and Lystra were cities in Lycaonia (Acts 14:6). Syria and Cilicia were en route to these cities, In other words, Luke is not providing all of the details related to this trip. He is rather accentuating the events that led to the epochs he will report.

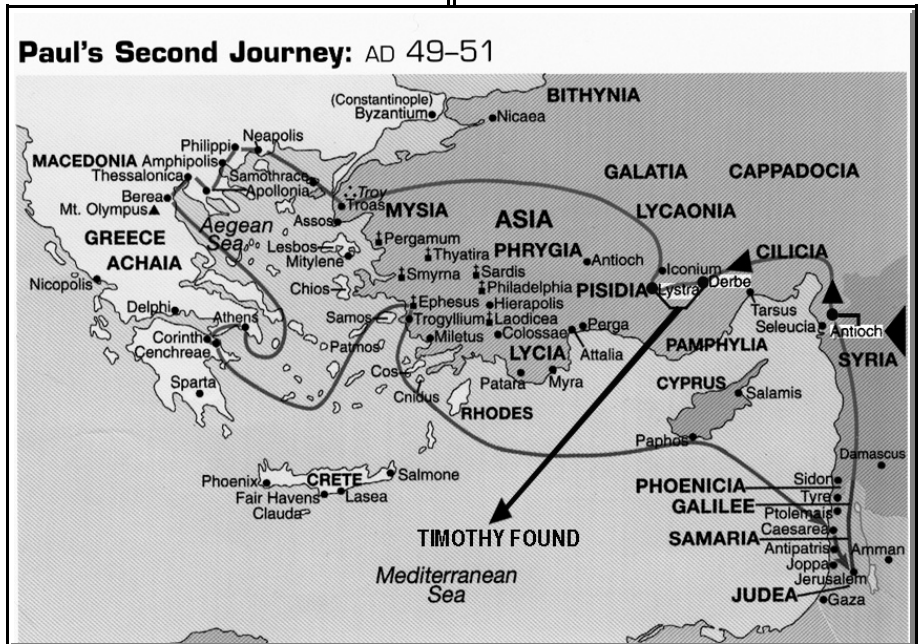
**THEY CAME TO DERBE AND LYSTRA**

“ . . . came he to Derbe and Lystra . . .” Other versions read, “went on also to,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “came also to,”<sup>ASV</sup> “he reached (also),”<sup>NAB</sup> “from there he went to,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “He also went to.”<sup>ISV</sup>

These were the last cities Paul and Barnabas visited on their initial trip (Acts 14:6,21). Derbe was the final city, and from there they had backtracked,

visiting Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, confirming the souls of the disciples (Acts 14:21-22).

Now Derbe and Lystra are the first cities Paul and Silas went to, following passing through Syria and Cilicia, “confirming the churches.”



Lystra was the city where Paul had been stoned during his first trip with Barnabas (Acts 14:8-19). There is where he healed a man who had been “*cripple from his mother’s womb*” (Acts 14:8). It is also where he and Barnabas barely restrained the citizenry from offering sacrifice to them, for the people there thought Jupiter (Zeus) and Mercurius (Hermes) had come down to them in the persons of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18).

It is evident that Paul spoke the truth when he later said to the elders of Ephesus, “*But none of these things move me, 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, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). Dominated by “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*” (Rom 8:2), Paul was moved along by something higher than self-interest.

**A CERTAIN DISCIPLE WAS THERE**

“ . . . and, behold, a certain disciple was there . . . ” Other versions read, “*there was a disciple,*”<sup>NRSV</sup> “*a disciple was there,*”<sup>RSV</sup> “*there was a young disciple,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*a follower,*”<sup>IE</sup> and “*he found there.*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

**It seems to me that a measure of a real man of God is a marked tendency to spot devoted followers of Christ and culture an association with them.**

Here we are being exposed to the nature of Paul. He was alert for distinguished disciples, as well as believers in general. **It seems to me that a measure of a real man of God is a marked tendency to spot devoted followers of Christ and culture an association with them.** Jesus Himself had this disposition. When seeing Nathanael, for example, Jesus said, “*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*” (John 1:47). He perceived the remarkable faith of a certain centurion and said, “*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*” (Matt 8:10). He also said to the Syrophenician woman who

pressed him for a blessing, “*O woman, great is thy faith*” (Matt 15:28).

This kind of awareness is also embedded in the very text of Scripture. Those who excelled in matters pertaining to God are duly noted.

- ⇨ It is said of David that God, “*gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will*” (Acts 13:22).
- ⇨ The mighty angel Gabriel said to Daniel, “*I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved*” (Dan 9:23).
- ⇨ It is written of Zechariah and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, “*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Luke 1:6).
- ⇨ The early church referred to Paul and Barnabas as “*Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 15:26).
- ⇨ Andronicus and Junia were “*of note among the apostles*” (Rom 16:2).
- ⇨ Persis, a Persian woman who was a

believer, is described as one “*which labored much in the Lord*” (Rom 16:12).

- ⇨ James Peter and John were “*acknowledged pillars*”<sup>NRSV</sup> of the church in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9).

Now, coming to the region of Lystra and Derbe, there was a young man that stood out – a “*certain disciple,*” or follower of Jesus Christ.

In his letters to Timothy, Paul admonished him to seek out “*faithful men*” – those who were *reliable*.<sup>NIV</sup> He

was to take the things he had heard from Paul and “*commit,*” or “*transmit and entrust [as a deposit],*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> them to others in order that they might “*teach others also*” (2 Tim 2:2). I do not believe this word has been taken seriously by the modern church. There is too much reliance on methodology, education, and the obtaining of credentials.

The religious professional of our time would probably never have noticed Timotheus. However, a godly man engaged in the work of the Lord would not have passed him by.

**TIMOTHEUS, THE SON OF A BELIEVING JEWESS**

“ . . . named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed . . . ” Other versions read, “*the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*whose mother was a Jewess and a believer,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*the son of a Christian Jewess,*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “*whose mother was a Jewish Christian.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

“Probably Timothy was about eighteen years of age, a convert of Paul's former visit a few years before (1Tim 1:2) and still young twelve years later (1Tim 4:12).”<sup>ROBERTSON'S WORD PICTURES</sup>

“*Timotheus*” is the Greek form of “*Timothy.*”

During their first trip into that region, Paul and Barnabas “*preached the Gospel*” (14:6-7). After Paul had been stoned in Lystra, he and Barnabas had gone to Derbe, “*preached the Gospel in that city, and taught many*” (14:21). On their returned trip, they had “*confirmed the souls of the disciples*” in that region, and “*ordained elders in every church*” (14:23). **That is the spiritual culture in which young Timothy matured.** Because Paul referred to him as his “*own son in the faith,*” he was probably converted during one of those visits.

There were at least three years between the initial visit of Paul and Barnabas to that area and this return – and possible as many as five years. Assuming that this was the time of Timothy’s conversion, he had greatly matured during the interim between the first and second visits. All of this being

true, and considering the notation of A.T. Robertson concerning the probable age of Timothy at this time, his conversion could have been when he was somewhere between thirteen and fifteen years of age. This is probably the approximate age of Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah when they were taken captive to Babylon.

Considering that Paul and Barnabas brought the Gospel to this region, this must also have been the time when Timothy's mother and grandmother were converted, for the faith that Timothy had first dwelt in them (2 Tim 1:5). If it is true that Timothy, his mother, and his grandmother were converted during Paul's first tour through that region, those three souls highlight the value of a pure spiritual environment, where saints have been "confirmed," exhorted to "continue in the faith," and solemnly reminded that "we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Where such activities are missing, it seems to me that believers are in danger of being shut up to mediocrity, and becoming more vulnerable to the attacks of the wicked one.

#### Timothy's Upbringing

Timothy had been nurtured in the Scriptures from the time he was a young child. Paul reminded him in one of his letters, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). This tutelage had come from his mother, who herself was a second generation believer. Paul wrote of her, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim 1:5).

This refers to Timothy's Jewish

upbringing by his mother, prior to him becoming disciple of Christ. Here is a notable example of special education and training in the Scriptures themselves. This was a Jewish manner, who maintained their own schools, and centered their learning in the Scriptures. Ordinarily, they were never absorbed into the culture where they were found, but remained unique within it. This tendency continues to this very day.

It was this faithful upbringing that led Timothy to believe the Gospel that Paul had preached in that region. Elsewhere Paul said of his preaching, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come**" (Acts 26:22). This kind of preaching is

*the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. **And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:** whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet 2:1-3).*

#### Paul's References to Timothy

Paul's references to Timothy confirm his uniqueness.

- ⇒ "My own son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2).
- ⇒ "My beloved son" (1 Cor 4:17).
- ⇒ "My workfellow" (Rom 15:21).
- ⇒ "My brother" (2 Cor 1:1).

