

"The grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2 Timothy 2: 1-10.

W. H. Westcott.

The Assembly of God, — the company of people called out between the day of Pentecost and the moment when Christ will call us home — has been gathered out for the express purpose that, during the season of Christ's rejection, we should be here in exact correspondence with all that Christ is, and this not merely individually as saved sinners, but as an Assembly in which can be set forth certain glories and certain functions which no individual could possibly set forth.

Now as to Christ in glory, it is not that He is a different Person from what He was on earth, but that all He was on earth has passed through death and resurrection and so into glory, and is seen there in Him. In connection with this I would like to refer to the gospels of which we have four, and each one represents the Lord Jesus Christ in certain graces. Just as this epistle begins with the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, I would take the gospel of John first. In this gospel we have certain things set out in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man on the earth, of great importance. We get first of all life seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, life that is entirely according to God. Secondly, I think we get relationship; we get the Son down here as a man but in relationship with His Father. Thirdly we get communion, uninterrupted, holy, blessed, intimate, wondrous communion.

In this gospel He is presented down here as that Eternal Life which was with the Father. It is a life of a distinct kind from that which the ordinary natural man lives born of Adam. The Lord Jesus truly came down in the condition of flesh and blood, but He lived here after a new manner of life, a life that had its home with the Father; as it says, that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. Then relationship. Although when people looked at the Lord Jesus Christ they might speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, and somewhat contemptuously speak of His lowly birth, His apparent lineage, relations, and His trade as a carpenter, yet nevertheless, that lowly, gracious, perfect, blessed Man was found here as Son in relationship with the Father. He could look up into His Father's presence and commune with His Father in all the joy and blessedness of that known relationship. To sum up briefly, we have these three things presented in the gospel of John, life, relationship, and the deepest communion with the Father.

Now remember that that Person has gone on high and all these things are found in Him there, are they not? As He says in the end of the gospel, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Then He breathed upon them and communicated His life to them here, saying, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

We are left here then to represent Christ in these three things. In the Christian Assembly there should be seen this grace which was in Christ Jesus; there should be seen in us a character of life different from the character of life that you see in men in the world; there should be seen in us all the blessedness of our relationship with God as Father, and there should be with us all the depth of communion that nothing can disturb. I think that when we begin to consider for a moment something of the grace that is set forth in Christ Jesus we can see that it opens out tremendous possibilities for us.

Now come to the third gospel, the gospel of Luke. In this gospel we have set forth all that God is in grace, in a Man here on earth; so that as you watch the footsteps of the Lord Jesus and His ways, and listen to His ministry in the gospel of Luke you are brought into contact with the resources of God in grace for every condition of man; and that too, even if the earth closes up, opens heaven to us. Now

that is a second thing connected with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and one of the things that has to be worked out in the Assembly of God on the earth; that is that the Assembly of God should be down here through grace enabled to represent the thoughts and the love and the grace of God working in a world such as this is. The Assembly of God while it is most wonderful and has connected with it the most wonderful truths, is yet to be down here the great exponent of the heart of God in a world such as this is. And therefore you cannot dissociate the thought of the Assembly from the gospel. It could not possibly be.

Then you take the second gospel, the gospel of Mark. I think we have the thought brought out there in wondrous detail of the Lord Jesus as the Servant of God, and as Servant not only doing the works of God and meeting the necessities of men, but also speaking the word of God, so that the words that He spake were God's testimony to men. And you find that all His works commanded the appreciation of God, and at the same time He was tireless and swift in His meeting of every need that came across His Path. And the Assembly of God is formed also to be the great exponent of Christ, the transcript of Christ with regard to this love of service. You might say it is summed up in Peter's address in Acts 10, when He says, "He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Now we who are Christians are united by the Holy Ghost to Christ, and we are so formed and constituted that we should be down here in this world reproducing what Christ is, as He was presented in the gospel of Mark about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. I was hearing the complaint of one dear sister who said that the Christians she knew seemed to think nothing more than about going to meetings and never seemed to have any time to do any good works. I wonder if we are like that? How many poor do you care for and visit? In what way do you exhibit this activity of the love and grace of Christ in the presence of all the needs around? And remember that He whom you love and whom you are left on this earth to represent went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. So while we value meetings and value opportunities of getting together, and we need to abide by the truth and learn it and to be in the power and good of it, let us see that it is found in our affection. As it works in us it will produce in us likeness to Christ that we shall be representatives of Him here, and there will be with all our learning the doing of those good works that are in correspondence with it and we shall love to be connected with the testimony of God, the truth of God's word, and the ministry that God has to send out whether to His professed people or to the world.

