The Ministry of Helps

The Saints Nobody Applauds But Heaven Records

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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THE MINISTRY OF HELPS
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Statement of Faith and Purpose

This publication has been prepared for the purpose of biblical instruction, Christian edification, and the encouragement of faithful service within the body of Christ.

The teaching emphasizes salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the authority of the King James Bible, the importance of rightly dividing the word of truth, and the believer's responsibility to serve faithfully in anticipation of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

This work is intended to direct attention toward the Scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than toward religious institutions, personalities, or human accomplishments.

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“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)

Introduction — The Ministry of Helps

The Saints Nobody Applauds But Heaven Records

There is something mighty peculiar about modern Christianity. We have reached a point where a man can stand behind a pulpit, wear an expensive suit, deliver a forty-five-minute sermon, collect a thousand compliments, and before long somebody will announce that he is practically indispensable to the work of God. Meanwhile, the elderly woman who prayed for that meeting, the fellow who unlocked the building, the Christian who drove three people to church, and the family who quietly helped pay the expenses may never receive so much as a thank-you. The preacher gets the photograph, the singer gets the applause, the religious celebrity gets the recognition, and the people who helped make the entire occasion possible are expected to disappear quietly through the back door. Apparently, in some religious circles, the Holy Ghost does His finest work only when somebody remembers to turn on the microphone. But that is not the Christianity revealed in the King James Bible. God never established His church as a theatrical production featuring a handful of celebrities supported by an invisible army of supposedly insignificant servants.

When the apostle Paul described the ministries God placed in the church, he included a remarkable little word that deserves considerably more attention than it ordinarily receives. First Corinthians 12:28 declares, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." There it stands, right in the inspired record: **helps**. Not an accidental addition, not a secondary consideration invented by some modern church committee, and certainly not a worthless responsibility reserved for Christians who lack more impressive abilities. The Holy Ghost deliberately included it. Notice also that the verse begins, "And God hath set some in the church." God arranged the members and their responsibilities according to His own wisdom. The passage does not say that popularity establishes importance, that the largest audience determines usefulness, or that the person receiving the greatest number of compliments must be accomplishing the greatest amount of spiritual work. Those are human measurements, and human measurements have a remarkable tendency to favour whoever happens to be standing closest to the spotlight.

Paul goes even further in 1 Corinthians 12:22, declaring, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." That verse ought to embarrass a considerable number of religious celebrities. Notice the difference between what the members seem to be and what God says they are. They may appear feeble, unimportant, ordinary, or easily replaced, but the Holy Ghost calls them necessary. A human body

cannot function properly if its members begin despising one another, and the body of Christ was never designed to operate through a competition for personal prominence. The eye cannot tell the hand that it is unnecessary, and the head cannot announce that the feet serve no useful purpose. Yet some congregations behave as though the preacher constitutes the entire church while everybody else exists to finance his activities and admire his accomplishments. That is not biblical leadership. That is religious vanity dressed in Sunday clothes. The Lord has established different responsibilities, and **the members who attract the most attention are not necessarily the members performing the most valuable service.**

Before examining these responsibilities, we must establish a doctrinal foundation that cannot be compromised. Christian service does not save a sinner, preserve salvation, or add anything to the finished work of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." A man cannot sweep enough church floors to purchase forgiveness. A woman cannot prepare enough meals to earn eternal life. A believer cannot drive enough passengers, give enough money, or visit enough hospital rooms to improve the blood of Christ. Salvation rests entirely upon what the Saviour accomplished, not upon what the sinner contributes. But Ephesians 2:10 immediately declares that believers are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is the proper order. Grace saves the sinner, and the saved sinner ought to become useful to the Lord. Works are not the purchase price of redemption. They are an appropriate expression of gratitude from somebody who has already been redeemed.

This series will examine ten areas of Christian service that have frequently been overlooked, misunderstood, or treated as inferior to more visible ministries. We will begin by establishing the biblical foundation for helps within the body of Christ, then examine the praying saints whose intercession supports gospel labour. Epaphras provides a remarkable example in Colossians 4:12, where Paul describes him as "always labouring fervently for you in prayers." Notice that prayer is described as labour, not religious entertainment. A faithful Christian may accomplish something worthwhile on his knees without ever standing behind a pulpit. There may be elderly believers, homebound saints, suffering Christians, and ordinary members of a congregation whose physical circumstances prevent them from engaging in public activities. Yet their access to the throne of grace has not been cancelled. The modern religious performer may need a stage, a camera, and a congregation shouting encouragement before he considers something important. The faithful prayer warrior needs an open Bible, a believing heart, and access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will also examine the ministry of hospitality, where ordinary homes become places of Christian fellowship, encouragement, and practical assistance. Aquila and Priscilla did not need a cathedral to become useful to the apostle Paul. Romans 16:3–5 identifies them as his helpers in Christ Jesus and mentions the church in their house. Acts 18 records their association with Paul and their assistance in instructing Apollos more perfectly concerning the way of God. There is a lesson worth recovering in a generation that has confused hospitality with expensive entertaining. A Christian does not need a magnificent dining room, imported furniture, or a refrigerator stocked like a luxury restaurant to demonstrate genuine charity. Sometimes an extra chair, a simple meal, an open Bible, and a willing heart accomplish more than the elaborate arrangements of people primarily interested in displaying their possessions. Romans 12:13 commands believers to be "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." God did not command His people to impress visitors with their wealth. He instructed them to concern themselves with the needs of others.

Then there are the quiet givers whose generosity helps keep the gospel moving. Philippians 4:17 records Paul saying, "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." The Philippians had supported his ministry, and their contributions represented genuine fellowship in gospel work. Yet this biblical principle has been buried beneath one of the most disgraceful money-making operations ever constructed in the name of Christianity. Prosperity preachers have transformed giving into religious gambling, promising financial multiplication to people who can scarcely afford their ordinary necessities. Others drag Israel's tithing obligations under the Mosaic law into the present Church Age and threaten saved believers with covenant curses that do not belong to them. We will expose that manipulation while maintaining the biblical responsibility of voluntary generosity. Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." The Lord does not need a financial salesman to manufacture cheerful giving through intimidation. **Christian generosity is not a heavenly investment scheme, and the offering plate is not a vending machine dispensing prosperity to the highest bidder.**

Other servants perform responsibilities so ordinary that people frequently notice them only when something goes wrong. Somebody must organize legitimate activities, maintain accurate records, communicate necessary information, prepare the meeting place, repair broken equipment, arrange the chairs, and make certain that practical responsibilities do not collapse into confusion. Acts 6 demonstrates that even the early Jerusalem congregation encountered serious difficulty when widows were neglected in the daily ministration. The apostles recognized the problem and established responsible arrangements without abandoning their appointed ministry of prayer and the word. First

Corinthians 14:40 commands, "Let all things be done decently and in order." That does not authorize a church to become a religious corporation drowning in paperwork, committees, and meaningless regulations. Neither does it excuse the careless congregation that considers every missed responsibility an unexpected movement of the Holy Ghost. God is not honoured by confusion merely because somebody attaches His name to it. **A church does not become more spiritual because nobody knows who is supposed to unlock the doors, pay the bills, or prepare the room where the Bible will be preached.**

We will consider the drivers who provide transportation for believers and gospel workers, and the visitors who refuse to allow suffering Christians to disappear from the congregation's memory. Titus 3:13 commands diligent assistance for Zenas and Apollos on their journey, while 3 John 8 describes faithful supporters as "fellowhelpers to the truth." Sometimes the opportunity to hear biblical preaching depends upon somebody possessing a dependable vehicle and being willing to use it. Sometimes a discouraged believer needs another Christian to visit rather than merely promise that somebody ought to visit. Second Timothy 1:16 records Paul's gratitude for Onesiphorus, "for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." That man sought out a suffering apostle when association with him was inconvenient. What a contrast to religious people who remember a faithful servant while he is useful but forget him when age, illness, poverty, or difficulty removes him from public activity. A congregation that can celebrate its famous visitors while neglecting its suffering members needs considerably more than another programme. It needs to obey the Scriptures.

The patient teachers of children also deserve careful attention. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the Holy Scriptures, while 2 Timothy 1:5 identifies the sincere faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Those women were not religious celebrities, yet their influence belonged to the preparation of a man who would later labour alongside the apostle Paul. There is something profoundly wrong with a church that considers children important enough to entertain but not important enough to teach sound doctrine. A child may remember the games, the decorations, and the refreshments, but those things cannot substitute for understanding sin, righteousness, the gospel, and the authority of God's word. Neither should children be pressured into repeating religious phrases merely so adults can announce impressive salvation statistics. The objective is not to manufacture professions. It is to teach the Scriptures faithfully and explain salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. A patient teacher may never know the lasting influence of one carefully explained passage, but the uncertainty of the results does not diminish the responsibility.

Throughout these studies, one rule will govern every application: the Scriptures must be rightly divided. We will not turn Israel's tabernacle into a modern church-building programme, transfer the Mosaic law's financial obligations to the body of Christ, confuse the apostolic circumstances of Acts with every detail of present church administration, or convert historical illustrations into doctrinal promises that God never made. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. That requirement does not disappear when the subject seems practical rather than prophetic. The church must distinguish Israel from the body of Christ, law from grace, the earthly kingdom from the believer's heavenly calling, and salvation from rewards. We must also preserve biblical qualifications for church offices rather than pretending that every useful servant possesses identical authority. Proper doctrine does not make practical service unnecessary. It provides the foundation upon which legitimate service can operate without becoming another religious invention.

There is also a searching warning concerning the motives of those who serve. A Christian can become just as proud of being overlooked as another Christian becomes proud of being famous. The man who spends every Sunday complaining that nobody appreciates his work may have forgotten the One he claims to serve. The woman who demands public recognition for every act of generosity may be seeking her reward from the congregation rather than serving the Lord. Conversely, the preacher who treats ordinary members as inferior because they do not occupy his position has forgotten that Christ is the Head of the Church. Colossians 3:23 declares, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." There is the proper motive. Christian service is not a contest between visible and invisible workers to determine who deserves the greatest applause. Both must examine their hearts. The Lord is not impressed with a famous preacher's vanity, and He is not impressed with a volunteer's bitterness. **The objective is not to replace the celebrity preacher with the celebrity servant. It is to get both men back under the authority of Jesus Christ.**

We must also remember that helping others does not excuse careless conduct, unscriptural authority, or the exploitation of vulnerable people. A transportation worker must operate responsibly. A children's teacher must demonstrate trustworthy character and observe appropriate safeguards. A person entrusted with money must handle it honestly, while somebody possessing confidential information must exercise discretion. A pastor cannot claim unlimited ownership over the time, resources, or abilities of the congregation merely because those resources might be useful to his ministry. First Peter 5:3 warns against becoming "lords over God's heritage," while First Corinthians 4:2 declares, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Faithfulness includes more than enthusiasm. It requires integrity, wisdom, diligence, and submission to

the word of God. Christian charity is not permission to become gullible, and spiritual service is not an excuse for abandoning ordinary responsibility. The church ought to be a place where willing servants can labour faithfully without being manipulated, intimidated, or treated as disposable instruments of somebody else's ambition.