**This was a Jewish manner, who maintained their own schools, and centered their learning in the Scriptures. Ordinarily, they were never absorbed into the culture where they were found, but remained unique within it.**

exceedingly rare in our day. Under the leadership of the mega-church and media ministers, the thrust of preaching has been focused on meeting the perceived needs of the individual rather than declaring the Lord's Christ. This kind of emphasis sounds noble only to those who are fundamentally ignorant of the Scriptures, which are able to "give you the wisdom that leads to salvation"<sup>NASB</sup> (2 Tim 3:15). This is the kind of departure of which Peter wrote: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying

- ⇒ Uniquely "likeminded" with Paul, who "naturally cared" for the state of God's people (Phil 2:19-22).
- ⇒ "He is doing the Lord's work, as I also am"<sup>NASB</sup> (1 Cor 16:10)
- ⇒ "Minister of God and fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ" (1 Thess 3:2).

All of this confirms that Timothy was just as unique as he first appeared to be. He had availed himself of the spiritual advantages that were given to him. There was spiritual substance to him, and it was duly noted by Paul.

## BUT HIS FATHER WAS A GREEK

"<sup>1b</sup> . . . but his father was a Greek." Other versions read, "was a Gentile,"<sup>DOUAY</sup> and "was a Grecian."<sup>GENEVA</sup> The idea is that his father was

neither a Jew nor a believer in Christ, for he is contrasted with Timothy's mother who was "a Jewess, and believed." By contrast - "but" - his father "was a

Greek." A contrast between Jew and Greek is often found in Scripture.

- ⇒ "And it came to pass in Iconium, that

they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the **Jews and also of the Greeks** believed” (Acts 14:1).

- ⇒ “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded **the Jews and the Greeks**” (Acts 18:4).
- ⇒ “And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, **both Jews and Greeks**” (Acts 19:10).
- ⇒ “And this was known to **all the Jews and Greeks also** dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (Acts 19:17).
- ⇒ “Testifying both to **the Jews, and also to the Greeks**, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

⇒ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, **and also to the Greek**” (Rom 1:16).

- ⇒ “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom 10:12).
- ⇒ “For **the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God**” (1 Cor 1:22-24)
- ⇒ “There is neither **Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).
- ⇒ “Where there is neither **Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor**

uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11).

Some have surmised that Timothy’s father had died, leaving him alone with his mother. However, I do not see this as a tenable view. The fact that a point is made of his father being a Greek, and that special action will be taken in view of that fact, suggests that he was still alive. Further, I do not know why a point is made of his mother being a believer but his father a Greek if he was no longer alive. The comparison is not between a wife that was alive and a husband that was dead, but between someone who believed and someone who did not.

However a person chooses to view the situation, it does confirm that a child can, if required, be raised in the faith without a believing father. What is more, the upbringing can be extraordinary, yielding results that were duly noted by the apostle to the Gentiles.

## HE WAS WELL REPORTED OF BY THE BRETHREN

“<sup>2</sup> Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.” Other versions read, “well spoken of,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “had a high opinion,”<sup>BBE</sup> “spoke highly,”<sup>CSB</sup> “had a good testimony,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “gave good testimony of him,”<sup>MRD</sup> “well thought of,”<sup>NLT</sup> “respected Timothy,”<sup>IE</sup> “highly regarded,”<sup>ISV</sup> “had a high reputation,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “was attested to,”<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup> “said good things about,”<sup>CEV</sup> and “held in high regard.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

As used in this text, the word translated “well reported of,” has the following lexical meaning: “to be continuously well reported of . . . giving honorable testimony,”<sup>THAYER</sup> and “receive a good report, be well-spoken of, be approved, have a good reputation.”<sup>FRIBERG</sup>

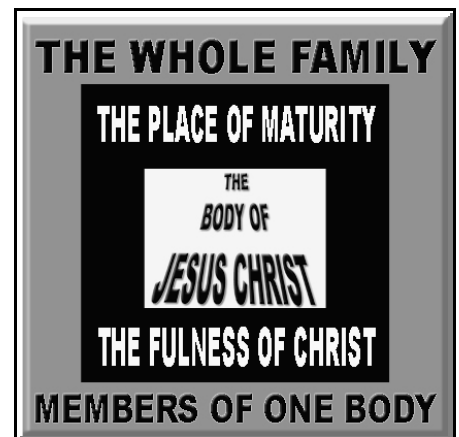
Here was a young man, probably in his teens, who, within a relatively short period of time (2-4 years) had captured the attention of the believers in that region. Such a phenomenon would be even more extraordinary in our time than it was at the time of our text.

However, this is a sterling example of what the grace of God will do in a person who is wholly given to the Lord – a person who avails himself of the Scripture and those who have insight into them.

The “brethren” were continually speaking well of Timothy, noting his spiritual excellence. The tense (perfect) of the Greek word here (ἐμαρτυρείτο), indicates a continual witness. Robertson, in his “Word Pictures,” makes a special note of this: “(emartureito). Imperfect passive. It was a continuous witness that was borne the young disciple both in his home town of Lystra and in Derbe. Already he had so borne himself that his gifts and graces for the ministry were recognized.” It also ought to be noted that a person who has not distinguished himself among local disciples, will probably not be able to do it anywhere else.

Like young Samuel, Timothy excelled his peers. Like Daniel and his three fellows, he stood out in comparison

to others of his age. Although it ought to be evident, the reputation of Timothy did not pertain to athletic, scholastic, or musical skills – although it is remotely possible he may have excelled in such things. **This commendation, however, had to do with the things of God.** He had already begun to live out what Paul would later buttress in a special letter to him: “Let no man despise thy youth; but



*be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*"(1 Tim 4:12). It is refreshing to note that we have some younger brethren among us who are following in the train of such notable disciples.

Although I want to avoid appearing overly negative, I feel compelled to note the general absence of this kind of youthful response in the churches of our time. **Under the incapable leadership of religious professionals, the younger brethren have been isolated from the more mature believers.** It appears this has been done in order to appeal to their vernal interests. Such an approach is wholly without any Scriptural suggestion or precedent. I am not aware of any text of Scripture that suggests any spiritual aptitude or maturity can be achieved independently of the body of Christ, Imagine the laughter that would be elicited if someone suggested the eye could be better developed if all of the eyes were put together; or that a keen ear could be acquired by putting all of the ears together. The notion of regularly, and even permanently, isolating a body of people within the church – any people –

*word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."*

⇒ **LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH.** Every younger believer is a steward of their youth. They are not to exhibit youthful foolishness, the lack of sobriety that characterizes worldly youth, or one who is dominated by a lust for pleasure.

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE BELIEVERS.** The standard of measurement are those who are living by faith (Heb 10:38) – *"the believers."* These are *"the household of faith"* (Gal 6:10), who walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Those who believe are those who are properly focused, and live unto the Lord who died for them and rose again.

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN WORD.** In speech, they are to speak as believers, not in the jargon of worldly youth. They are not to speak in a manner that makes no sense to those who are trusting in the Lord with all of their hearts, and not leaning to their own understanding (Prov 3:5). Their speech is with grace (Col 4:6), and they have a keen awareness that

which they fasten their gaze upon things that are not seen, rather than what can be seen, and is consequently passing away (2 Cor 4:18).

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN CHARITY.** This is the love that puts the interests of other above self. Charity gives, forgives, and seeks the betterment of others.; (1 Cor 13:1-13).

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN SPIRIT.** This has to do with living a controlled life, keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). It has to do with the posture of our life, what motivates us, and how we live before the Lord. A spiritual person is one who is *"humble in spirit"* (Prov 29:23), is *"poor in spirit"* (Matt 5:3), and is content with the things they have (Heb 13:5). Having been taught by the grace of God, they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world (Tit 2:12).

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN FAITH.** Young believers are to be an example of the believers in their faith – holding up under trials, and not being moved about with every wind of doctrine. The just *"live by faith"* (Rom 1:17), and they are to exhibit this manner in their lives.

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN PURITY.** Believers are those who keep themselves *"unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27). They are busy about cleansing themselves of all filthiness and flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). They make it their aim to *"walk in the light as He is in the light"* (1 John 1:7). They labor at avoiding contaminating and defiling influences. Jesus pronounced a blessing on the *"pure in heart,"* declaring of such, *"they shall see God"* (Matt 4:8). Emphasizing the role of purity, Paul also admonished Timothy, *"neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure"* (1 Tim 5:22).

This is the manner in which youthful believers are addressed. **There is no special dumbed-down version of the**

**By becoming absorbed in the youthful culture of our time, many Christian young people have, in fact, separated themselves conceptually from the body of Christ. More and more, they are not viewed in association with the body of believers.**

in order to focus attention upon them , is questionable, to say the least.

By becoming absorbed in the youthful culture of our time, many Christian young people have, in fact, separated themselves conceptually from the body of Christ. More and more, they are not viewed in association with the body of believers. However, the word to young people is still, *"Be thou an example of the believers"* (1 Tim 4:12). Note the remarkable extent of Paul's exhortation. *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in*

they will be justified or condemned by their words (Matt 12:37).