And then, lastly in the gospel of Matthew. I think we find the Lord Jesus Christ coming down as the great Administrator of the will of God, to the carrying out of His promises and purposes with regard to the earth, and to administer that which God has put under His control Now the Assembly of God is intended to be down here, a company of people in the world under the rule of Christ, in which all the functions and all the administration should be ordered according to His will, and where the will of man is ruled out.

Now I have only given a little summary, but brief as it is, I think it will suit these words, "The grace which is in Christ Jesus?" and you will see it opens out tremendous possibilities, and it shows that when we speak of the Assembly of God, after all, we know very little about it. As long as we break bread we say, we are in fellowship: we seem to be quite content with coming to meetings and going to meetings, and we attend the breaking of bread and the gospel meetings, and perhaps one in ten at any rate attend the prayer meetings, and perhaps two in ten attend the Bible reading, and we think we are getting along very well; and as long as we do not have a regular good fall out it is alright. Oh! but is that Christianity? You remember that we are left here so that although the world cannot see Christ it should be able to look at us and understand what kind of a Person He is. Is there not a whole field of

acquisition before us? Is there not everything to learn? And it is not only a question of information and getting our minds instructed, but the Holy Spirit working into our souls every line of the truth, and bringing it out in power.

We have been looking at that word, "The grace that is in Christ Jesus" as it is presented in the four gospels. Now the Apostle says to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." These things should not be mere theories, but every line of the truth ought to be wrought in living power in our souls. What is the secret of having the truth of God in real power in our souls? An honoured brother once said, "I think the secret of having the truth in power may be said to be this, That every line, every bit of the truth that we learn should be accompanied by a corresponding self-judgment in our own souls . . . Paul, the moment he got the light of Christ's glory shining in upon his soul, was broken down and bowed himself in the dust in self-judgment before Him; for three days and three nights he neither ate nor drank. And the result was that the truth of the glory of Christ acquired such a place in his soul that when he got on to his feet he straightway preached in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God."

Now it seems to me that being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus involves this, that with regard to every part of the truth which we learn from God there must be the getting into the presence of God in connection with it and judging ourselves as deeply as we know how in the light of the truth that God has made known to us, otherwise you are likely to lose its force. It is not that the thing becomes untrue, but so far as you are concerned, you, who might be the vessel of it and the exponent of it, lose the force of it because when you learned it you never learned it with the corresponding self-judgment. Now what does that mean? If I see that God has Christ before Him and His intention is to reproduce Christ in us down here, what does it mean but the setting aside of all that I am, and of all that man is, and all that the world can bring, in the Holy Spirit just displacing everything by Christ. So that if you see anything in connection with Christ and you wish for it to have its real power in your soul, get before the Lord with that bit of truth which you have learned, and judge yourselves in the light of it. Make room for Christ, for you find the opposite in yourselves, and in your associations, or in things connected with you Judge yourselves; allow the light of that truth to shine in upon your soul and judge yourselves in the light of it, so that the truth may become a living power and force in your life. I do not know anything that more discourages me, humanly speaking, than to see people coming fifty-two Sundays in the year, and as many weekday nights to hear addresses, and never budge an inch, getting on in their souls. You come year after year and find them just where they were. And why? Just for that very reason they have fallen into the habit of listening to the truth and never allowing the spirit of self-judgment to enter and accompany the hearing of it.

Then the apostle says "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses. the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Now it seems to me that the apostle recognises that the mass of Christians were giving up the truth but he recalls Timothy to what he had heard from himself. We have these things in the epistles; but, he says to Timothy, "These things you have heard of me. Now if Timothy through exercise of soul became strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus, and in his own life, and own way, was brought under the power of the truth he was to commit these same things to faithful men. That is, I suppose, the apostle in a way expects that these faithful men would be distinguishable among the general unfaithfulness. But Timothy was to seek them out and getting into their company and into exercise with them he was to speak of these things together with them so that they might become suited vessels to carry it on. You often feel that speaking of the rank and file, that the very things we ought to be most familiar with we can hardly speak about. We have to speak of elementary things, and it is very nice to speak about elementary things when you meet a simple child to try and help him at the point where you find him. If he is not clear about the

forgiveness of sins, well. try to help him. If he is not clear about peace with God, try to help him. If he has not yet learned the seventh of Romans, go patiently over it with him; get it deeper into your own soul while helping him. but help according as to how you find him But how seldom you really find saints of God who are eager to learn the deeper truths of Christ and God's purpose in connection with Him. And therefore you are greatly limited and do not even have time to speak about these things; but wherever you find a faithful men, it is your privilege and mine, to share with him what we can of all that we have learned.