Finally, all ten studies will lead us toward a future appointment that ought to put every religious reputation into proper perspective. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That is not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20, and it is not an opportunity for saved believers to purchase or preserve eternal life through their works. Salvation rests securely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. But the works of believers will be examined, as 1 Corinthians 3:11–15 plainly establishes. Some work will abide and receive reward, while other work will be burned and result in loss. First Corinthians 4:5 further declares that the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. What a day that will be for religious vanity! The impressive title will not determine the verdict. The enormous audience will not determine the verdict. The building, the financial reports, the number of admirers, and the applause collected during a lifetime will not determine the verdict. Jesus Christ will judge with perfect knowledge, and nobody will be able to impress Him with a publicity campaign.

And that brings us to the reason this series deserves to be written. There are faithful Christians whose service will never become the subject of a religious biography. Some have prayed for decades without receiving public recognition. Others have supported gospel work from modest incomes, opened their homes to struggling believers, maintained meeting places, assisted travelling preachers, visited the afflicted, transported the elderly, taught children, and performed ordinary responsibilities that most people barely notice. Their work has not necessarily been impressive in the eyes of men, and we are not authorized to announce beforehand exactly which rewards Christ will assign. But we are authorized to believe His promise in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that labour in the Lord is not in vain. The coming examination will reveal what earthly applause could never accurately measure. **The preacher may be remembered because he stood before the congregation, but the Lord knows the saints who stood behind the work. Men may forget who prayed, who gave, who carried, who taught, who visited, and who remained faithful when nobody was watching. Heaven does not need a microphone to hear obedience, a camera to witness sacrifice, or a church bulletin to remember a servant's name. This is the ministry of helps: the saints nobody applauds, but heaven records.**

1 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Forgotten Ministry That God Never Forgot

Key Scripture — 1 Corinthians 12:28 (KJV)

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

There is something mighty peculiar about modern Christianity. A man can stand behind a pulpit, wear a fine suit, raise his voice, collect a following, and before long somebody will call him a great man of God. Meanwhile, the elderly woman who has prayed for that congregation for thirty years, the fellow who keeps the building clean, the widow who quietly supports missionaries, and the faithful Christian who visits the sick may never receive so much as a thank-you. We have developed an entire religious culture that can recognize a microphone from three hundred yards away but cannot recognize faithfulness when it is standing right beside us. The modern church has become remarkably skilled at celebrating the people everybody sees while overlooking the people everybody needs. But there is one serious difficulty with that arrangement. God never agreed to it. The Lord who established the church did not consult a publicity department, and He never appointed popularity as the standard for spiritual usefulness.

When the Holy Ghost inspired Paul to describe the various ministries God established in the church, He included a word that ought to make every self-important religious performer examine his heart. That word is “helps.” There it stands in 1 Corinthians 12:28, sitting in the same inspired sentence that mentions apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, and gifts of healings. It is not a printer's mistake, an unnecessary addition, or an afterthought slipped into the passage because somebody needed to fill a line. The Holy Ghost deliberately placed it there. Notice the opening words: “And God hath set some in the church.” That is divine appointment, not human advertisement. The passage does not say a religious board invented these ministries, a denominational committee approved them, or a preacher's popularity made them legitimate. God established the members and their functions. A man who dismisses the ministry of helps as insignificant is not merely insulting a volunteer. He is treating something God placed in His church as though it were beneath serious consideration.

The purpose of this opening study is to put the ministry of helps back where the Scriptures placed it, not by manufacturing another religious title or inventing some new ecclesiastical office, but by showing what God actually said about the members of Christ's body. The saved person belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ through the new birth, not through church employment, volunteer service, religious ambition, or the accumulation of good deeds.

Ephesians 2:8–9 settles salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, and verse 10 immediately establishes that saved people are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. There is the proper order. Grace saves the sinner, and that saved sinner ought to become useful to the Saviour. The work does not purchase salvation, maintain salvation, or improve the finished sacrifice of Calvary. It is service offered by somebody who already belongs to Christ. And when we begin measuring Christian service by what the Lord says rather than what religious men applaud, some very impressive reputations may begin looking considerably smaller.

1. God Put Helps in the Church, Whether Religious Men Appreciate It or Not

Start with the wording of 1 Corinthians 12:28 and refuse to run past it. “God hath set some in the church.” The verb settles the question of origin. The Lord arranged the members and ministries of His church according to His own wisdom. Paul was writing to the Corinthians, a congregation that possessed remarkable spiritual privileges while displaying an embarrassing amount of carnality, division, pride, and confusion. Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 3:3, he asked, “For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” That congregation knew something about spiritual gifts, but they had trouble understanding spiritual character. They were fascinated with outward manifestations while failing in ordinary Christian conduct. Sound familiar? A church can have talented singers, impressive speakers, expensive equipment, and enough religious excitement to shake the windows, yet still be spiritually immature. Giftedness is not the same thing as godliness, and noise is not evidence that the Holy Ghost approves of the program.

The passage contains an important distinction that must not be discarded. The apostles and prophets had their particular places in the foundational and revelatory work associated with the establishment of the New Testament church. Ephesians 2:20 speaks of believers being “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” We are not authorized to turn every item in 1 Corinthians 12:28 into an identical, continuing office or pretend that every manifestation belonged to every Christian in every period. But neither are we authorized to erase “helps” because the more spectacular gifts attract greater attention. The same chapter that discusses extraordinary manifestations also teaches the ordinary necessity of dependent members serving one another. The sensationalist wants the miraculous gift without the biblical regulation, while the religious celebrity wants the prominent title without the humble responsibility. Both can overlook the plain teaching. God did not arrange His church to accommodate human vanity. He arranged it to accomplish His purpose.

A ministry of helps is not a second-class ministry simply because it does not involve public preaching. That does not diminish preaching, which is plainly commanded and necessary. Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). A church without sound preaching is in serious trouble, but a church that believes preaching exhausts every responsibility of its membership has misunderstood the body of Christ. Somebody must pray, encourage, give, assist, teach where qualified, care for practical needs, and bear another believer's burden. The ministry cannot be reduced to one man speaking while everybody else becomes a permanent spectator. If the entire Christian life consisted of listening to sermons, the New Testament would be considerably shorter. Yet the epistles are filled with commandments concerning charity, service, diligence, hospitality, edification, and practical obedience. God never intended His people to become an audience that merely applauds the performance of one individual. He intended them to function as members of a living body.

2. The Body Has Many Members Because One Member Cannot Do Everything

Paul begins the larger argument in 1 Corinthians 12:12 by declaring, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” Then verse 13 explains the spiritual unity of believers: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This is not a reference to water baptism establishing salvation or some subsequent charismatic experience making a Christian spiritually superior. It describes the Spirit's work of placing believers into one body. Notice the repeated emphasis upon one body and many members. Unity does not eliminate distinction, and distinction does not require division. A human body possesses eyes, ears, hands, feet, and countless other parts because different functions are necessary. God did not create a walking eyeball and call it a complete man. Neither did He create the church so every Christian could compete for the same visible position.

In verses 15 and 16, Paul introduces an almost humorous illustration. “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” Then the ear complains because it is not the eye. Imagine a foot becoming offended because nobody asked it to look at the scenery. Imagine an ear announcing its resignation because it cannot pick up a hammer. Such foolishness would be absurd in the human body, yet something remarkably similar occurs among Christians who become dissatisfied with the work God has provided because somebody else's assignment appears more impressive. Not every Christian is called to preach, and not every Christian possesses the same abilities. The absence of one particular gift does not make a saved person useless. Paul asks in verse 17, “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?” A church filled

exclusively with preachers would still need somebody willing to practice the instructions those preachers delivered.

Verse 18 gives the answer to religious envy: “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” There is no room in that verse for the notion that every believer must establish his importance through public recognition. The Lord places the members according to His pleasure. That truth should humble the highly visible servant and encourage the obscure one. Nobody has grounds for boasting as though his abilities originated in himself, and nobody should despair simply because his abilities differ from another Christian's. The question is not whether a man can reproduce somebody else's ministry but whether he is faithfully performing the service that belongs to him. A hand that refuses to work because it cannot see is not displaying humility. It is refusing its proper function. Likewise, a Christian who spends his years complaining about the ministry he never received may neglect the opportunities directly in front of him. Faithfulness begins with obedience, not comparison.

3. The Members That Seem Feeble Are the Members God Calls Necessary

Now we arrive at one of the most devastating statements in the entire discussion. First Corinthians 12:22 declares, “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Pay careful attention to the difference between appearance and reality. Paul does not say these members actually are worthless, nor does he say they become necessary after acquiring greater recognition. He says they “seem” more feeble, yet they “are necessary.” Human estimation and divine reality do not always agree. Men tend to judge usefulness according to visibility, physical strength, eloquence, wealth, education, or influence. God looks upon the actual function of the member within His appointed arrangement. A person might see the hands moving while never considering the heart beating, but let the heart stop and the entire discussion changes rather quickly. What attracts attention is not necessarily what sustains the body. Some of the most essential operations are performed without public notice.

Paul continues in verses 23 and 24 by explaining that members considered less honourable receive special attention and that God has tempered the body together, “having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.” Here is a direct rebuke to the worldly practice of assigning human worth according to prestige. The body does not survive by humiliating its less conspicuous members. It functions because God has arranged its parts to work together. Consider the church member who quietly assists a disabled believer, the woman who prepares meals for a suffering household, or the man who performs necessary repairs without expecting an announcement afterward. Their work may not appear on a church website, but its effects are real. Of course, the text does not authorize pretending that every

quiet task is automatically righteous or that obscurity guarantees spirituality. Motives and conduct still matter. But it certainly demolishes the assumption that the most publicly admired worker must be the most valuable. Heaven does not keep its records according to the seating arrangement on the platform.

The reason for this divine arrangement appears in verse 25: “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” The next verse explains that suffering and honour should be shared concerns among the members. When one suffers, the others should care; when one receives honour, the others should rejoice. That is a far different picture from a religious organization divided between celebrities and servants, where one class receives admiration while another class performs the labour. The Christian who becomes jealous when another believer is recognized is violating the spirit of the passage. So is the prominent worker who considers ordinary believers unworthy of his attention. Pride can wear a preacher's suit or a volunteer's work clothes. Neither outfit makes it holy. Paul's command is not merely that Christians occupy the same building but that they exercise genuine concern for one another. A divided body cannot function properly, no matter how impressive its public appearances become.