⇒ **BE AN EXAMPLE IN CONVERSATION.** Their conversation is their conduct — the manner in which they live. Believers, of which they are to be example, are strangers and pilgrims in this world (1 Pet 2:11). They are in the process of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. They are living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and are looking for Christ's appearing (Tit 2:12). The believers have a manner of life in

Gospel for them. They have not been liberated to meander about in the various “youthful lusts” of the flesh. Rather, they have been called into a life that requires the crucifixion of the flesh, and the pursuit of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Confirming their oneness with the body of Christ they are admonished, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord

out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22).

**THE POINT OF THIS**

The point of this brief diversion is to emphasize that **these are the areas where Timothy had distinguished himself.** He had a good report as a believer, not merely as an energetic youth. There is, of course, a lot of unwarranted assumption concerning youthful vigor. During that period of life,

children are not noted for their productivity or sustained work and industry. By nature, their energies are ordinarily devoted to passing pleasures. However, with Timothy, this was not the case. The “good report” that was given of him was not merely that he stayed out of trouble and did the bidding of his parents. He was, at a young age, a noble “example of the believers,” and had obtained that reputation among them.

**PAUL DESIRES TO GO FORTH WITH HIM**

“<sup>3</sup> Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”

Being alert to the environment in which he found himself, Paul took due note of Timothy. **It is true that walking in the Spirit causes one to be alert to the working of the Spirit in the people of God.** The person who walks in the flesh dismisses the presence of godly people as something of little consequence. I have often been in gatherings of professed Christian leaders that appeared to give little regard to especially godly people among them. It is common, for example, for a Christian philanthropist, or one who engages in some form of charitable work, is perceived as being deeply involved in the work of the Lord. As laudable as such works are, serving tables is by no means to be seen as equal to laboring in the Word and in the doctrine (Acts 6:2; 1 Tim 5:17). For example, the thing that distinguished Paul from others was his prodigious labors in preaching and teaching what he had been given to see (Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 2:4; 4:7; 9:27; 15:1,2,10; Gal 1:8; Col 1:28; 1 Thess 2:9).

There is a certain Kingdom awareness that is worthy of note. **That is, as we are living in a conscious awareness of the living God and His purpose in Christ Jesus, certain things become obvious to us.** Faith causes us to be alert to the presence of the Lord Himself, as well as His people. The presence of faith, hope, love, the fruit of the Spirit, works of faith, the love of the truth, and those who are pilgrims in this world, become very

obvious.



By way of comparison, a fleshly mind, sectarianism, and adherence to lifeless religious tradition hide all of these things to us. In such a case, we become blind and insensitive to Divine workings. Like Jerusalem of old, such people do not know the time of their visitation (Lk 19:44).

**Spiritual obtuseness is the plague of the church of our time.** In order for any semblance of spiritual sensitivity to be aroused, all manner of coaching and stimulus is required. In our time, most of this appears to be artificial, being nothing more than a meager attempt to simulate spiritual life.

**In such a surrounding as this, Timothy would have been very difficult to detect.** First, it is doubtful that such a young man would choose to be in such an environment – unless it was in the capacity of a speaker like Stephen. Second, Paul would not have been

inclined to be in such a place unless he was going to address the people.

If you have not already learned this, you will find that the more your mind is stayed on the Lord, the less you will be attracted to lifeless assemblies, even if they have a lot of outward activity. A love for the truth cultures a certain disdain for a misrepresentation of the truth. A quest for glory develops within the individual a very real contempt for things that cause this world to seem more prominent than it really is. That is the manner of spiritual life.

At any rate, it was in the activity of preaching, teaching, and “confirming the churches” that Paul took note of Timothy (Acts 15:41; 16:1). In this, he followed the example of the Lord Jesus Himself. He chose His disciples while He was in the act of preaching and teaching (Matt 4:17-23; Lk 5:17-27).

**PAUL CHOOSES HIM**

“Him would Paul have to go forth with him . . .” Other versions read, “wanted this man to go with him,”<sup>NASB</sup> “wanted to take him along on the journey,”<sup>NIV</sup> “wanted Timothy to accompany him,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “was disposed to take with him,”<sup>MRD</sup> “wanted to have him as a traveling companion,”<sup>NJB</sup> “wanted him to join them on their journey,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “asked him to join them on their journey.”<sup>LIVING</sup>

Paul was not merely looking to add a young man to the group – a sort of trainee. He had already judged Mark to be unworthy of such a privilege (15:37-

38). The idea here is that Paul wanted Timothy to be *“with him”* in the mission on which he had embarked. That work was to *“go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do”* (Acts 15:36).

In our time, who has heard of such a mission? To be sure, there are precious laborers engaged in such holy activity, but it is rare, indeed. I know of no Bible College of Seminary that endeavors to prepare students for such a work. It certainly is not common to hear of such a thing in the churches.

The very fact that Paul had a profound desire to take Timothy on such a mission is commentary enough on the spiritual quality of this young man.

We assume that Paul’s request was clearly made known to Timothy and to his mother. It is obvious that there was no reluctance on the part of Timothy, or on the part of his mother or other relatives. This young man was *“prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:21). He did not draw back like the person who said he would follow Jesus, but requested to go home first, and bid farewell to those of his house (Lk 9:61). Nor, indeed, was he like the would-be disciple who said he would follow Jesus, but asked that he first be allowed to go and bury his father (Lk 9:59). Both of these people were rejected by Jesus. However, there was no hesitation on the part of Timothy. In fact, it appears that he went with Paul immediately.

#### PAUL CIRCUMCISED HIM

*“ . . . and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters . . . ”* Other versions read, *“because of the Jews in that region,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“because of the Jews who lived in that area,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“on account of the Jews in the locality,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“in deference to the Jews of the area.”*<sup>NLT</sup>

Here we are faced with an action that will confuse the sectarian. It seems inconsistent with the very letters that Paul was carrying to the churches. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem, together with the whole church, had gathered together to consider the matter of circumcision – particularly with regard

to it being necessary to be saved. Now, in seeming contradiction of the decree of the apostles and elders, Paul has Timothy circumcised.

This action was taken *“because of the Jews which were in those quarters”* – not those of *“the brethren,”* as in 16:2 – but *“of the Jews.”* The phrase *“of the Jews”* is mentioned twenty-two times in the book of Acts (10:22,39; 12:11; 13:5,43; 14:1,5; 16:3; 17:1,10; 20:19; 22:30; 23:12, 27; 25:2,8,15,24; 26:2). **It always refers to those who were not believers in Christ, but were fleshly Jews.**

Add to this the fact that Paul had refused to have Titus circumcised during the Jerusalem conference. Of that occasion he wrote, *“But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised; and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into*

From this, we can see how Timothy’s mother had distinguished herself among the Jews – they were all aware of her, and of her marriage. Whether this was because of her devotion, or because she married a Gentile is not specified. I suspect that both were involved, with the emphasis being on the former. She had come from a devout Jewish family, whose faith in God was beyond all question. Paul said of Timothy’s mother and grandmother, *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (2 Tim 1:5).

It is apparent that Lois and Eunice were now believers in Christ. **However, they had also been devout Jews, and were noted for being so.** In them the Scripture was fulfilled, *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Gal 3:24). Like

**When the Gospel was first preached to them, probably by Paul, they had believed on Christ, having been taught by the Law and the Prophets to anticipate Him, and to recognize Him when He was preached.**

*bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”* (Gal 2:3-5).

**Something more is involved here than merely following, or not following, a given procedure.** Paul’s action was mingled with wisdom, and with a consideration of the impact of this circumstance upon the ministry of Timothy. As we will see, the circumstance was not identical with that of Titus. It is apparent that the Jews whom Paul considered here, were unbelieving Jews, who had not yet obeyed the Gospel.

#### THEY ALL KNEW

*“ . . . for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”* Other versions read. “

Zecharias and Elizabeth, they were *“both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”* (Luke 1:6). When the Gospel was first preached to them, probably by Paul, they had believed on Christ, **having been taught by the Law and the Prophets to anticipate Him, and to recognize Him when He was preached.**

Also, in this family, Timothy, as well as the marriage itself, was sanctified by his believing mother. Where there is a peaceful marriage among those who are divided because of faith, the believer, whether husband or wife, makes the marriage to be sanctioned by God. Therefore Paul wrote, *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy”*

(1 Cor 7:14). This had taken place in the case of Timothy's mother, and this he was considered a proper child, even though the circumstances were not ideal. **This kind of thinking is very difficult for those who major on the family structure, instead of the believers who are in the family.**

Now, in consideration of the Jews in that region, who were acquainted with Timothy's family, Paul circumcises Timothy. Because of the nature of this circumstance, this was not a private matter, but a public one.