"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." If you are getting into exercise as to the proper truths of the gospel and as to the deeper truths of the Assembly of God, wherever you find an open ear, and a heart that appreciates these things with you, share together what you are learning about the Lord. Make sure it is what we have heard of Paul among many witnesses; we have it all recorded here in the Word, but what you are learning of Christ share with your brother, and in that way you are preparing some who in their turn will be able to teach others also. I think that we cannot rely upon the continuation of gift in the way in which we have known it in past years. We are all conscious how that in past years there have been outstanding men, there have been those whom we have recognised as getting a distinct impression from the Lord, and they have preached the truth and been in the exercise and power of it, and they have brought the truth before us in such a way that we recognise their message from the Lord. But they have passed and their places are not filled, and we are left very very weak we are left where we have the truth but we have not these gifts, but we are weak, and we are made conscious of this. Now supposing we had no longer these eminent and special gifts and we were left in our weakness does that mean we can no longer get into touch with the truth that is in Christ Jesus? Certainly not. We have it here, and we have the Holy Ghost given to us, but if we are to pass it on there must be this communication, as it says here, "The things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Now there are three things in the following verses that I would like to refer to. You will notice in the fourth verse you have the warrior spoken of; in the fifth verse what you might call the wrestler; and in the sixth verse, the worker. The warrior, the wrestler, and the worker: these are the three ways in which the Christian is called to stand in these days.

With regard to the warrior, we read, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." It seems as though there must be an undivided heart for Christ if we are going to stand in these difficult days. The warrior — the soldier — is a man who is called at the bidding of his king and country to put those things first that relate to the king's honour, and the affairs of life have to be relegated to the rear. He is a man chosen to be a soldier, and in his capacity of soldier his one business is to please him who hath called him to be a soldier. Now you are in that position in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, seeing the battlefield, and knowing all the power of the enemy, and the difficulties among His own people, has called you to be a soldier. One of the first things we have to watch is the way in which the affairs of life absorb our attention to the exclusion of the Lord's interest. Whatever shape the Lord's interest may take in your life, and whatever service you are to render, be on your guard that the affairs of life do not occupy such a place in your mind that they shut out the claims of Christ. It is very difficult: the state of affairs in the world is such that we feel the distraction of these things, the uncertainties of employment, the difficulties of trade and business, and all the things that are pending in social and political life; all these things tend to drift into the mind like a sand-drift blown by the wind, and to extinguish all the devotedness to Christ. I would ask you whether this may not be the secret in your case of a great deal of

indifference to the Lord's interests? Is it not that there has come in such a crowding of duties, such a pressure, that you can hardly find time to discover what the Lord's will is with regard to you, and when difficulties come in you are non-plussed, not having the habit of referring to the Lord and having His will? The result is you are liable to be carried about by that influence and the other influence, because you have not time to get into exercise yourself.

The second thing is the wrestler. It says, "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." That is, there are certain rules of the ring, and if you are going to strive for masteries, if you are going into special games you must make yourself acquainted with the rules of the games, for if you transgress you may be ruled out, disqualified. In connection with the prize we are looking for it is of the greatest importance that we should make ourselves familiar with every desire of the Lord's heart, and with all these rules which He has given us to walk by. I might ask you, do you read the Word systematically? Do you read only certain portions that you are rather fond of and fancy?

Our first verse reads, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." As far as I can understand, in this epistle there are seven things that are said to be "IN CHRIST JESUS", beginning with the promise of life in the first chapter. Seven things seem to suggest the idea of a circumference within which it is safe for the Christian to walk in the midst of all corruption, and that "IN CHRIST JESUS" involves our knowing all that is included and all that is shut out. "IN CHRIST JESUS" — you cannot bring in anything which is of Adam, you cannot bring in anything of your own will, or of man's organisation, or of man's resources. "IN CHRIST JESUS" shuts it all out. And what we are to be strong in is "THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS." That is the circumference within which it is safe for us to walk. Well if I do not know what it includes I obviously shall be at fault; a difficulty will come in and I shall be distracted, and will not know where to look; or I may strive unlawfully in my earnestness, and when putting forth my strength I may do it in some way the word of God condemns, and as far as playing the game is concerned I am disqualified.