4. Romans 12 Puts the Servant Before the Spotlight

Romans 12 approaches this subject from another direction and begins by striking at the root of religious self-importance. Paul writes in verse 3, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly.” That is an excellent prescription for a church suffering from an epidemic of inflated egos. The instruction applies to the preacher, teacher, giver, organizer, encourager, and every other believer. Spiritual gifts are not decorations pinned to the chest to establish superiority. They are abilities and opportunities entrusted to Christians for service. In verses 4 and 5, Paul repeats the illustration of the body, explaining that the members do not all possess the same office, although they belong to one another in Christ. The individual member has a responsibility that cannot be separated from the welfare of the others. Independence may impress the world, but biblical Christianity requires mutual dependence under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Look at the actual language of Romans 12:6–8. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,” Paul proceeds to speak of prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. Notice the practical instructions attached to these functions. The person ministering is to attend to that ministry. The giver is to give with simplicity. The ruler is to exercise diligence. The one showing mercy is to do so with cheerfulness. This is not a catalogue of impressive religious titles. It is a set of

responsibilities requiring faithful action. A person can distribute financial assistance while secretly craving recognition. Another can show mercy while complaining about every inconvenience. Somebody can organize a ministry efficiently while becoming unbearable to everybody working alongside him. The gift does not excuse the attitude. If a man claims to possess a spiritual ability but refuses the scriptural manner in which it should operate, his claim to usefulness needs examining. God is interested in obedience, not merely activity.

The immediate context supplies another necessary correction. Romans 12:9 commands, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Verse 10 requires believers to be kindly affectioned toward one another, and verse 11 adds, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” Here we find Christian service anchored in sincerity, holiness, diligence, and devotion. Biblical charity is not an excuse for doctrinal compromise, and energetic ministry is not a substitute for personal righteousness. A church can become so occupied with keeping its machinery running that nobody bothers to ask whether the machinery is accomplishing anything biblical. There is little spiritual achievement in organizing a hundred activities that neglect the word of God. At the same time, there is nothing admirable about a professing Bible believer who possesses plenty of doctrinal vocabulary but cannot be bothered to assist a suffering brother. Sound doctrine ought to produce sound conduct. Truth that never affects the hands and feet has not been properly obeyed.

5. Christ Gave Ministers to Equip the Saints, Not to Replace Them

Ephesians 4:11–12 is another passage that ought to be read carefully before somebody constructs an entire religious empire around one individual. Speaking of the ascended Christ, Paul declares, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Notice the purpose of these ministries. Their work contributes to the perfecting of the saints and the edification of Christ's body. The pastor is not supposed to turn the congregation into a personal admiration society. He is supposed to feed, instruct, exhort, correct, and prepare believers to walk according to the Scriptures. The evangelist is not commissioned to manufacture a traveling personality cult. The teacher is not appointed to collect disciples who never learn to open their Bibles independently. Christ gave these ministries for the spiritual benefit of His people, not for the vanity of the men exercising them.

Continue reading through Ephesians 4:15–16, where Paul identifies Christ as the head and describes the whole body as “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” Those last words are especially important. Every joint contributes to the

functioning of the whole. The body increases through the effectual working of its parts according to their measure. Here is the biblical pattern of cooperation, maturity, and mutual edification. Christ is the head, not the pastor, the denomination, the religious institution, or whichever fellow possesses the largest collection of flattering introductions. A church can become organizationally impressive while remaining spiritually dependent upon a personality rather than growing in obedience to its actual Head. The ministry of helps exposes that corruption because it demonstrates how much the congregation accomplishes through believers who are not standing in front of everybody. The body does not grow properly when its members are encouraged to remain spiritually helpless while one individual receives credit for everything.

There is also a warning here against confusing activity with maturity. Ephesians 4:14 speaks of believers who should no longer be children "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Verse 15 commands speaking the truth in love. The ministry of helps must therefore remain connected to biblical truth. Helping somebody does not require endorsing false doctrine, financing spiritual deception, or submitting to unscriptural authority. A willing servant still possesses a responsibility to examine what he is supporting. If a ministry uses volunteers to promote a false gospel, the volunteers should not imagine that their sincerity automatically sanctifies the enterprise. An efficient organization can spread error just as efficiently as truth. The purpose of Christian service is not to keep a religious machine running at any cost but to honour Jesus Christ according to His word. The church needs willing hands, certainly, but those hands must remain attached to hearts governed by the Scriptures.

6. The New Testament Records Helpers That Religious History Would Have Forgotten

Consider Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2. Paul writes, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." He then instructs the Roman believers to receive her properly and assist her, explaining, "for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." The word "succourer" describes somebody who provided real assistance. Paul did not record Phoebe's name because she possessed a large audience, wore an important title, or demanded a position of authority over the congregation. He commended her because she had actually helped people, including the apostle himself. Nor does the passage require us to invent an ecclesiastical office or disregard the qualifications governing church leadership elsewhere in the New Testament. The text supplies sufficient reason for honour without adding anything to it. Phoebe served, and her service mattered. Two thousand years later, her name remains in the Scriptures while countless celebrated personalities have disappeared from remembrance.

Then there is the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 16:15. Paul says these believers "have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." What a remarkable expression! In a world addicted to entertainment, money, influence, and endless self-promotion, here was a household devoted to serving God's people. Paul continues in verse 16, "That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." The apostle recognized genuine labour and urged the Corinthians to respect those who performed it. There was nothing theatrical about that commendation. Stephanas and his household were not presented as religious superstars but as dependable servants. Paul also mentions Fortunatus and Achaicus, saying in verse 18, "For they have refreshed my spirit and yours." That is a ministry worth remembering. Some Christians leave everybody exhausted after five minutes of conversation. Others strengthen weary believers simply by their faithful presence, sound words, and practical assistance. The difference is not measured by volume but by usefulness.

Philippians 2 introduces Epaphroditus, whom Paul calls "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier," as well as the Philippians' messenger and the man who ministered to Paul's needs. This servant became so ill that he was near death, and Paul instructed the church to "hold such in reputation" (Philippians 2:29). That is biblical honour directed toward sacrificial faithfulness. Second Timothy 1:16 supplies another striking testimony when Paul remembers Onesiphorus: "for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." This man did not abandon the apostle when association with him became uncomfortable. He sought him diligently and provided encouragement during imprisonment. These examples reveal something about Paul's ministry that celebrity religion would rather ignore. The great apostle had needs. Other believers supplied help. His work involved companions, messengers, supporters, and faithful friends. The Holy Ghost preserved their names because their contributions were worthy of remembrance. God did not erase the supporting servants from the biblical record simply because Paul was the man preaching.

7. The Judgment Seat of Christ Will Settle What Earthly Applause Cannot

A necessary doctrinal distinction must be established before discussing eternal rewards. Salvation is not compensation for Christian service. A sinner receives eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, not through church attendance, financial donations, ministry assignments, or a lifetime of volunteering. Paul declares in Ephesians 2:8–9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day. The believer's standing before God rests upon Christ, not his performance. Once that

truth is established, the Scriptures plainly teach that the saved individual is accountable for his conduct and service. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That is not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20, and confusing the two produces needless doctrinal trouble.

First Corinthians 3:11 establishes the foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Paul then discusses the quality of the work built upon that foundation, using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. The fire reveals the character of the work. Verse 14 speaks of reward for work that abides, while verse 15 describes a man whose work is burned: “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The distinction could hardly be clearer. Salvation remains secure in Christ, but Christian labour may result in reward or loss. That should sober every preacher who has confused crowd size with spiritual success and every Christian who believes unseen service has no eternal significance. A religious empire made of wood, hay, and stubble may look exceedingly impressive before the fire reaches it. Meanwhile, work scarcely noticed by men may prove precious under the searching examination of the Lord.

Colossians 3:23–24 provides the proper motive: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Although these words occur in a passage addressing servants and their earthly masters, the principle of service rendered unto Christ is unmistakable. The Christian must understand whom he ultimately serves. First Corinthians 4:5 adds that the Lord will “make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” That means the outward performance is not the complete story. God knows whether a man served faithfully or merely performed for recognition. He knows whether a generous offering came from charity or vanity. He knows whether a preacher sought His glory or cultivated his own reputation. He also knows the faithful assistance rendered without public attention. The Judgment Seat will not be fooled by impressive advertising. Men can manufacture applause, purchase influence, and polish reputations, but nobody will be able to bribe the fire.

Conclusion — The Saints Nobody Applauds But Heaven Records

The ministry of helps is not an invention of modern church organization. It stands in the inspired Scriptures as part of God's arrangement for the functioning of His people. First Corinthians 12 establishes the necessity of the members, Romans 12 instructs believers concerning their differing responsibilities, and Ephesians 4 explains how the body grows through the working of its parts under Jesus Christ. These passages leave no room for the idea that public prominence determines spiritual importance. Neither do they diminish sound preaching or excuse disorderly service. The Lord has appointed different

responsibilities, and those responsibilities must function according to His word. A preacher who faithfully expounds Scripture is performing necessary work, but so is the believer who faithfully serves within the opportunities God has provided. The trouble begins when religious men turn differences in responsibility into a hierarchy of personal worth. There are no useless members in Christ's body merely because they possess no microphone. The members who seem less conspicuous may be performing functions whose importance is discovered only when their faithful labour disappears.

There is a warning here for church leadership as well as for ordinary members. A pastor has no biblical authority to manipulate believers into becoming unpaid servants of his personal ambition. He is not permitted to exploit loyalty, demand unquestioning obedience, or measure devotion to Christ by unquestioning devotion to himself. First Peter 5:3 warns against being “lords over God's heritage,” and that principle is worth remembering whenever religious authority begins behaving like personal ownership. On the other hand, believers should not use the failures of proud ministers as an excuse for withdrawing from every responsibility. Somebody else's pride does not justify our laziness. Galatians 5:13 commands, “by love serve one another.” The answer to corrupt religious leadership is not an equally corrupt spirit of indifference. It is biblical service performed under the authority of Jesus Christ, with sound doctrine, sincere charity, and proper accountability. The church needs neither celebrity worship nor professional spectators. It needs saved people who know their Bibles and are willing to put their faith into practice.

And when all the religious publicity has faded, when the last church advertisement has been discarded, when the most impressive buildings have returned to dust, and when the applause of men has become nothing more than a forgotten noise, one reality will remain. Jesus Christ knows those who belong to Him, and He will judge the service of His people according to perfect righteousness. The widow who prayed, the believer who gave sacrificially, the servant who encouraged the afflicted, and the faithful Christian who performed an ordinary duty without expecting recognition have not escaped His attention. We are not authorized to announce beforehand exactly who will receive which reward, but we are authorized to believe what the Scriptures say about the Lord's faithfulness and His coming judgment. Paul closes 1 Corinthians 15 with this command: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” There is the promise worth carrying into every unnoticed assignment. The world may overlook the labour, the congregation may forget the servant, and the preacher may never speak the person's name. But work faithfully done unto Christ is not wasted merely because men failed to applaud it. The church may forget who carried the burden, but the Lord has never needed a spotlight to see a faithful servant.