**The Circumstances Were Different**

In the case of Timothy, Paul's action was in consideration of Jews who were **not** believers in Christ. He would be journeying among them, with Timothy participating in the work he would do. It was therefore expedient that there be no unnecessary offense among the Jews because Timothy was not circumcised. It is apparent that we are not dealing here with factious Jews who had believed on Christ, yet demanded that uncircumcised believers be circumcised after the manner of Moses. **Paul would not have submitted to such a demand.**

**It is apparent that we are not dealing here with factious Jews who had believed on Christ, yet demanded that uncircumcised believers be circumcised after the manner of Moses. Paul would not have submitted to such a demand.**

Thus, as already stated, the circumstance differed from that of Titus, when *"false brethren"* sought to force Titus to be circumcised. Paul considered such people *"false brethren,"* and would not submit to them for a single hour (Gal 2:3-5).

There are a number of principles to be seen in this text. They all emphasize the necessity of insightful laborers in the Lord's field.

⇒ **WALKING IN WISDOM TOWARD THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT.** Believers are admonished, *"Walk in wisdom*

*toward them that are without, redeeming the time"* (Col 4:5). This involves taking care not to cause needless offense. As it is written, *"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God"* (1 Cor 10:32). In this case, offending the Jews was the issue – devout Jews, not malicious ones. By circumcising Timothy, Paul was confirming to the Jews that his purpose was not to merely *"change the customs"* of the Jews – a charge false witnesses raised against Stephen (Acts 6:13-14). Later, Paul affirmed with clarity that he had not gone about to disrupt the customs of the Jews: *"Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all"* (Acts 25:8). **In Christ, required changes are made as a result of insight,** not the adopting of some new habits or routines.

⇒ **NOT SUBMITTING TO SECTARIAN DEMANDS.** Being considerate of others, and submitting to the demands of sectarian leaders are two different things. The latter is strictly

out of order. A believer may choose to be considerate of the persuasions of others, altering his personal conduct as Paul did when he paid the expenses for a temple vow made by four Jewish men (Acts 21:23-26). In that case, James reminded Paul that those Jews were not binding their custom on the Gentiles. It was strictly a devout personal adherence to the instructions for taking a vow of dedication to the Lord for a season (Num 6:2-7). If, however, this had been a demand placed upon Paul, he would not have done it. It is obvious that wisdom is required in such cases

– cases that cannot be settled by rules or routines.

⇒ **NOVICES AND MINISTRY.** How would a novice have handled such a circumstance? It is obvious that he would not have been able to address the issue wisely. He might have erroneously treated sincere Jews as though they were hypocritical bigots, and cited strong New Covenant teaching to confirm the folly of their thinking. This is why Paul said of spiritual leaders, *"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (1 Tim 3:6).

⇒ **WHEN YOU ARE INTERPRETED WRONGLY.** When honest and good people interpret you wrongly, it is in order to dispel their view by considerate actions. If religious bigots see you in erroneous ways, you are under no obligation to alter your conduct to please them. There is no record of Jesus or the apostles changing their conduct in order to please hypocrites who stood in judgment of them. Of course, there is an obligation placed upon the people of God to be able to distinguish the difference between such critics.

**SOMETHING ELSE TO BE NOTED**

There is something else here that is worthy of our attention. Notice that precisely twenty-three words are devoted to the report of Timothy being circumcised: *"... took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."*

⇒ Paul circumcised Timothy.  
 ⇒ He did it because of the Jews in those quarters, who knew his father was a Greek.

This is not the manner in which a man of the world would have reported this incident. **It is man's nature to emphasize incidentals, drawing attention to things that are not directly related to the purpose of God.** However, this is not the Divine manner, and thus the Holy Spirit does not move inspired writers to linger upon such things. This is a remarkably consistent manner, whether

the record involves Adam, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, or the Prophets. It continues in the reports of men like John the Baptist, the apostles, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, etc. **For that matter,**

**what do we know of the Lord Jesus Himself that is not directly related to the reason for which He was sent to men?** What incidentals we do know are few and far between. They are not sufficient to write a detailed biography of their lives.

We should learn from this to avoid the inclusion of a lot of earthly incidentals in our preaching and teaching. They have a distracting quality about them, and often require an inordinate amount of explanation.

## THEY DELIVERED THE DECREES

**“<sup>4</sup> And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”**

Having selected an additional companion, and removed unnecessary obstacles, Paul and company commence the further fulfillment of their mission: *“to visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do”* (15:36).

Behold the interest of the man of God in those upon whom he has bestowed labor! Paul is keenly aware of the Divine agenda, which is for the Son to bring many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). He also knew that his commission involved ensuring that those who turned from darkness to light, will receive the inheritance *“among them which are sanctified by faith”* (Acts 26:18). It was not enough to bring them to a point where they ceased to live after the manner of the Gentiles. It was not sufficient for them to merely adopt a new kind of life that included various sanctified activities. **The aim was for the converts to be among those who would ultimately be presented to the Lord “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”** (Eph 5:27). It was for the believers to have *“boldness in the day of judgment,”* and be ready for the appearing of the Lord (1 John 4:17).

### AS THEY WENT THROUGH THE CITIES

*“And as they went through the cities . . .”* Other versions read, *“while they were passing through the cities,”* NASB *“as they traveled from town to town,”* NIV *“as they went on their way through the cities,”* RSV *“as they visited one town after another,”* NJB and *“as they were*

*going on through the cities.”*<sup>YLT</sup>

Again, note the impact of their purpose upon their mission. I do not doubt that there were many interesting sights in these cities. However, that is not what had captured the attention of this holy entourage. ***It was the clusters of believers in the cities that were the object of this mission.*** Once they were visited, there was no further reason to linger in the cities. They simply passed through them.

### THEY DELIVERED THE DECREES

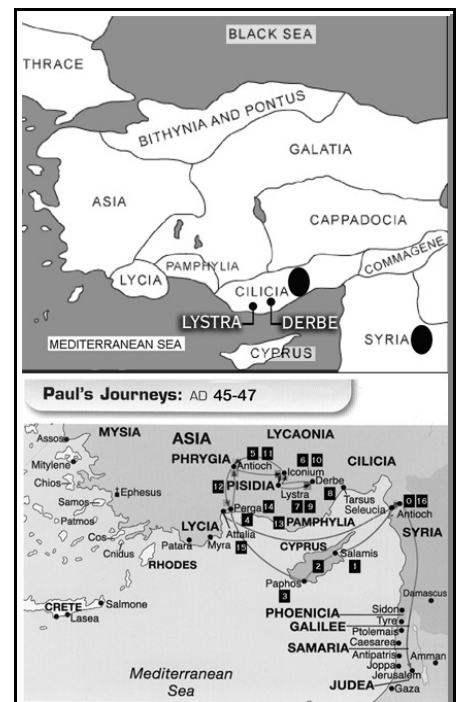
*“. . . they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”* Other versions read, *“they were delivering the decrees,”* NASB *“the delivered the decisions,”* NIV *“they delivered to them for observance the decisions,”* NRSV and *“they instructed them to observe the decrees.”* DARBY

When the apostles and elders sent the letters to Antioch, they addressed them to *“the brethren which are Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia”* (15:23). There were a number of cities in the region, Lystra and Derbe being two of them. Now they went throughout the region, delivering the decrees that had been *“ordained of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.”* Those decrees were as follows.

- ⇨ *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols.”*
- ⇨ *“That ye abstain . . . from blood.”*
- ⇨ *“That ye abstain . . . from things strangled.”*
- ⇨ *“That ye abstain . . . from fornication.”*

General Requirements  
The original question raised in Antioch concerned circumcision. The apostles dismissed the question by saying the issue was not raised with their consent. It was wholly spurious, and the Gentiles were to disregard it. **However, there were matters that did pertain to them – matters that related more to God Himself than to men.** They were to guard against developing any consciousness of idols, for God has no equals or competitors (Psa 86:10). They were to maintain a high regard for life, for it is God who *“giveth to all life, and breath”* (Acts 17:26). They were also to refrain from the prostitution of the body, for *“the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord: and the Lord for the body”* (1 Cor 6:13).

These were not regional



directives, but applied to all of the churches. Right and wrong, and acceptable and unacceptable are not defined by varying standards. Where differing responses are acceptable (as in Romans 14), one's conscience toward God is the determining factor. That must be characterized by a full persuasion, "for whatsoever is not of faith I sin" (Rom 14:5,23).

There is a reason for this approach. If a person's thinking is going to be brought into harmony with the mind of the Lord – and that is the ultimate objective – it will be done within the context of faith and of "charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Tim 1:5). Spiritual life is not defined more precisely in a "what is right for you may not be right for me" mentality. Differing views of the same matter are to be held tentatively in the prospect of finally arriving at the point where we have the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor 1:10). Private views are not the best ones, and they are not to be held and

maintained as though they were. The Kingdom belongs to the Lord, and His will is the supreme will. In such a circumstance, there is no time when self can be exalted. Even when there is a good conscience about a matter, it is quite possible that continued exposure to the truth will modify that good conscience.