Well, may God give you to strive according to the illustration, "Striving lawfully for the mastery;" but see that you strive lawfully; that you know what the rules of the game are. Supposing that you were for instance to say, "I want to see everybody converted." and you were to set yourself out to preach the gospel and see the whole world converted. Oh how you would set out with tremendous energy! But have you studied the rules of the game? Is this exactly what is set forth in the mind of God for the present time? Supposing you say, "Well now I want to win souls and see them saved." and you adopt some of the expedients which are very popular today. Well I wonder if you have studied the circumference, what "IN CHRIST JESUS" means, and have you given a thought to what is consistent with that word "IN CHRIST JESUS!" A great many of those methods are brought with the best of intentions but are they according to the rules of the game? Is it striving lawfully or unlawfully? God give us to test ourselves.

Then the third thing is in the sixth verse, which you require to alter a little, for the true translation is, "The husbandman must labour before partaking of the fruits." (N.Tn). The idea is that before the partaking of the fruit there must be labour, there must be the toil. And I think that any amount of toil is worthwhile in connection with the interests of Christ, because, "Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." If you do strive according to the rules and do your service according to the mind of the Lord, shutting out your own thought and will, and man's ways and methods, and do it in the power of the Holy Spirit consistently with the Spirit that is in Christ Jesus, there will be certainly the working and the toiling, and the praying and the tears, but your work IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD. There will be the answer. Turn to that passage in 1 Corinthians 15. You may apparently be defeated your

work may seem to disappear, your scholars that you have loved and prayed for may be scattered, and you may think, "Well it has all been labour in vain. But look at verse 58, in that resurrection chapter in which God shows that everything that goes into the grave will have to come up out of it. The apostle says, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." It makes it as plain as possible to me I have only to see that my labour is in the Lord. I have only to study what the Lord's will is, and to do my work, of whatever kind it is IN THE LORD, and as sure as God's work is true, that work will reappear, nothing will be lost.

"Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." You visit a sick man; before you go get into touch with your Lord and then visit him, and just be in His hand, and what He gives you to say, say it and commend it to Him. Do you think that the Lord is ever going to forget that visit? Perhaps there did not seem much result. Perhaps you were not well received. Perhaps it all seemed to be in vain. But in so far as your visit was in the Lord you will see that visit again in glory. I do not know in what shape the answer will be, you will have your Lord's approval. You go to your Sunday School class, and have the boys or the girls, as the case may be, and you pray and seek in every way to shut out all that is merely superficial and sentimental or emotional, and you seek to bring Christ before their souls, praying that God will teach the young Christians and save the unconverted. Do you think that your service falls to the ground? Do you think that it is simply done and forgotten, and there is no more of it? In so far as your labour is in the Lord you will see that again. There is not a word spoken in the Lord, a thing done in the Lord, at home or abroad, but you will find God's answer in resurrection. And so it says here the labourer will be "partaker of the fruits". You will get the fruit, but be content, if God so will it, to go labouring on; only see to it that your labour is in the Lord.

In connection with your labour, read verse 8, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings" (N.Tn.). The very Master whom you wish to serve and whose graces you wish to represent on earth, was One who toiled and laboured and wept. And Oh! how He pleaded with Israel again and again! Was it not He that said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Did He not say, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Did not the Lord feel it? Yet He says, "My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" (Isa. 49: 4). That work, which in His lifetime, seemed to have been all in vain was found in resurrection to be of such a character that it will fill the whole universe with blessing. "Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead." Remember that though you may labour in your lifetime, and may say, "Well, somehow or other, I have not been allowed to see much result of my labour", if your labour has been in the Lord, you shall, as sure as God's word is true, see the fruit in the resurrection day. God is faithful to His word, "He that goeth forth and weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126: 6). And so with regard to all that we may think to be breaking up on every side, study what your Lord's will is, and see to it that your life's testimony and service and everything are IN THE LORD, and you will certainly be partakers of the fruits.

The apostle adds, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things." May God give us to learn more of the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and seek to be consistent with it. "Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Find faithful men if you can and communicate these things one to the other. Even though you do not get the mass, go on with everything you can learn of Christ Jesus, keeping within the circumference. And be assured of this that nothing that is wrought here by the Holy Spirit for the Lord will ever disappear. Only set the Lord before you,

get into exercise as to His will, and do it in all humility; but with this confidence that as sure as God's word stands for ever, and is settled in heaven, you will see the results in resurrection. AMEN.