2 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Prayer Warriors Who Hold Up the Hands of the Preacher

Key Scripture — Colossians 4:12 (KJV)

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

There is a mighty strange thing about modern Christianity. A preacher can stand behind a pulpit, raise his voice, pound the furniture, and have half the congregation convinced that the kingdom of darkness is trembling because he has discovered how to operate a microphone. Meanwhile, somewhere in the same church, an elderly woman may be sitting at her kitchen table with an open King James Bible, praying for that preacher by name, pleading for souls to be saved, asking God to protect the congregation from false doctrine, and begging the Lord to keep His servants faithful. She has no television program, no ministry logo, no expensive sound equipment, and no crowd shouting encouragement every time she opens her mouth. But the Holy Ghost has something to say about people like her. When Paul described Epaphras in Colossians 4:12, he did not introduce him as a religious celebrity. He called him “a servant of Christ” and said he was “always labouring fervently for you in prayers.” That is a description worth examining before somebody decides that nothing important happens unless a crowd can see it.

Notice the expression “labouring fervently.” Paul did not describe Epaphras as casually mentioning somebody's name between breakfast and the morning newspaper. The passage presents prayer as earnest spiritual labour directed toward a definite biblical purpose. Epaphras was concerned that the Colossian believers might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” He was not praying for bigger houses, finer horses, impressive religious titles, or enough prosperity to make the neighbouring pagans jealous. He was concerned about their spiritual condition before the Lord. There is a tremendous difference between praying that a church will become famous and praying that its members will become faithful. One is concerned with public reputation; the other is concerned with biblical maturity. The modern religious world has managed to turn prayer into everything from a fundraising technique to a stage performance, but Epaphras was occupied with something considerably more serious. He wanted believers established in God's will. That kind of prayer may never produce a standing ovation, but it certainly belongs in the ministry of helps.

Before proceeding, one doctrinal distinction must be established. Prayer does not save a lost sinner, purchase forgiveness, maintain eternal security, or add anything to the finished work of Jesus Christ. Salvation in this present Church Age is by grace through faith,

according to Ephesians 2:8–9, and the gospel rests upon Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His bodily resurrection, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. A believer does not pray his way into the body of Christ, and he does not remain saved by accumulating enough hours on his knees. But the Christian who has been saved by grace is commanded to pray, and the Scriptures repeatedly connect prayer with gospel labour, spiritual strength, thanksgiving, perseverance, and the needs of other believers. The ministry of intercession is not a substitute for preaching, witnessing, studying, or obeying the Scriptures. It is a God-appointed responsibility that accompanies those duties. And if the church ever becomes so impressed with the man preaching that it forgets the importance of the saints praying, it has begun admiring the instrument while neglecting the God who must make the work fruitful.

1. Epaphras Was Fighting Battles Without Standing on a Platform

The first thing to recognize about Epaphras is that he was not an imaginary prayer warrior invented to decorate a sermon. He was a real servant whose ministry appears in the inspired record. Colossians 1:7 calls him “our dear fellowservant” and describes him as “a faithful minister of Christ.” By the time Paul mentions him again in Colossians 4:12, the emphasis falls upon his persistent intercession for the believers at Colosse. The statement “who is one of you” identifies his connection with the people for whom he prayed. These were not anonymous names printed on a religious mailing list. He knew their congregation, cared about their spiritual welfare, and carried their needs before the Lord. He was serving Christ by concerning himself with the condition of other Christians. That is an important correction to the religious idea that usefulness must always be demonstrated through personal prominence. Epaphras was not trying to establish himself above the church. He was labouring before God on behalf of the church.

The word “always” deserves attention, because it establishes the character of his ministry. Paul was not necessarily claiming that Epaphras spent every waking second in uninterrupted verbal prayer. The expression describes persistent, habitual concern. His prayers were not reserved for annual religious campaigns or occasional emergencies when somebody finally remembered that God was available. He was regularly engaged in intercession. Colossians 4:13 adds Paul's testimony: “For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.” His concern extended beyond one local assembly. He cared about believers in several places and was deeply interested in their spiritual condition. Notice also that Paul bears witness to Epaphras's zeal without turning him into an object of worship. Scripture commends the servant while directing attention toward the Lord he serves. That is how Christian

recognition ought to operate. Honour faithfulness without manufacturing another religious idol.

The object of Epaphras's prayer is equally important. He desired that the saints would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." The language points toward spiritual maturity, stability, and obedience, not the false doctrine that Christians become sinlessly perfect through an extraordinary religious experience. The Colossian epistle warns against enticing words, philosophy, vain deceit, and religious ordinances imposed contrary to the believer's completeness in Christ. In Colossians 2:10, Paul declares, "And ye are complete in him." The believer's position in Christ is secure, while his practical growth requires continued instruction and obedience. Epaphras wanted Christians to stand firmly upon truth rather than become spiritual weathercocks spinning with every new doctrinal wind. A genuine prayer warrior is concerned that God's people understand the Scriptures, resist deception, and walk worthy of the Lord. That is considerably more valuable than praying that the pastor's next sermon will attract enough applause to make him feel like a conquering general.

2. The Apostle Paul Asked for Prayer Because the Preacher Still Needed Help

If anybody could have claimed that he was sufficiently gifted to operate without the prayers of other Christians, the apostle Paul would have been the fellow. He had received direct revelation from the risen Lord Jesus Christ, had been entrusted with the gospel of the grace of God, had established churches, and had suffered extraordinary persecution for preaching the truth. Yet this same apostle repeatedly requested the prayers of ordinary believers. In Ephesians 6:18–19, after describing the whole armour of God, he commands prayer and supplication for all saints, adding, "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." There is something wonderfully humbling about that request. Paul did not ask the Ephesians to admire his courage, congratulate his knowledge, or circulate flattering reports about his ministry. He asked them to pray that he would speak boldly and faithfully. Even the apostle understood his dependence upon the Lord.

Romans 15:30 makes the request more personal: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Notice the expression "strive together with me." Paul regarded the prayers of fellow believers as participation in his struggle, not as a polite religious decoration added to the end of a church announcement. He goes on to mention specific concerns involving deliverance from unbelieving opponents, the acceptance of his service, and his journey according to God's will. Second Thessalonians 3:1–2 likewise requests prayer that the word of the Lord might have free course and that the apostolic workers

might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Those are definite requests concerning definite needs. The apostle did not ask Christians to send spiritual vibrations in his direction or make mysterious declarations over his geographical coordinates. He asked them to pray unto God. Evidently, heaven was capable of receiving a proper request without the assistance of religious theatrics.

Second Corinthians 1:11 provides another remarkable expression: “Ye also helping together by prayer for us.” There it is in plain English, preserved in the King James Bible. Helping together by prayer. The Corinthians were not physically enduring every affliction Paul experienced, but their petitions were a genuine contribution to his ministry. The immediate passage concerns severe trouble, deliverance, dependence upon God, and thanksgiving for answered prayer. Paul did not treat the praying believers as spectators who were useful only when they contributed money. He recognized their intercession as a form of help. That ought to settle the matter for anybody willing to believe the passage. The preacher standing before the congregation needs more than a prepared outline and a strong pair of lungs. He needs the grace of God, fidelity to the Scriptures, spiritual courage, and wisdom. The saints cannot manufacture those things through prayer, but they can ask the Lord to supply what His servant needs. The man may deliver the sermon, but the congregation has a responsibility that begins long before he opens his mouth.

3. God Commanded Intercession Before Anybody Invented a Prayer Ministry

First Timothy 2:1 begins with an instruction that ought to settle the importance of intercession: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” Paul is addressing Timothy concerning conduct connected with the church of the living God, as the larger context establishes in 1 Timothy 3:15. This is Church Age instruction, not an Old Testament ceremony that must be reconstructed or a future kingdom ordinance that has no present application. Notice also the words “first of all.” Prayer is not presented as an emergency substitute when human ingenuity has exhausted every available option. It belongs among the first responsibilities of God's people. Supplications concern earnest requests, intercessions involve petitions on behalf of others, and thanksgiving acknowledges God's goodness and provision. The Christian is instructed to bring real concerns before the Lord rather than imagining that religious excitement can replace dependence upon Him. A church may possess a magnificent schedule and still neglect its most basic responsibilities.

Paul continues in verse 2, “For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” That command was not written merely for believers fortunate enough to live under pleasant governments. Christians are commanded to pray for rulers without being required to approve their wickedness, defend

their policies, or confuse earthly political authority with the authority of Jesus Christ. The purpose includes the conditions under which believers may live godly lives and carry out their responsibilities. The modern religious world occasionally behaves as though prayer for government means selecting a political personality and treating him as the last surviving hope of Christianity. That is nonsense. The church has a risen Saviour, not a political messiah awaiting election. We can pray for rulers, oppose unrighteousness, obey God rather than men when necessary, and remain faithful to our heavenly calling without turning the pulpit into campaign headquarters. Biblical prayer is not partisan applause dressed in religious clothing.

Verses 3 and 4 identify the spiritual concern behind the instruction: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Then verse 5 settles the question of mediation: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” There is no need for departed saints, priestly intermediaries, invented heavenly administrators, or a religious expert claiming special access to God. The believer comes through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:16 invites us to come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. This is not arrogance before God; it is confidence in the access provided through Christ. And when Christians pray for lost men, they are not attempting to force salvation upon unwilling sinners through mystical influence. They are asking God to work through the truth of the gospel, which must be believed.

4. Aaron and Hur Held Up the Hands While Joshua Fought the Battle

Exodus 17:8–13 gives us one of the clearest Old Testament illustrations of the importance of supporting God's appointed servant. Israel had been delivered from Egypt and was travelling through the wilderness when Amalek came to fight at Rephidim. Moses instructed Joshua to choose men and engage the enemy while he stood upon the hill with the rod of God in his hand. The passage records that when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Moses was not operating a modern church service, and Joshua was not conducting a gospel campaign. This was an actual military conflict involving the nation of Israel during its wilderness journey. That historical setting must remain intact. The Lord was dealing with the nation He had brought out of Egypt, not establishing a formula whereby Church Age believers can guarantee victory over imaginary enemies by lifting their arms at religious meetings. Scripture deserves better treatment than that.

Now observe verse 12: “But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side.” The narrative is remarkably practical. Moses grew

weary. Aaron and Hur did not accuse him of lacking faith, announce that his exhaustion was evidence of a generational curse, or demand that he demonstrate greater spiritual intensity. They provided a place for him to sit and supported his arms. There was no complicated ceremony. They saw a need and helped meet it. The passage does not explicitly say Moses was offering a verbal prayer throughout the battle, so we should not pretend it does. The rod, the raised hands, the assistance, and the military outcome belong to the recorded event. Nevertheless, the principle of supporting an appointed servant is a legitimate illustration. The man on the hill had an assignment, the men beside him supplied necessary assistance, and Joshua continued the battle below.