In this case, however, conscience was not the determining factor. The Gentiles of that region had been exposed to teaching that was expressly associated with salvation: "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). On matters relating to salvation, there is no room for human opinion. This is because "Salvation belongeth to the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and will ultimately be ascribed wholly unto

Him (Rev 7:10). Like the altar of old, human innovations cannot be employed in God's salvation. Of that altar it is written, "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex 20:25).

Those who themselves require the salvation of God, cannot employ their own methodologies in it. That ought to be glaringly apparent. However, alas, it is not. Men continue to this day to insist on their own devices to rescue men from sin – either initially, or in recovering those who have been "overtaken in a fault" (Gal 6:1). It simply cannot be allowed.

The directives that were given by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem were not originated by them. Further, they had the discretion to see that although circumcision was not essential, keeping the decrees they delivered was essential. After all, they did receive them from the Holy Spirit, as they themselves affirmed: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (Acts 15:28).

## THE CHURCHES WERE ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH

**"<sup>5a</sup> And so were the churches established in the faith . . ."**

The Spirit now makes a statement concerning the effectiveness of the ministry of Paul and company. Remember, the stated objective was to visit the churches and see how they were doing, progressing, or growing up into Christ in all things. This determination would be made by comparing their state with the revealed objective of God Himself – to conform the people to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). This conformation would be accomplished through the appointed means: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors-teachers" (Eph 4:12). It is through these gifts, that were given to the church through the exalted Jesus, and as they held fast to the Head of the body, that edification would occur. The ordained result – growing up into Christ in all things, and being filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:16-19; 4:12-16).

Seeing how the churches were doing in this process involved more than merely observing them. Any deficiencies would be addressed – like the misconceptions addressed by the decrees Paul delivered from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The aim, however, was not merely to meet the needs of the saints, or to correct any flawed conduct or perceptions that were found among them. They were not like physicians coming to see how sick the people were, but like husbandmen who were examining the productivity of the vineyards (Lk 13:7-9).

### AND SO

And so . . ." Other versions read, "Accordingly," <sup>CJB</sup> "therefore," <sup>DARBY</sup> "day after day," <sup>NAB</sup> and "then, indeed." <sup>YLT</sup>

The expression "so were" is translated from two Greek words: μὲν οὖν.

The first word means "truly, certainly, surely, indeed." <sup>THAYER</sup> The second word means "then, therefore, accordingly, consequently." <sup>THAYER</sup> The meaning of the phrase "and so" is very weighty: **Certainly, as a consequence of Paul and company passing through the cities, the following results were realized.**



This is not the mere opinion of a witness, but is a statement of the fact from heaven's point of view. The Lord is here

informing us of the results of Paul and those with him visiting the brethren. The report is like the trail of a shooting star – a certain glory that resulted from the visits of these holy brethren.

**THE CHURCHES WERE ESTABLISHED**

“ . . . were the churches established . . . ” Other versions read, “strengthened,” NKJV “made strong,” BBE “confirmed,” DARBY and “grew stronger.” NAB

We have already read of the churches being “confirmed” (Acts 15:32). Although there is some similarity in the expression used here, the word “established” comes from a different Greek word – ἐστερεοῦντο, as compared with ἐπιστηρίξαν in Acts 15:32. The former word refers to strengthening, like a building being made more firm, or a tree being able to stand against strong gales. **The word used here speaks of strengthening like that of the muscles – to be made more able to be productive in the Kingdom, as compared to standing against assaults by the wicked one.**

The aim of the gifts Jesus has given to men is that “the whole body” might be “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth” (Eph 4:16). That is, as each member holds to the Head, there is a mutual edification that takes place, where the people are “able to admonish one another” (Rom 15:14).

This is *establishment* like a well tended and nurtured vine that bears abundant fruit – or a cultivated olive tree that produces an abundance of quality fruit. Those who are made strong in this respect are consistent in being productive and beneficial in the body of Christ.

**IN THE FAITH**

“ . . . in the faith . . . ” All versions read the same, referring to “the faith” as the area in which the churches were made strong and productive. **That is, their persuasion of the realities faith grasps became stronger.** Their confidence increased in both measure and strength. They were more fully persuaded, and more sure of the accomplishments of Jesus and their own acceptance in the Beloved.



**The Domain of Faith**

The domain of faith is where salvation is worked out (Phil 2:12). It is not accomplished in the realm of self-discipline, although faith causes a person to be more disciplined than is possible under any other means. Faith has to do with perceiving – being able to see “Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). It has to do with being fully persuaded that God is able to do what He has promised (Rom 4:21). Faith secures to the soul what God has promised, and moves the individual to embark on otherwise impossible things – as when Noah “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb 11:7), or when David ran to meet, and prevailed over, the giant warrior Goliath “with a sling and with a stone” (1 Sam 17:48-50).

There is no scientific method through which a person can come to be “established in the faith.” **No man, however astute in intellect and analysis is capable of conceiving a procedure by which establishment in the faith can be achieved.** No book has been written on this subject that is capable of delivering the desired results. If a person is ever going to be “established in the faith,” so that spiritual productivity and fruit result, it will have to be God’s way. It is simply not possible for faith to be obtained or maintained in any other way. **This is because faith primarily has to do with God.** Thus It is written, “But without faith it is impossible to **PLEASE HIM: for he that COMETH TO GOD must believe that HE IS, and that HE IS a rewarder of them that diligently SEEK HIM** (Heb 11:6).

Those who represent faith as

primarily having to do with obtaining the things of this world, or being successful in earthly relationships, have seriously misrepresented the case.

In faith, Jesus is preeminent, and coming to God is the immediate objective (Heb 7:25). Faith has to do with things that are “not seen” – things that are “eternal” (2 Cor 4:18).

**References to Establishment**

A church or a person that is established in the faith does not waver, or vacillate. This state is the objective for every believer. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith **without wavering;** (for He is faithful that promised)” (Heb 10:23). Answered prayer is conditioned upon this unwavering state: “But let him ask in faith, **nothing wavering.** For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). These are souls that are not “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). They are not subject to doctrinal confusion or delusion.

It ought to be obvious that establishment in the faith is essential. However, judging from the condition of the nominal church, this is not common knowledge – even though the Spirit has spoken clearly and repeatedly concerning it to the churches.

⇨ **ESTABLISHMENT. “Established”** (Rom 1:11-12). “Established in the faith” (Col 2:7). To be established is to be solid like a building, fruitful like a healthy tree, and grown up in Christ.

⇨ **STRENGTH. “Strong in faith”** (Rom 4:20). This is a strength that cannot be shaken by apparent impossibilities. It is one’s faith that is strong, enabling him to take hold of the promises of God, even when all human hope contradicts such a stance.

⇨ **STANDING. “Stand fast in the faith”** (1 Cor 16:13). The person who “stands” is victorious, remaining upright after the battle. The winds of adversity cannot move such souls. The tide of trial does not move them. With them, weeping may, indeed, endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning (Psa 30:5).

⇒ **ROOTING AND GROUNDING.** *“Rooted and grounded”* (Eph 3:17). This is a depiction of deep roots that hold the person firmly, and also obtain the vivifying water that flows beneath the surface of life.

⇒ **CONTINUANCE.** *“Continue in the faith grounded and settled”* (Col 1:23). Being grounded and settled is the antithesis of being unstable and wavering. In this case, religion is not by fits and starts, and life is not a series of ups and downs. There is a continuity in both faith and hope that brings glory to God.

⇒ **STEADFASTNESS.** *“Steadfastness of your faith”* (Col 2:5). *“Steadfast in the faith”* (1 Pet 5:9). The person who is steadfast continues to make progress in mountainous terrain. He moves forward when journeying up-hill, so to speak, or against the strong gales of opposition and testing. A person who is steadfast in the faith continues to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, even when it is attended by difficulty and inconvenience.

⇒ **SOUNDNESS.** *“Sound in faith”* (Tit 2:2). A sound faith has no weak places, or Achilles heel. This is the person who has cast off every weight, and the sin that so easily besets (Heb 12:2). It is a person who has a proper view of God, Christ, and the great salvation that is in Christ *“with eternal glory”* (2 Tim 2:10).

⇒ **ESTABLISHED IN THE TRUTH.** *“Established in this present truth”* (2 Pet 1:12). *“The present truth”* is the truth that is brought through Christ Jesus, who is *“full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). The truth of God makes sense to such individuals, because they have received the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-11). They love the truth *“for the truth’s sake,”* and not for worldly advantage (2 John 1:2).

⇒ **FIRMNESS.** *“Firm unto the end”* (Heb 3:6). Spiritual firmness is to the human spirit what a healthy and mature core is to a tree. In this case,

firmness has to do with maintaining a tight and unyielding grip on the confidence that is produced by faith, and the consequent rejoicing of the hope of glory. A person who is holding these *“firm unto the end”* will say during the most fierce trial, *“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:19).

⇒ **ESTABLISHED HEART.** *“Heart be established”* (Heb 13:9). Only the grace of God can establish the heart, so that it is not moved about by the varied experiences of life in this present evil world. If a person’s heart is established, their thinking will be solid and God-honoring. A heart that is not established is one that has been penetrated by unbelief, which brings a pervading defilement to the individual (Heb 3:12).

All of this, and more, is involved in the churches being *“established in the faith.”* This was the result of a proper and insightful ministry. In the last analysis, it is the truth that sanctifies the soul (John 17:17), doing so through one’s faith (Acts 26:18).

**methodologies of men.** The *“Spirit of truth”* employs the truth in reaching the hearts of men, illuminating them, and empowering them. If ever religious men will get to the work of insightfully proclaiming the truth, the churches will be established in the faith. Until that takes place, however, God will not allow establishment to take place, for He works only through the truth, and in those who have received a love of the truth.

**The role of faith in spiritual life**

In order to see the necessity and value of being established in the faith, it is essential to see the role of faith in spiritual life. This has to do with both the obtainment of salvation, and its maintenance – and both are imperative. There is no such thing as an *“eternal salvation”* (Heb 5:9) that is not first obtained, then maintained.

**FAITH IN OBTAINING SALVATION**

The obtaining of salvation, or salvation in its initial phase, is inextricably associated with faith. While there are certain responses that are imperative (i.e. repenting, confessing Christ, being baptized into Christ, etc), they are all validated by faith, and are

**This establishment cannot be accomplished by a human methodology, or a series of supposedly logical steps or procedures. Paul was probably not with these brethren long enough to have instituted an elaborate plan – like a six or twelve month program.**

This establishment cannot be accomplished by a human methodology, or a series of supposedly logical steps or procedures. Paul was probably not with these brethren long enough to have instituted an elaborate plan – like a six or twelve month program.

Yet, significant results took place as he *“went through the cities”* (16:4). The reason for the significant fruitage was the message that he delivered. **The power of God unto salvation, in all of its marvelous complexities, is in the message of the Gospel, not the**

evidences of that faith. **The presence of faith does not obviate the need for these responses, but is the Divinely appointed means by which they are accomplished.**

Apostolic doctrine is very precise on this point, accounting for the experience of salvation by pointing to our faith.

⇒ **Salvation is by grace through faith** (Eph 2:8). In its entirety, from beginning to the coming of the Lord, salvation is by the means of the grace of God, which faith alone can access.

- ⇒ **Hearts purified by faith** (Acts 15:8). The purification of the heart and the purging of the conscience are uniquely accomplished through faith.
- ⇒ **The righteousness of God is obtained by faith** (Rom 3:22). The appropriation of the righteousness of God, which is to be man's premier pursuit (Matt 6:33), is realized through faith. In fact, faith itself is counted to us for righteousness (Rom 4:5,9).

- ⇒ **Children of God by faith** (Gal 3:26). While it is true that the appropriation of salvation necessarily involves obeying the Gospel (Rom 10:16; 2 Thess 1:8), we are, in the final analysis, the children of God by virtue of our faith.
- ⇒ **Salvation through faith** (2 Tim 3:15). The realization of salvation, with all of its marvelous complexities and benefits, is by faith.

- ⇒ **STANDING AGAINST THE WILES.** Standing against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11).
- ⇒ **WRESTLING AGAINST AGGRESSIVE FOES.** Wrestling against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12).
- ⇒ **WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION.** Working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).
- ⇒ **HOLDING FAST.** Holding fast the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end (Heb 3:6).

**Salvation is not a once-for-all experience. This is because, as long as we are in the body, it is initiated and maintained in a hostile realm, with the essential treasure being maintained in an "earthen vessel"**

- ⇒ **BEING TESTED AND TRIED.** Our faith is being tested in the crucible of suffering (1 Pet 1:7; 5:10).
- ⇒ **READYING OURSELVES.** Making ourselves ready for being forever with the Lord (Rev 19:7).

- ⇒ **Propitiation through faith in Jesus' blood** (Rom 3:25). Propitiation is the merciful covering that frees us from condemnation – like the mercy seat over the ark of the covenant. And, what is it that accesses the marvelous mercy of God? This is the peculiar prerogative of faith!
- ⇒ **Justified by faith** (Rom 5:1). To be justified is to be declared by God to be righteous in His sight. There are two sides to justification, and both are essential. The first has to do with the righteous removal of sin: being *"justified from all things"* (Acts 13:39). The second is to be declared righteous by God, having obtained His very own righteousness. This is done by Divine imputation, where the coin of faith is received as the means through which this very real righteousness is obtained (Phil 3:9).
- ⇒ **Receive the promise of the Spirit through faith** (Gal 3:14). The Lord promised through the prophets that He would give His Holy Spirit to His people (Isa 32:15; Joel 2:28-29; Ezek 36:27). This is not done automatically, as some imagine. Rather, as affirmed in the above text, we receive the promised Spirit through the means of faith.

**SALVATION IS NOT YET COMPLETED**

Salvation is not a once-for-all experience. This is because, as long as we are in the body, it is initiated and maintained in a hostile realm, with the essential treasure being maintained in an *"earthen vessel"* (2 Cor 4:7). We are not glorified immediately, for salvation involves the following processes.

- ⇒ **BEING CONFORMED.** We are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).
- ⇒ **A WORK IN PROGRESS.** Being *"changed from glory to glory"* (2 Cor 3:18).
- ⇒ **IN A STATE OF GROWTH.** Growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15)
- ⇒ **IN THE PROCESS OF APPREHENDING.** Apprehending that for which we have been apprehended (Phil 3:12-13).
- ⇒ **RUNNING A RACE.** Running with perseverance the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1-2).
- ⇒ **PERFECTING HOLINESS.** Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1).

- ⇒ **THERE ARE THINGS THAT MUST BE REJECTED.** Ungodliness and worldly lusts are to be denied, or rejected, and the deeds of the body put to death (Tit 2:12; Rom 8:13).
- ⇒ **WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DOING CERTAIN THINGS.** The *"old man"* is to be put off, and the *"new man"* is to be put on (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10).
- ⇒ **THE DEVIL IS TO BE RESISTED.** When we are baptized into Christ, the devil does not cease his initiatives against us. We are responsible for resisting him (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9).

Who would dare to imagine that these things do not involve a hearty effort, or that there is no chance that we could leave them undone? Yet, there are many who live without any significant consciousness about these requirements.

**FAITH IS INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING SALVATION**

The maintenance of spiritual life is something that cannot be ignored. Once a person is *"added to the church"* (Acts 2:47), they cannot live as though the newness of life continues on its own. We do not live in a moral or spiritual vacuum.

Being *“established in the faith”* is essential because of the integral part faith lays in the maintenance of our lives.

- ⇒ **APPROPRIATING GRACE.** Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph 2:8; Rom 4:16).
- ⇒ **SANCTIFICATION.** Sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18).
- ⇒ **OBEDIENCE.** Obedience comes from faith (Rom 1:5).
- ⇒ **RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (Rom 1:17a; 4:5,9).
- ⇒ **LIVING.** We live by faith (Rom 1:17b).
- ⇒ **JUSTIFICATION.** We are justified by faith (Rom 3:28) – both obtaining and maintaining justification.
- ⇒ **STRENGTH.** Being strong in faith gives glory to God (Rom 4:20).
- ⇒ **ACCESS TO GOD.** We have access to grace by faith (Rom 5:2).
- ⇒ **STANDING.** We stand by faith (Rom 11:20; 2 Cor 1:24).
- ⇒ **SPIRITUAL GIFTS.** Faith is the means through which spiritual gifts are given, and function (Rom 12:3,6).
- ⇒ **VALIDATION.** Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23).
- ⇒ **WALKING.** We walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7).
- ⇒ **HEARING.** Profitable hearing is by faith (Gal 3:2,5).
- ⇒ **WAITING.** We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal 5:5).
- ⇒ **BOLDNESS.** We have access with boldness by faith (Eph 3:12).
- ⇒ **INDWELLING CHRIST.** Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17).
- ⇒ **PROTECTION.** Faith is the shield that protects the believer (Eph 6:17).
- ⇒ **EDIFICATION.** Godly edifying is in faith (1 Tim 1:4).

- ⇒ **WISDOM.** We obtain wisdom by asking in faith (James 1:6).
- ⇒ **INHERITING THE PROMISES.** Through faith and patience we inherit the promises (Heb 6:12).
- ⇒ **UNDERSTANDING.** Understanding comes through faith (Heb 11:3).
- ⇒ **DYING.** We die in faith (Heb 11:13).
- ⇒ **BEING KEPT.** We are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Pet 1:19).

These are all areas in which spiritual growth is realized. The stated objective is for the whole body to be *“filled with all the fulness of God”* (Eph 3:19). From the individual viewpoint, each member is to grow up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15), advancing to personal maturity in their measure, unto *“the fulness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13).

The *“measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* correlates with the predetermined objective of God, that the justified ones be *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom 8:29). In the aggregate, the whole body of Christ, in the glorified state, will be a replica of Christ Himself. Just as the fulness of God dwells in Christ, His fulness is destined to dwell in His body (Eph 1:23).