The application to Christian ministry must therefore be practical rather than doctrinally confused. A preacher today is not Moses, his congregation is not the nation of Israel under the wilderness economy, and his opponents are not Amalekites awaiting military destruction. Nobody should turn Exodus 17 into a promise that a pastor will defeat every adversary if enough people pray over his hands. But the passage certainly illustrates that a servant performing an important duty may require help from others. Those who supported Moses were not competing for the position he occupied. Neither were they useless because Joshua was doing the fighting. They participated according to the need before them. When a congregation prays for a preacher, encourages him to remain faithful, and supplies legitimate assistance, it demonstrates that same practical willingness to help. The lesson is not that a preacher is some untouchable Moses whose every decision must be obeyed. The lesson is that even an important servant can need ordinary, faithful assistance.

5. Real Prayer Has Nothing to Do With Religious Theatre and Mystical Nonsense

One of the great abuses of prayer occurs when men transform it from humble petition into public performance. In Matthew 6:5, the Lord Jesus warned about hypocrites who loved praying publicly “that they may be seen of men.” He then instructed His hearers about private prayer and warned against using vain repetitions as the heathen did. These words were spoken during Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, before the finished work of Calvary and the full revelation of the mystery of the body of Christ through Paul. We do not need to confuse those dispensational settings to recognize the moral rebuke against religious pretence. The Lord was exposing people whose apparent devotion was designed to attract human admiration. A prayer that is primarily performed for spectators has already lost sight of its proper audience. God is not impressed because a man can stretch a five-minute request into a forty-minute exhibition of religious vocabulary.

There is nothing wrong with praying publicly when Scripture calls for it, and there is nothing wrong with repeating an earnest request. Paul besought the Lord three times concerning

his thorn in the flesh, and the Lord Jesus prayed repeatedly in Gethsemane. The problem is vain repetition, hypocrisy, and the assumption that multiplied words possess independent spiritual power. Some modern religious performers behave as though heaven contains a locked door that can only be opened by shouting the correct phrases at sufficient volume. Others claim to bind territorial spirits, command unseen principalities, cancel hereditary curses, issue decrees over cities, or pronounce guaranteed victories over situations about which God has made no such promise. You can search Paul's instructions on prayer without finding a command for believers to become freelance commanders of the invisible world. The throne of grace is not a supernatural control panel, and the name of Jesus Christ is not a magic password for obtaining whatever the flesh desires.

Ephesians 6:10–18 provides the proper biblical framework for spiritual warfare. The Christian is instructed to be strong in the Lord, put on the whole armour of God, stand against the wiles of the devil, and continue in prayer. The armour includes truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. Paul concludes by directing believers to pray "with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." That is not a commission to invent elaborate ceremonies for diagnosing invisible enemies behind every ordinary difficulty. Second Corinthians 10:4–5 concerns spiritual weapons and the casting down of imaginations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. The emphasis remains upon divine truth and obedience, not theatrical demonstrations of supposed supernatural rank. A Christian carrying the sword of the Spirit has no business trading it for a collection of mystical catchphrases. Biblical prayer is powerful because believers approach the living God through Christ, not because they have mastered religious dramatics.

6. The Saints Who Cannot Leave Their Homes Can Still Approach the Throne

One of the cruelest mistakes a congregation can make is to assume that believers become spiritually useless when age, illness, disability, or difficult circumstances prevent them from participating in visible activities. A Christian may no longer possess the strength to stand for long periods, travel across town, teach a class, or perform physical labour, but access to the throne of grace does not depend upon a healthy pair of legs. Romans 12:12 commands believers to continue "instant in prayer," and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 declares, "Pray without ceasing." Those instructions do not become meaningless when a Christian enters a nursing home or becomes confined to his house. The elderly saint who remembers the missionaries by name, prays for children growing up in the congregation, and asks God to preserve the preaching of sound doctrine is participating in a genuine Christian responsibility. Physical weakness does not cancel spiritual access, and retirement from employment is not retirement from faithfulness.

Paul understood circumstances that restricted his physical freedom. Writing from imprisonment, he declared in Philippians 1:19, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The surrounding passage concerns his circumstances, his expectation, and the magnifying of Christ, not the purchase of eternal salvation through somebody else's prayers. He recognized that the prayers of the Philippians accompanied God's provision during his imprisonment. The man whose preaching had carried the gospel into numerous places was now receiving help from believers who could not personally remove his chains. That ought to encourage the Christian who believes his circumstances have made him insignificant. A sickbed does not become a pulpit merely because somebody uses religious language to describe it, but neither does sickness prevent a believer from praying faithfully. Christian usefulness is not confined to activities that require standing before an audience.

This truth must never become an excuse for congregations to neglect suffering believers. It would be a fine piece of religious hypocrisy to tell a bedridden widow that she possesses a wonderful prayer ministry while nobody bothers to visit her, bring necessities, or inquire about her condition. James 1:27 speaks of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and Galatians 6:2 commands, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Those responsibilities belong alongside prayer, not in competition with it. Nor should suffering Christians be made to feel guilty when weakness, medication, pain, or exhaustion interrupts their concentration. The Lord knows their frame, and prayer is not an athletic contest. The church should honour the intercession of its afflicted members while showing them genuine practical care. A congregation that applauds prayer warriors but abandons them when they become inconvenient has learned religious vocabulary without learning Christian charity.

7. The Greatest Prayer Warriors Submit Their Requests to the Will of God

A serious examination of intercession must address the difference between asking God and attempting to command Him. Second Corinthians 12:7–10 records Paul's experience with a thorn in the flesh. He besought the Lord three times that it might depart from him. The answer was not the removal he requested, but the Lord's declaration, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul consequently learned to glory in infirmities so that the power of Christ might rest upon him. The passage destroys the notion that persistent prayer guarantees the immediate removal of every affliction. If the apostle Paul could make a sincere request and receive a different answer, a modern religious performer has no business promising that every Christian will obtain the outcome he demands. Faith trusts the Lord's wisdom. Presumption writes its own answer and expects heaven to sign underneath it.

Romans 8:26 supplies further encouragement: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” That statement ought to cure the conceit of anybody who claims complete knowledge of God's hidden purposes. The same chapter declares that the Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God, while verse 34 identifies the risen Christ as making intercession for us. The believer is not abandoned to his own intelligence or verbal ability. He approaches the Father through Christ, dependent upon divine help. Philippians 4:6 instructs Christians to make their requests known unto God with thanksgiving. Notice that prayer is an expression of dependence, not a declaration that the person praying has become sovereign over circumstances. We are instructed to ask, trust, obey, and continue faithfully. We are not instructed to issue orders to the Almighty as though the Creator of heaven and earth were a servant waiting for our latest instructions.

Finally, the ministry of intercession must be understood in light of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 teaches that believers will appear before Christ to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or bad. First Corinthians 4:5 reminds us that the Lord will bring hidden things to light and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. Scripture does not provide a detailed accounting of how every individual prayer will be rewarded, and we should not manufacture one. But faithful prayer belongs to Christian obedience, and nothing sincerely done unto Christ escapes His knowledge. The public preacher will answer for his preaching, his doctrine, his motives, and his conduct. The praying believer will likewise answer for his own stewardship. Neither position guarantees reward merely because it appears impressive. The Lord evaluates the service. A magnificent sermon delivered for human applause may fare poorly under divine examination, while faithful intercession offered without recognition may prove far more valuable than men ever imagined.

Conclusion — The Knees Behind the Pulpit and the God Who Hears Them

The Scriptures have established the ministry of intercession without requiring a single theatrical invention. Epaphras laboured fervently for believers to stand complete in God's will. Paul repeatedly requested prayer for boldness, deliverance, and the progress of the gospel. Timothy received instructions concerning supplications, intercessions, thanksgiving, and prayer for rulers. Aaron and Hur illustrated practical assistance during Israel's conflict with Amalek, while the New Testament directly established prayer as a continuing responsibility of Christian believers. Every passage contributes something important, and none requires us to confuse Israel with the Church or substitute mystical practices for biblical obedience. The man preaching the word of God certainly has a necessary responsibility, but he is not the entire ministry. A congregation needs people who

will pray intelligently, consistently, and faithfully. It needs saints more concerned about the purity of the gospel than the popularity of its messengers, and more concerned about obedience to Christ than the production of impressive religious statistics.

There is also a warning for the preacher who begins believing his own publicity. The ability to stand before a crowd does not make a man independent of God's grace, and the possession of biblical knowledge does not eliminate his need for prayer. The apostle Paul asked other believers to pray for him, and he was not ashamed to make the request. A preacher who imagines himself too important to need the prayers of ordinary Christians has climbed considerably higher in his own estimation than the apostle ever climbed in the Scriptures. At the same time, those praying must remember that their responsibility does not make them spiritual supervisors possessing secret authority over the preacher. They should pray for his faithfulness, examine his doctrine according to Scripture, encourage what is right, and refuse to excuse what is wrong. The objective is not to protect a personality. It is to honour the Lord Jesus Christ and support the faithful proclamation of His word. Nobody needs another religious celebrity surrounded by admirers. The church needs faithful servants helping one another obey God.

And somewhere tonight, while the religious world measures success in crowds, contributions, buildings, and publicity, there may be a Christian sitting quietly with an open Bible, praying for a preacher who does not even know his name. There may be a widow asking God to strengthen missionaries she will never meet, a disabled believer interceding for young Christians struggling against temptation, or an elderly saint pleading for lost family members to believe the gospel before it is too late. No trumpet announces their petitions. No camera records their faithfulness. No crowd rises to applaud when they finish praying. But their requests are directed toward the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and their obedience is neither meaningless nor forgotten. The preacher may be heard by hundreds, but the praying saint is heard by the One who matters most. The final measure of their service belongs to Christ, not to the congregation's applause. The preacher may stand where everybody can see him, but the faithful prayer warrior bows before the One who sees everybody. And when the Lord examines the work, the loudest voice in the building will not necessarily have been the most faithful servant in the church.

3 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Open Door, the Extra Chair, and the Gospel in the Living Room

Key Scripture — Romans 12:13 (KJV)

“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

There is something remarkably revealing about a church that can spend a quarter of a million dollars decorating its sanctuary, install enough lighting to illuminate a football stadium, purchase furniture that looks like it belongs in a royal palace, and still fail to make a lonely visitor feel welcome. The carpet is immaculate, the microphones are working, the temperature is perfect, and the fellow at the front door has been trained to distribute bulletins with the precision of a government employee. Unfortunately, nobody seems particularly interested in the stranger standing beside him. The modern religious establishment has become exceptionally skilled at maintaining buildings while occasionally forgetting the people those buildings were supposed to serve. Yet when the apostle Paul instructed Christians concerning their responsibilities toward one another, he included a command that requires no cathedral, no professional staff, no expensive equipment, and no religious corporation. Romans 12:13 simply says, “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.” There is enough practical Christianity in those eleven words to keep a considerable number of church members occupied for the rest of their lives.

Hospitality has been almost completely misunderstood in a generation that confuses Christian service with social entertainment. Invite somebody into a beautiful home, prepare an elaborate dinner, display expensive decorations, arrange the furniture like a magazine photograph, and apparently you have accomplished something spiritually impressive. But the Bible does not command believers to operate private restaurants, compete for the finest dining room, or impress visitors with possessions they cannot afford. Biblical hospitality involves receiving others with genuine kindness, meeting legitimate needs, extending Christian fellowship, and making available what God has entrusted to us for the benefit of His people. Sometimes that involves a meal. Sometimes it involves lodging, transportation, encouragement, instruction, or simply providing a place where somebody can sit down without feeling like an unwelcome interruption. The difference between hospitality and entertainment is often found in the purpose. Entertainment wants the guest to admire the host. Christian hospitality wants the guest to receive something worthwhile from the Lord through the host's willingness to serve.

The New Testament provides several remarkable examples of believers who understood this responsibility, particularly Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife whose usefulness extended far beyond the ordinary boundaries of public religious activity. Their home became associated with Christian fellowship, their occupation connected them with the apostle Paul, and their knowledge of the Scriptures allowed them to assist a gifted preacher who needed further instruction. They did not require a magnificent church

building to accomplish those things. Neither did they need to establish themselves as religious celebrities. Their service demonstrates that ordinary Christians can strengthen gospel work through the faithful use of their homes, possessions, time, and biblical understanding. This is not about replacing the local church with informal gatherings that refuse biblical accountability, nor is it about making hospitality a condition of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, according to Ephesians 2:8–9, and good works follow salvation rather than purchase it. But the Christian who has received God's grace ought to possess enough gratitude to open something besides his mouth when another believer needs assistance.

1. Hospitality Is a Biblical Command, Not a Religious Decorating Contest

Romans 12 begins by establishing the proper foundation for Christian conduct. Paul beseeches believers to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." He then warns against conformity to the world and commands transformation through the renewing of the mind. The chapter proceeds to discuss humility, differing spiritual gifts, sincere charity, brotherly affection, diligence, patience, prayer, and practical service. Hospitality appears in verse 13 as part of that larger pattern of Christian living. It is not an isolated suggestion intended exclusively for wealthy homeowners or people who happen to enjoy entertaining company. The words "given to hospitality" describe a disposition of willing service. The believer is not supposed to regard every legitimate need as an inconvenience and every unfamiliar Christian as a potential disturbance to his comfortable routine. Christianity that never extends beyond personal convenience has understood very little about presenting the body as a living sacrifice.

Notice also the first part of Romans 12:13: "Distributing to the necessity of saints." The word "necessity" establishes a practical concern. Paul is not encouraging believers to finance extravagant lifestyles, subsidize religious laziness, or provide an endless supply of luxuries to people who refuse ordinary responsibility. He is addressing legitimate needs among God's people. Hospitality belongs naturally alongside that instruction because receiving another person often requires sharing something we possess. It may be food, shelter, time, transportation, or personal attention. Romans 12:10 had already commanded believers to be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." That is the spirit governing the arrangement. A fellow who can explain seven dispensations, identify every major prophetic kingdom, and argue for three hours about obscure biblical questions ought to be capable of finding an extra chair for a visiting brother. If his theology never reaches his dining room, somebody needs to explain what practical obedience means.

The following verses further expose the attitude required. Romans 12:15 commands believers to “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Verse 16 warns against being “wise in your own conceits.” Genuine hospitality requires enough humility to recognize that the visitor is not necessarily there to admire the host's accomplishments. Somebody may enter a home carrying grief, financial difficulty, loneliness, discouragement, or questions concerning the Scriptures. The Christian who spends the entire visit describing his possessions, achievements, and religious importance has successfully turned hospitality into another opportunity for self-advertisement. A home can be furnished beautifully and still feel spiritually cold, while a modest household may provide genuine Christian encouragement. The difference is not determined by square footage. The Lord never instructed His people to demonstrate charity by purchasing furniture impressive enough to intimidate their guests. He commanded sincere love, practical assistance, and the willingness to prefer another person above personal pride.

2. Aquila and Priscilla Proved That an Ordinary Home Can Serve an Extraordinary Purpose

Acts 18 introduces Aquila and Priscilla during Paul's ministry at Corinth. Verse 2 identifies Aquila as a Jew born in Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded the Jews to depart from Rome. Paul came to them, and verse 3 explains, “And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.” There is nothing glamorous about this introduction. We are dealing with people who possessed an ordinary trade, earned their living through practical labour, and shared circumstances with a travelling gospel preacher. Yet their association with Paul became part of an important chapter in the spread of the gospel. Notice that the Bible does not present honest employment as spiritually inferior to religious activity. Paul worked with his hands, and these believers used their occupation and circumstances in connection with his ministry. Sometimes the Lord's work advances through a faithful Christian who knows how to perform an ordinary day's labour without demanding a religious title for doing it.

Later, in Romans 16:3–5, Paul writes, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus,” and then explains that they had laid down their own necks for his life. He adds, “Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” First Corinthians 16:19 also mentions Aquila and Priscilla together with the church in their house. These references demonstrate that their household was associated with the gathering of believers. Their residence was not merely private property maintained exclusively for personal comfort. It became useful to the people of God. We should not imagine that every home gathering described in the New Testament automatically establishes a complete pattern for modern church

government or abolishes the need for biblical leadership and order. But neither should we overlook the obvious fact that believers assembled in homes before the development of elaborate religious facilities. The building did not create the church. Saved people belonged to Christ before somebody purchased a steeple.

Their usefulness extended beyond offering a meeting place. Acts 18:24–26 describes Apollos as an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, who spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord while knowing only the baptism of John. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Notice the wisdom of their conduct. They did not establish a public spectacle to humiliate him, nor did they confuse eloquence with complete understanding. They recognized a genuine need and supplied further instruction. The historical setting belongs to the transitional events recorded in Acts, where knowledge concerning John's ministry and the fuller revelation of Christ required careful distinction. The passage does not authorize a woman to disregard the qualifications governing pastoral oversight in 1 Timothy 2–3. It does, however, demonstrate that a Christian husband and wife can possess substantial scriptural knowledge and be useful in helping another believer understand biblical truth. A home containing an open Bible can accomplish considerably more than a building filled with religious decorations and doctrinal ignorance.

3. The Early Churches Needed Open Doors as Well as Open Bibles

The travelling servants of the early churches did not possess modern hotels, commercial airlines, electronic communications, or the financial arrangements commonly associated with organized religious institutions. Their journeys involved actual roads, difficult circumstances, practical expenses, and dependence upon the assistance of fellow believers. Third John provides an especially clear picture of that responsibility. John commends Gaius in verse 5: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers." The following verses explain that these men had gone forth for the Lord's name and that believers ought to receive such servants. Verse 8 declares, "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth." There is the biblical principle. A person who receives and properly assists a faithful gospel worker participates in supporting the truth that worker carries. The host does not become the preacher merely by providing hospitality, but his service contributes to the preacher's legitimate work.

Paul's correspondence provides further examples. In Philemon 22, he writes, "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Notice how naturally lodging and prayer appear together. Paul expected practical hospitality while acknowledging dependence upon God. In 1 Corinthians 16:6, he

expresses the possibility of remaining with the Corinthians during the winter so that they might bring him on his journey. Such arrangements were not evidence of spiritual weakness or improper dependence. They were ordinary expressions of cooperation among believers. Of course, the New Testament also commends honest labour and warns against idleness, so receiving assistance must never become an excuse for a minister to exploit the generosity of others. A preacher who spends his life demanding expensive accommodations while advertising his own humility has managed to make a rather impressive contradiction out of his profession. Biblical hospitality supports faithful service; it does not subsidize religious vanity.

Acts 16 offers another example when Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend unto the things spoken by Paul, was baptized along with her household. Verse 15 records her invitation: “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.” Later, after Paul and Silas were released from prison, verse 40 records that they entered Lydia's house, saw the brethren, comforted them, and departed. Her household became connected with practical assistance and fellowship during the establishment of gospel work at Philippi. The Acts narrative records events from a period in which the apostolic ministry was unfolding, and individual historical events must not be turned into universal commands without examining their context. Nevertheless, Lydia's willingness to receive the servants of God supplies an unmistakable example of practical hospitality. She did not need to establish a ministry headquarters, purchase a religious franchise, or print an impressive title on the front of her house. She opened her door and made herself useful.

4. Entertaining Strangers Requires Charity, Discernment, and a Willing Heart

Hebrews 13:1–2 declares, “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” This passage has probably produced more imaginative storytelling than many readers realize. Some people seem determined to discover disguised angels at every gas station, restaurant, and highway intersection. Before long, every mysterious hitchhiker becomes a heavenly messenger, and every unexpected visitor carries enough supernatural significance to supply three religious television programs. But the Scripture does not command believers to hunt for angels or promise that every stranger entering a home is a disguised celestial being. The epistle is addressed to Hebrews, and its doctrinal context must be respected. Nevertheless, the exhortation concerning brotherly love and hospitality supplies a legitimate practical lesson. God's people ought not become so absorbed in personal comfort that they refuse every opportunity to extend appropriate kindness to others.

Genesis 18 provides an important historical example of hospitality when Abraham received three visitors near the plains of Mamre. The passage identifies the LORD's appearance to

Abraham and records the patriarch providing water, rest, and food. Abraham did not begin by demanding a public ceremony in recognition of his generosity. He received the visitors and provided for them. Genesis 19 likewise records Lot receiving angelic visitors, although that account also exposes the extraordinary wickedness of Sodom and the dangerous circumstances surrounding his household. These narratives belong to the historical dealings of God with the patriarchs, not to the present Church Age as promises that believers can reproduce identical supernatural encounters. The point is that Scripture has long recognized the significance of receiving others with appropriate care. Hospitality should not become an excuse for wild speculation, and the possibility of an unusual encounter does not eliminate the necessity of sound judgment. Biblical kindness is not the same thing as reckless gullibility.

First Peter 4:9 gives a particularly direct instruction: “Use hospitality one to another without grudging.” Peter addresses believers scattered through various regions, as identified in the opening of the epistle, and the passage occurs in an exhortation emphasizing charity, sobriety, prayer, and faithful stewardship. The expression “without grudging” exposes the heart of the matter. A person may provide a meal while silently resenting every minute of preparation. Another may welcome guests and spend the following week complaining about how much trouble they caused. Such conduct turns an outward act of kindness into an inward exercise in bitterness. The command does not require Christians to ignore legitimate responsibilities, exhaust their finances, or allow themselves to be abused. It requires hospitality to arise from willing charity rather than compulsory resentment. There is little spiritual value in opening the front door while allowing the bitterness of the heart to greet everybody standing on the porch. A willing spirit is worth more than an expensive dinner served with a miserable disposition.