Each individual member of the body, so far as function is concerned, is a *“member”* of the body of Christ, and possesses a *“measure,”* or portion, of the whole. This measure is obtained and maintained by faith, and is referred to as a *“measure of faith”* (Rom 12:3). By faith, drawing upon the resources that are made available to us in Christ, each member is to mature in their role in the body, **so that they function in that capacity as Jesus does.** This may seem like a nearly impossible thing to do – but it is not. The point is that we are to advance toward this objective by means of spiritual growth (Eph 4:15). The full measure will be realized when Jesus appears, and, seeing Him as He is, we will, be *“like Him”* (1 John 3:2). **There is no suggestion that this will be realized in those who had the opportunity, but did not “grow up into Christ in all things” during their tenure in this world.**

#### The Point

The point is that this growth, advancement, and spiritual maturity, was the objective of Paul’s ministry. This is what is involved in being *“established.”*

#### Being Established in the Faith

I cannot leave this subject without once again drawing your attention to the matter of establishment: ***“so were the churches established in the faith.”*** That is, they were made more firm in regard to ***“things hoped for”*** and ***“things not seek”***–

# THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

1 PETER 5:10  
 ROMANS 15:13  
 ROMANS 15:14  
 EPHESIANS 1:4  
 EPHESIANS 3:19  
 EPHESIANS 4:2  
 EPHESIANS 4:15  
 COLOSSIANS 1:9  
 HEBREWS 10:22  
 COLOSSIANS 2:2  
 HEBREWS 6:11  
 COLOSSIANS 2:3  
 COLOSSIANS 4:12

ALL GRACE  
 ALL JOY AND PEACE  
 ALL KNOWLEDGE  
 ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS  
 ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD  
 ALL LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS  
 GROW UP INTO HIM IN ALL THINGS  
 ALL WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING  
 FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH  
 FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING  
 FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE  
 ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE  
 PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN ALL GOD’S WILL

# THE MEASURE OF GREATNESS

for *“faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Heb 11:1).

⇒ **THINGS.** The *“things”* of reference are not nebulous. They are spiritual realities – that is, they belong to another order. They are referred to as *“those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”* (Col 3:1-2). They are to be eagerly sought by all believers: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things”* (Col 3:1). Our affection, interest, or mind is to be *“set . . . on things above”* (Col 3:2). However, if the reality of those *“things”* is in question, they will neither be sought nor desired. These are *“things”* that come to us from above. They include faith and love (1 Tim 1:14), grace, mercy, and peace (1 Tim 1:2), wisdom (James 3:17), strength (Psa 20:2), Divine fellowship (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3), grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16), the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), and *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* (2 Pet 1:3). This is not to mention that supreme realities of the Father and the Son Themselves.

⇒ **SUBSTANCE.** Other versions use the words *“the assurance,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“being sure of,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“being confident,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“the reality,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“the substantiating,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“the ground of things,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“the persuasion,”* <sup>MRD</sup> *“the realization,”* <sup>NAB</sup> and *“guarantee,”* <sup>NJB</sup> Faith gives the substantiality of these realities to the soul, so that they become more real to the believer than this world and all that is in it. All doubt of them is removed while faith takes hold of them. They are realized, enjoyed, and life is lived with a keen awareness and benefit of them. Speaking of this aspect of faith, it is said of Moses that *“he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible”* (Heb 11:27).

⇒ **EVIDENCE.** Other versions read, *“conviction,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“being . . . certain,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“the sign,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“proof of,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“convinces us,”* <sup>GWN</sup> and *“manifestness.”* <sup>MRD</sup> Faith itself is proof of the things on which it lays hold. It is like the hand of the soul, that obtains and uses the unseen

realities that are *“above.”* It brings the kind of persuasion that was required for David to hasten and run to meet Goliath (1 Sam 17:51).

When an individual’s faith is *“weak”* they lack the conviction and assurance that is required to fight the good fight of faith, run the race with patience, and stand against the wiles of the devil. Spiritual stamina and consistency cannot be developed or maintained while faith remains weak.

In such a case, they are like the servant of Elisha who could not see the angelic hosts that surrounded the prophet. He only saw the Syrian army, and was therefore afraid (2 Kgs 6:14-15). However, the hosts of the Lord were very real – even more real than the Syrian army. It is just that the servant could not see them. However, Elisha prayed that the Lord would open his servant’s eyes to see what was otherwise invisible. When he saw, the servant knew what Elisha meant when he said, *“Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them”* (2 Kgs 6:16).

Faith does for the believer what the opening of the eyes did for Elisha’s servant. It puts them in the victory posture, for *“this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

When, therefore, the churches were *“established in the faith,”* they were made more confident, more sure, more persuaded of the realities that are declared in the Gospel. They were made more capable of what can only be achieved *“by faith.”* All of the things that are accomplished *“by faith”* and *“through faith”* were more readily apparent in them.

**You Make the Comparison**

How does *“established in the faith”* compare with the goal of establishing homes, marriages, and personal lives? How does it compare with stabilizing the youth, or enabling people to conquer bad habits? Mind you, it is not that such things are wrong. **Rather, it is that they do not qualify as an emphasis, an objective, or focused kingdom labors.** They are too low, and can be considered to have been achieved independently of

spiritual maturity. Additionally, they are all temporal in nature, having only to do with life in this world.

**A religion that majors on correction and outward adjustments in behavior cannot be right.** This is primarily because their emphasis is life in this present evil world. Such an accentuation does not require spiritual maturity, but rather stresses outward discipline. Further, the procedures that support this approach [which are called *“ordinances”* in Scripture, Col 2:20], are not supported by the Word of God. **In Scripture, putting away sinful expressions is never proceduralized.** Those in Christ are simply told to put them away (Eph 4:31), mortify them (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5), and do them *“no more”* (Eph 4:26).



**From the most favorable point of view, putting away sinful expressions has to do with clearing the pathway so we can run the race that is set before us.** In Christ, there is an inward change wrought by becoming a *“new creation”* (2 Cor 5:17). This creation, referred to as *“the new man,”* is *“created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24). He is also *“renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”* (Col 3:10). In addition, faith enables the believer to overcome the world, which attempts to allure the child God back to the temporal order. We are categorically told, *“this is the victory that over cometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). Further, all desires to sin are associated with the world, whether they are *“the lust of the flesh,”* *“the lust of the eye,”* or *“the pride of life.”* These basic causes of sin are

categorically said to be *“all that is in the world,”* having to do with *“the things that are in the world”* (1 John 2:15-17).

**This simply means that those who are established in the faith are fully willing and capable of accomplishing what the routines of men claim to achieve.** The failure of the ordinances of men is found in the fact that they cannot take away the desire to sin. Therefore they seek to conquer the expression of unlawful desires by regimen. This approach does not acknowledge that the one who is in Christ is *“dead with Christ”* to the rudiments of the world, as stated in Colossians 2:20. In that text, Paul is addressing this very subject.

**The point is that by establishing the saints in the faith, all of the practical aspects of spiritual life are effectively addressed.** In my judgment, it is a most serious offense to proceed to address daily living just as though this was not the case. In Christ, proper expressions are perfectly united with the heart and the desires that flow from it.

When the early churches received the decrees sent to them by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, their actions were in perfect accord with their hearts, upon which the laws of God had been written (Heb 10:16).

**The Impact of Not Being Established**

A word also ought to be said

concerning the impact of instability on the individual in whom it is found – the one who is not *“established in the faith.”* That is a condition in which the individual becomes *“unstable in all of his ways.”* This is owing to the presence of a double mind (James 1:8), which is the direct result of **not** perceiving the things of God clearly. Such people are immature, and will be *“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”* – teachings that are contrived *“by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Eph 4:14). Being *“established in the faith”* moves the believer out of that category, taking the advantage away from the flesh.

**AND INCREASED IN NUMBER DAILY**

<sup>5b</sup> . . . **and** [the churches] **increased in number daily.** Other versions read, *“were increasing in number daily,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“grew daily in numbers,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“grew in number every day,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“grew larger every day,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“were abounding in number every day.”*<sup>YLT</sup>

This is similar to what happened when the New Covenant was first inaugurated: *“And the Lord added to the church **daily** such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47). In our text, the daily increase in numbers was not the result of a church-planting program. It was the churches that were being visited, not the cities. It was the disciples that were being addressed, not the community at large. It was the churches that *“grew in number every day.”*<sup>NIV</sup> The individual churches were what was growing, and they were doing so on a daily basis. This was the result of the churches being *“established in the faith.”* It is not said to have been the result of an outreach program. **This was not the result of what is called evangelism, but was the consequence of believers being “established in the faith.”** That is what the text states. Because the believers grew, maturing in the faith, their numbers grew – on a daily basis!

At this point, it is necessary to define what is meant by *“the churches.”*

We will find that the Scriptures speak of *“the churches”* quite differently than nominal Christendom does.



The word *“churches”* is used thirty-seven times in the Scriptures. All of the references are found in Acts through Revelation. Most all of the standard English versions use this expression – *“the churches”* – in the same verses. The phrase *“all the churches”* is used seven times (Rom 16:4,16; 1 Cor 7:17; 14:33; 2 Cor 8:18; 11:28; Rev 2:23). The expression *“the churches”* is used twenty-one times (Acts 15:41; 16:5; 2 Cor 11:16; 14:34; 16:1,19; 2 Cor 8:1,19,23,24; 12:13; Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14; Rev

2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 22:16). We read of the following.

- ⇒ *“The churches of the Gentiles”* (Rom 16:4)
- ⇒ *“The churches of Christ”* (Rom 16:16)
- ⇒ *“The churches of God”* (1 Cor 11:16; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 1:4).
- ⇒ *“All churches of the saints”* (1 Cor 14:33).
- ⇒ *“The churches of Galatia”* (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2).
- ⇒ *“The churches of Asia”* (1 Cor 16:19).
- ⇒ *“The churches of Macedonia”* (2 Cor 8:1).
- ⇒ *“The churches of Judaea”* (Gal 1:22).

What do the Scriptures mean when they say *“the churches”*? From the etymological point of view, the Greek word translated *“churches”* (ἐκκλησία) means *“called out . . . an assembly of the people.”*<sup>THAYER</sup> As used in Scripture, the *“churches”* are bodies of believers that have been called together for purposes of edification. Paul referred to it as coming together *“in one place”* (1 Cor 11:20),

when *“the whole church be come together into one place”* (1 Cor 14:23).

When *“the churches”* come together, more is involved than simply coming together. Their gatherings are *“for the better,”* and *“not for the worse”* (1 Cor 11:17). That is, their gatherings are times when they are *“edified,”* built up, and *“established in the faith”* – like the churches mentioned in our text. **Those who gathered together increased in number daily.**

The people who comprised these

*power of Satan unto God”* (Acts 26:18).

- ⇨ Those who are *“called to be saints”* (Rom 1:7).
- ⇨ Those who are *“dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ”* (Rom 6:11).
- ⇨ Those who have *“obeyed from the heart the form the doctrine”* (Rom 6:17).
- ⇨ Those who are *“sanctified in Christ Jesus”* (1 Cor 1:2a).

*the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom”* of God’s *“dear Son”* (Col 1:13).

- ⇨ Those who *“know”* the Lord (Heb 8:11).
- ⇨ Those who have *“obtained like precious faith”* (2 Pet 1:1).
- ⇨ Those who have been *“washed”* from their sins, and made *“kings and priests unto God”* (Rev 1:5).

This is only a brief sampling of such texts. **These are the kind of people that were becoming more and more in number, and doing so every day.** This is not the kind of increase that is realized in developing a mere roster. Further, they felt at home in churches that were being *“established in the faith,”* for the focus was upon *“the churches.”*

**That is, their gatherings are times when they are “edified,” built up, and “established in the faith” – like the churches mentioned in our text. Those who gathered together increased in number daily.**

*“churches”* are referenced in various ways.

- ⇨ *“Believers”* (Acts 5:14).
- ⇨ *“Disciples of the Lord”* (Acts 9:1).
- ⇨ *“All that believed”* (Acts 2:44).
- ⇨ Those whom the Lord *“added to the church”* (Acts 2:47).
- ⇨ Those who were *“added to the Lord”* (Acts 5:14).
- ⇨ Those to whom God had *“granted repentance unto life”* (Acts 11:18).
- ⇨ Those who have been taken out of the people for God’s name (Acts 15:14).
- ⇨ Those who have *“believed through grace”* (Acts 18:27).
- ⇨ Those whose eyes have been *“opened,”* who have turned *“from darkness to light,”* and *“from the*

- ⇨ Those who *“call upon the name of the Lord”* (1 Cor 1:2b).
- ⇨ Those who are *“new creatures”* (2 Cor 5:17).
- ⇨ Those into whose hearts God has sent the *“Spirit of His Son”* (Gal 4:6).
- ⇨ *“The faithful in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 1:1).
- ⇨ Those who are *“accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph 1:3).
- ⇨ Those who, by God, are *“created in Christ Jesus unto good works”* (Eph 2:10).
- ⇨ Those who are *“taught by Christ”* (Eph 4:21).
- ⇨ Those who were *“sometimes darkness, but now are . . . light in the Lord”* (Eph 5:8).
- ⇨ Those who have been *“delivered from*

Those who are guilty of bringing low-grade disciples into the church need to hear and heed the warning of the Lord concerning such activity: *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Cor 3:17). Defiling materials are described as *“wood, hay, and stubble,”* which are descriptive of people who will not be able to pass through the judgment (1 Cor 3:10-15).

Both acceptable people and unacceptable people are the direct result of the teaching they have received and embraced. **In our text, Paul and company delivered sound doctrine, establishing the churches in the faith.** That is something that cannot be accomplished by erroneous gospels, spurious Christ’s, and a fictitious Holy Spirit (2 Cor 11:4). Only the truth of God can cause the churches to be *“established in the faith”* – which faith is sustained solely by means of the Word of God.

## CONCLUSION

With only a few words, Luke has covered a period of time that may very

well have been significant. His pungent summation mentioned four things:

- ⇨ (1) **A WISE DECISION.** Paul chose Timothy to accompany him in the

visiting of the cities where he had previously preached the Word.

- ⇒ (2) **FAITHFULNESS.** The , delivering of the decrees from the apostles and elders, which, it appears, was accompanied with some exposition.
- ⇒ (3) **CONFIRMING THE SAINTS.** The establishment of the churches in the faith.
- ⇒ (4) **THE MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES.** The daily increase of the number of people in the churches.

It is noteworthy that all of this was done in a manner that could not be codified. How would a person go about systematizing such activities? In the fulfillment of the objective, there is no mention of a decision making process – not even the multiplication of counselors. It should be evident that faithfulness cannot be reduced to a code or a series of steps. This is because it is accomplished in an arena of conflict where the precise circumstances cannot be predicted. The confirmation, or establishment, of the saints requires spiritual insight, as well

as a heart for the people of God. You certainly cannot proceduralize that. The multiplication of disciples cannot be planned, for it is God that gives the increase. Men can only sow and water the seed. They have no power in the matter of multiplying disciples (1 Cor 3:6-7) – and that is by Divine design.

Thus, we have seen the work of God in process – a work that involves the participation of those with insight, and the response of those of tender heart. How blessed it is to ponder such things!

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/02/09. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Sixty-ninth lesson will cover verses 6 through 15 of the sixteenth chapter: “THE MACEDONIAN CALL.” In the spread of the Gospel, there were places the Holy Spirit did not allow Paul and company to go. Two such regions are specified in our text. It is apparent that there is a heavenly priority involved in the dissemination of the Gospel. This is confirmed in the Lord’s call of His messengers to a specific region. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**





## God's Everlasting Kingdom

POST YOUR COMMENTS ON AMAZON'S WEBPAGE

LOG ON TO AMAZON.COM AND SEARCH FOR “GIVEN O. BLAKELY”



**The Word of Truth  
Radio Broadcast**  
WITH RADIO EVANGELIST GIVEN O. BLAKELY  
**91.7<sup>F</sup>  
M**  
KNEO RADIO  
MONDAY THRU FRIDAY AT 4:00 PM.  
Clarifying the nature and content of the Gospel



**THE WORD OF TRUTH  
RADIO BROADCAST**  
KNEO, 91.7 FM  
4:00 - 4:15 PM  
Monday thru Friday

The purpose of this program is to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ. Our target is the body of Christ, and our aim is to strengthen their faith and enhance their hope.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, and Eva*

*406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

**ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>**

**Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)**

**Adah Hutchcraft ([adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com](mailto:adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com)), Jason Hutchcraft ([hutchcraftj@hotmail.com](mailto:hutchcraftj@hotmail.com))**

---

## **THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP**

**WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>**

**A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.**

**Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship:**

**<http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>**

---

**WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>**

### **BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES**

**COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Philippians: <http://wotruth.com/philippiansdindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on First Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/1sthessindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Second Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/2ndthessindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on First Peter: <http://wotruth.com/1stpetindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Mark: <http://wotruth.com/Mark.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Titus: <http://wotruth.com/Titus.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>**

---

The tendency of religious men to create and adopt routines to accomplish what God requires, has become very pronounced in our day. It has given rise to a plethora of religious professions, careers, and purported ministries. In direct proportion to the emphasis that is placed upon such approaches, the perceived need of faith is diminished, as well as the absolute necessity of fellowship with Christ, living by faith, and walking in the Spirit. The hope of glory, looking for the appearing of Jesus, and the anticipation of being forever with the Lord are also decreased. As a result of these circumstances, an inordinate value is attached to life in this world. Virtue is assigned to NOT doing this or that, and spiritual growth is imagined to be nothing more than avoiding sin. These misconceptions are more serious, and have great repercussions, than any of us dare to imagine.