5. The Forgotten Guest May Be the Person Who Needs Christian Fellowship Most

A church can become a remarkably lonely place for somebody who does not belong to its established social circles. Families gather with families, longtime members converse with familiar friends, and newcomers occasionally discover that they have entered a room containing plenty of people but very little interest in anybody unfamiliar. James 2:1–4 confronts the sin of showing respect of persons by describing the different treatment given to a man wearing fine clothing and another wearing poor clothing. Although James addresses the twelve tribes scattered abroad and must be handled according to its proper doctrinal setting, the condemnation of partiality supplies a clear moral lesson. A person should not receive greater consideration merely because he possesses wealth, fashionable clothing, or social influence. It is a shameful thing when a congregation rushes to welcome the wealthy businessman while overlooking the elderly visitor who arrived

wearing the only decent coat he owns. God did not commission church members to operate a spiritual country club.

The responsibility becomes particularly important when considering widows, grieving families, struggling households, and believers who experience genuine isolation. First Timothy 5 contains careful instructions concerning the honour and practical care owed to widows, while distinguishing legitimate needs from situations in which relatives possess responsibilities they ought to fulfil. Verse 3 commands, “Honour widows that are widows indeed,” and verse 4 establishes the responsibility of family members. This is not a command for indiscriminate financial distribution without examination. It is a sober framework for Christian care. Hospitality can become part of that care when believers invite a lonely widow for a meal, visit a family experiencing difficulty, or make room for somebody who has been overlooked. Such service is not complicated, but it often requires something more costly than money. It requires attention. A Christian may spend fifty dollars without interrupting his comfortable routine, while giving an afternoon to somebody who needs companionship may demand genuine personal sacrifice.

Galatians 6:10 declares, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” The word “opportunity” is important because it establishes the relationship between responsibility and actual circumstances. No individual Christian can personally receive every needy person, solve every household problem, or provide unlimited assistance to everybody who requests it. But believers are instructed to recognize legitimate opportunities and act accordingly. Sometimes that means inviting a new family to dinner. Sometimes it means bringing food to somebody recovering from surgery. Sometimes it means making room at a table for a Christian whose relatives live hundreds of miles away. The ministry of hospitality is not always dramatic, and the person receiving assistance may never understand the sacrifice involved. But charity does not become meaningless because the service is ordinary. A small act performed faithfully may provide encouragement far beyond the apparent size of the gift.

6. A Beautiful House Cannot Compensate for an Empty Spiritual Life

Luke 10:38–42 records the visit of the Lord Jesus Christ to the household of Martha and Mary. Martha received Him into her house, but as the account proceeds, she becomes distracted by the responsibilities of serving while Mary sits at Jesus' feet and hears His word. Martha complains that her sister has left her to serve alone and asks the Lord to intervene. His answer is searching: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful.” He then commends Mary's choice. The passage belongs to Christ's earthly ministry before Calvary, and the historical setting must not be

confused with the later revelation concerning the body of Christ. Nevertheless, the contrast is unmistakable. Service can become so consuming that the servant neglects the very truth that should govern the activity. Martha was not condemned because preparing food was inherently wrong. She was corrected because her anxious occupation had displaced proper attention to the Lord.

There is a modern version of Martha's problem that deserves examination. Some Christian households become so obsessed with preparing the perfect gathering that the entire family is exhausted, irritated, and arguing before the first guest arrives. The table must look magnificent, the decorations must impress, the food must rival an expensive restaurant, and the visitors must be sufficiently complimentary to justify the trouble. By the time everybody sits down, genuine fellowship has become a secondary concern. Apparently, the Lord is supposed to be glorified by the condition of the silverware while the household conducts a domestic civil war in the kitchen. That is not hospitality governed by Christian charity. It is pride wearing an apron. A simple meal served with kindness, peaceful conversation, and honest fellowship may accomplish considerably more than an elaborate production designed primarily to impress the visitors. There is no biblical commandment requiring the host to go into debt, exhaust the family, or transform every invitation into a demonstration of social superiority.

First Corinthians 10:31 declares, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” That verse reaches the dinner table just as surely as it reaches the pulpit. Hospitality should honour the Lord through sincerity, moderation, kindness, and conduct consistent with the Scriptures. The Bible does not teach that a Christian gathering becomes spiritual merely because somebody pronounces a blessing before the meal. The conversation, attitudes, treatment of family members, and purpose of the gathering also matter. A host who speaks affectionately to guests while humiliating his wife or children has not demonstrated biblical hospitality. He has simply arranged for witnesses to observe his hypocrisy. Likewise, a household that turns every visit into an argument over obscure controversies may accomplish little toward strengthening the saints. Biblical fellowship can include serious doctrinal discussion, necessary correction, laughter, encouragement, and ordinary conversation. The governing principle is that the participants should be helped toward faithfulness, not merely entertained until the evening ends.

7. An Open Door Must Never Become an Open Invitation to False Doctrine

The command to practise hospitality does not eliminate the Christian's responsibility to exercise discernment. Second John 10–11 warns concerning those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker

of his evil deeds." The passage concerns the reception and endorsement of false teachers, not a prohibition against every ordinary act of kindness toward an unbeliever. The immediate context exposes deceivers who deny the truth concerning Jesus Christ. John does not instruct believers to surrender doctrinal judgment in the name of kindness. A Christian household should not become a platform for promoting another gospel, denying the deity of Christ, attacking His finished sacrifice, or distributing destructive teaching. There is a difference between showing ordinary human compassion and providing religious endorsement. Charity must never be used as an excuse for helping error spread.

Romans 16:17 likewise commands believers to mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine they have learned and to avoid them. Third John exposes Diotrephes, a man who loved preeminence and refused to receive faithful brethren, even hindering others who would have received them. Here we find two opposite dangers. One person opens his household indiscriminately to anybody claiming spiritual authority, while another refuses faithful believers because pride has made him possessive of religious influence. Both attitudes can produce serious trouble. Biblical hospitality requires receiving appropriate people for appropriate reasons without surrendering the authority of Scripture. This does not require conducting a theological interrogation before offering a hungry stranger a sandwich. It does require refusing to confuse ordinary kindness with permission to teach false doctrine. The church should not be so suspicious that nobody can enter its doors, nor so careless that every wolf wearing a religious smile receives the keys to the sheepfold.

Practical wisdom also requires proper boundaries concerning family safety, privacy, finances, and personal responsibility. A Christian is not commanded to expose children to unsafe adults, permit manipulation within the household, surrender confidential information, or provide indefinite support to somebody deliberately refusing honest work. Second Thessalonians 3:10 states, "If any would not work, neither should he eat," addressing wilful idleness rather than condemning the genuinely sick, disabled, elderly, or unemployed person seeking work. First Timothy 5:13 warns about idlers wandering from house to house and becoming tattlers and busybodies. Those passages remind us that charity must operate with judgment. Hospitality is not gullibility, and kindness does not require abandoning common sense. A family has legitimate obligations before God, including protecting those entrusted to its care. A wise Christian can open his home generously while exercising discernment about whom he receives, what assistance he provides, and what conduct he permits. An open door is a ministry opportunity, not permission for strangers to overthrow the household.

Conclusion — The Door That Opened for Others and the Lord Who Saw It

The ministry of hospitality has a firm foundation in the Scriptures and deserves to be restored to its proper place among the responsibilities of Christian service. Romans 12:13 commands believers to be given to hospitality. Aquila and Priscilla demonstrated how an ordinary household could assist gospel work, provide a gathering place, and become an environment for biblical instruction. Gaius received faithful brethren, Lydia offered lodging, and Paul recognized the practical importance of receiving help during his journeys. Hebrews 13 reminds readers not to forget hospitality, while 1 Peter 4:9 warns against performing it grudgingly. These passages do not establish a competition over expensive houses or elaborate entertaining. They establish the importance of willing service directed toward genuine needs. The believer who possesses little may nevertheless extend sincere hospitality, while the wealthy Christian who possesses much can remain spiritually stingy. God does not measure hospitality by the market value of the property. He measures the service according to truth, faithfulness, and the condition of the heart.

There is a particular challenge here for churches that have invested enormous resources in facilities while neglecting personal fellowship. A beautiful building is not necessarily sinful, and responsible maintenance of a meeting place is certainly legitimate. But expensive facilities cannot substitute for Christian charity. A congregation can possess excellent preaching, sound doctrine, and a well-maintained property while still failing to demonstrate ordinary kindness toward visitors, widows, struggling families, and fellow believers. That failure should be corrected rather than excused. At the same time, hospitality must remain subordinate to biblical truth. The church is not commissioned to become a social organization that feeds people while withholding the gospel, nor should every gathering become an opportunity for manipulating guests into religious decisions. The objective is to serve others faithfully under the authority of Jesus Christ. Sometimes that will involve opening the Scriptures and explaining salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection. At other times it will involve a meal, a quiet conversation, or practical assistance that demonstrates sincere Christian care.

And when the Judgment Seat of Christ reveals the character of Christian service, it is entirely possible that many ordinary acts of hospitality will prove more valuable than their recipients ever imagined. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the believer's accountability before Christ, and 1 Corinthians 4:5 reminds us that the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. We are not given permission to invent a heavenly reward system for every dinner served or every visitor received, but we are assured that faithful labour for the Lord is not in vain. Some Christians may never stand before a congregation, publish a book, preach a sermon, or possess anything resembling public recognition. Yet their homes may become places where discouraged believers find encouragement, travelling gospel workers receive assistance, lonely saints experience

fellowship, and the Scriptures are opened before people hungry for truth. Aquila and Priscilla did not need a religious empire to become useful to God, and neither do we. A church can spend a fortune building an impressive entrance and still fail to open its heart. But a faithful Christian with an ordinary house, an extra chair, and a willingness to serve may accomplish something that all the religious marble and stained glass in the world cannot purchase. The world admires the size of the house. The Lord knows what happened when somebody opened the door.

4 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Quiet Givers Who Keep the Gospel Moving

Key Scripture — Philippians 4:17 (KJV)

“Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”

There is something mighty suspicious about a religious establishment that can preach for three minutes about Calvary and forty-five minutes about the offering plate. The preacher has a gold watch, the ministry owns three buildings, the television cameras are rolling, and the congregation is being informed that God cannot possibly bless them until they surrender another hundred dollars. Apparently, the Almighty has developed a financial emergency, and the only people qualified to solve it are the poor folks sitting in the pews. Meanwhile, somewhere in a little congregation, a retired factory worker quietly puts money aside to help purchase Bibles. A widow sends a modest offering to support a missionary. A family sacrifices an unnecessary expense so a struggling believer can buy groceries. Nobody announces their generosity, nobody photographs the transaction, and nobody promises them a new automobile for their trouble. Yet the King James Bible has considerably more to say about that kind of giving than the modern religious money merchants would like to acknowledge.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, he identified something that the modern prosperity racket has almost completely buried beneath its mountains of financial promises and religious advertising. In Philippians 4:17, he declared, “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” Notice what the apostle desired. He was not congratulating himself for extracting another offering from people who could scarcely afford their necessities. He was interested in spiritual fruit connected with their willing participation in gospel work. These believers had supported him during his missionary labours, and Paul regarded their generosity as meaningful service before God. They were not all apostles, evangelists, travelling preachers, or public teachers. Many were ordinary Christians whose names never appear in the biblical record. Nevertheless, their

giving contributed to the progress of the ministry. The man carrying the gospel preached the message, but the believers supporting his necessities were not therefore absent from the work. The Holy Ghost recorded their fellowship because it mattered.

The biblical ministry of giving must be established upon a foundation that cannot be purchased, manipulated, or improved by financial contributions: the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not for sale. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” A sinner cannot purchase forgiveness with a church donation, preserve eternal security through regular contributions, or increase the value of Christ's blood by financing a religious institution. Once saved, however, the believer has genuine responsibilities concerning stewardship, generosity, and the material needs of others. The distinction must remain clear. Giving is the privilege and responsibility of the redeemed, not the price of redemption. The church that confuses those truths has not discovered a more effective fundraising method. It has begun tampering with the gospel itself. God is not running a salvation auction, and the highest bidder does not get a better seat in heaven.

1. The Philippians Supported a Preacher Without Purchasing His Ministry

Philippians 4:10–19 supplies one of the clearest New Testament examples of financial fellowship between a congregation and a gospel preacher. Paul begins by rejoicing that the Philippians' care for him had flourished again, while acknowledging that previously they had lacked opportunity to express it. He then explains that he had learned contentment in different circumstances, whether experiencing abundance or suffering need. That context is essential. The apostle was not writing a fundraising appeal designed to make the congregation feel responsible for his personal luxury. He was expressing gratitude while demonstrating that his satisfaction rested upon Christ rather than financial circumstances. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,” belongs to that discussion. It is not a promise that every Christian can become a millionaire, win an athletic championship, or purchase whatever he desires through sufficient positive thinking. Paul was speaking about Christ strengthening him to endure the circumstances of faithful service.

Verses 15 and 16 identify the Philippians' generosity more precisely. Paul reminds them that when he departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with him concerning giving and receiving except them, and that even in Thessalonica they sent assistance more than once toward his necessities. Notice the word “necessity.” Their contributions concerned the practical support of a servant engaged in gospel work. They were not purchasing influence over his doctrine, buying special treatment from heaven, or financing

an extravagant lifestyle. Their giving represented fellowship in the ministry, and Paul acknowledged their faithfulness. Here is a lesson for every ordinary Christian who believes usefulness is limited to public preaching. The preacher may travel to another city, but somebody must help provide for necessary expenses. The missionary may place a Bible into a sinner's hands, but somebody may have contributed toward obtaining that Bible. The message belongs to Christ, and the willing giver may legitimately participate in supporting its proclamation.

Then comes the extraordinary statement in Philippians 4:17: “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” Paul was interested in something more enduring than a financial transaction. Verse 18 describes their contribution as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” Those words describe voluntary Christian service pleasing to the Lord, not an additional sacrifice for sin or a replacement for Calvary. Verse 19 follows: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The context concerns believers who had willingly supported gospel work, not a universal guarantee that everybody sending money to a preacher will become wealthy. God promises His care according to His wisdom; He has not appointed Himself the financial investment manager of religious speculators. Paul thanked the Philippians, recognized their spiritual fruit, and directed glory to God. That is the biblical arrangement. A preacher who changes it into a sales contract for guaranteed riches has missed the passage by a considerable distance.

2. The Macedonian Churches Gave From Grace, Not Religious Coercion

Second Corinthians 8 introduces another remarkable example of Christian generosity, and the circumstances make the passage particularly powerful. Paul tells the Corinthians about the grace God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia, explaining that “in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:2). Notice what these believers possessed. They had affliction, joy, poverty, and liberality. They were not wealthy religious investors looking for an opportunity to multiply their fortunes. Their giving arose from a genuine willingness to assist others despite difficult circumstances. Verse 3 records that they gave according to their ability and even beyond it voluntarily. The apostle was describing remarkable generosity, not issuing a command that every struggling Christian must disregard his necessities and empty his pockets. Their actions were voluntary, and that distinction matters. Grace produced the giving; intimidation did not.

Verse 4 says the Macedonians were “Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” That turns the modern religious fundraising arrangement upside down. The believers were earnestly

requesting an opportunity to participate in assisting other Christians. Paul was not chasing them around with threatening letters, promising supernatural financial multiplication, or announcing that their salvation depended upon another contribution. Their concern was directed toward the necessities of the saints. Verse 5 explains the deeper foundation: “but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” There is the order that modern Christianity desperately needs to recover. The Macedonians first belonged to the Lord in surrendered service. Their generosity proceeded from that relationship. Money was not the substitute for personal obedience. It was one expression of it. God wants the Christian himself, not merely a payment designed to excuse disobedience elsewhere.

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 8:9 by reminding believers of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though rich, became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be rich. The verse concerns the grace displayed through Christ's humiliation and redemptive work, not a divine scheme for turning Christians into prosperous property owners. The spiritual riches secured through Christ cannot be reduced to cash, possessions, or financial privilege. Then verse 12 establishes an essential principle: “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” Read that again before believing another preacher who demands money a congregation does not possess. God recognizes willingness according to actual ability. Verse 13 even clarifies that Paul's objective was not to ease others while burdening the Corinthians. Biblical giving considers circumstances and responsibilities. It does not require the poor to finance the extravagance of the wealthy. The Lord never instructed His people to prove their generosity by financing somebody else's greed.

3. The Gospel Moves Through the Faithfulness of Those Who Support Its Preaching

First Corinthians 9 establishes that gospel ministers may legitimately receive material support for their work. Paul asks whether a soldier goes to warfare at his own expense, whether a man planting a vineyard eats its fruit, and whether a shepherd receives nourishment from the flock. He then applies the principle to spiritual labour, asking in verse 11, “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” Verse 14 concludes, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” That is sufficient authority for supporting a faithful minister without inventing a complicated financial theology. A congregation benefiting from sound preaching ought to recognize the legitimate needs of those labouring in the word. Galatians 6:6 likewise commands, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” Financial support is not inherently corruption. The corruption begins when ministers turn biblical provision into personal entitlement and treat the people of God as an unlimited source of revenue.

Paul himself demonstrated that possessing a legitimate right does not mean exercising it under every circumstance. In 1 Corinthians 9:12, he explains that he had not used that right in Corinth, lest he hinder the gospel of Christ. Acts 18:3 records his tentmaking work, and 2 Thessalonians 3:8 describes his labour so that he would not be chargeable to the Thessalonians. The same apostle who accepted assistance from the Philippians could refuse support when circumstances made refusal appropriate. That balance exposes both extremes. One fellow imagines that accepting legitimate support makes every preacher a hireling, while another imagines that entering the ministry entitles him to luxury, unquestioned financial access, and freedom from ordinary responsibility. Neither position matches Paul. The faithful servant must be more concerned about advancing the gospel than improving his standard of living. If refusing an offering protects the testimony, refuse it. If receiving support allows legitimate gospel work to continue, receive it gratefully. The gospel is the mission. The minister's comfort is not.

The same principle extends beyond the man standing behind the pulpit. Third John 5–8 commends believers who received faithful brethren and helped them forward on their journeys, concluding, “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” That expression deserves a prominent place in the understanding of Christian giving. The believer who contributes toward a faithful missionary's necessities may never travel to the distant community where the gospel is preached, but his support helps make that labour possible. A Christian who pays toward the printing of sound biblical material, assists an evangelistic effort, or provides resources for a struggling congregation can participate in legitimate gospel work without claiming to be the preacher. That participation must never become an excuse for abandoning personal witness, prayer, or obedience. Money cannot perform every Christian responsibility. Nevertheless, the Scriptures plainly recognize material support as genuine assistance. The preacher may carry the message across the ocean, but somebody may have helped put him on the ship. Both should remember who deserves the glory.

4. The Tithe Belonged to Israel Under the Law, Not to a Church Age Fundraising Scheme

Now we come to the passage that has frightened more church members into opening their wallets than practically any other text misused by modern religious fundraising. Malachi 3:8 asks, “Will a man rob God?” and proceeds to speak of tithes and offerings. Verse 9 declares, “Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.” Notice those last words. The Lord was addressing Israel, a nation under the Mosaic covenant, concerning obligations belonging to that covenant. The context involves Israel's priests, the temple system, covenant unfaithfulness, and the storehouse connected with

the nation's worship. Malachi 3:10 speaks of bringing tithes into the storehouse so that there would be meat in God's house. The passage is not an instruction to a saved Gentile in the body of Christ to surrender ten percent of his wages to a modern religious corporation under threat of divine punishment. A preacher who removes Israel's covenant obligations from their setting and imposes them upon the Church has not rightly divided the word of truth.

Somebody immediately protests that Abraham gave tithes before the law. Certainly he did. Genesis 14:20 records Abraham giving tithes of all following the victory involving the kings, and Hebrews 7 discusses that event in connection with Melchisedec and the superiority of Christ's priesthood. But Abraham's historical action does not establish a recurring command requiring every Church Age believer to surrender ten percent of his salary. The passage does not describe a monthly church payroll system, and Hebrews 7 is not a fundraising manual. Others appeal to Matthew 23:23, where Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees concerning tithes while neglecting weightier matters of the law. But the Lord was addressing Jews under the law during His earthly ministry before Calvary. He was not issuing financial instructions to the body of Christ following the revelation of the mystery through Paul. A verse does not change its doctrinal address simply because a preacher needs additional revenue.

The believer today is not under the Mosaic law as the governing covenant for Christian righteousness. Romans 6:14 declares, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Galatians 3:13 explains that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The instructions concerning Christian giving in 2 Corinthians 8–9 emphasize willingness, ability, sincerity, generosity, and freedom from compulsion. Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” That verse does not forbid Christians from planning regular contributions or using a percentage as a personal budgeting practice. It forbids turning giving into coerced religious performance. First Corinthians 16:2 likewise provides an example of planned, proportionate giving for a particular collection. The issue is not whether ten percent is too much or too little. The issue is whether a preacher possesses biblical authority to impose an Old Testament covenant requirement upon the Church. He does not. Grace may produce greater generosity than a legal minimum, but it does not become grace by disguising a legal demand as a voluntary offering.

5. Prosperity Preaching Turns Christian Generosity Into Religious Gambling

Second Corinthians 9:6 declares, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” That statement has provided the prosperity industry with enough material to fill decades of fundraising

broadcasts. The television preacher announces that a thousand-dollar offering will release a tenfold financial return, the congregation is instructed to demonstrate faith by surrendering money it needs for ordinary expenses, and the entire arrangement is presented as though the apostle Paul had established a heavenly investment exchange. But read the surrounding passage. Verse 8 speaks of God providing sufficiency so that believers may abound to every good work. Verse 10 speaks of multiplying the seed sown and increasing "the fruits of your righteousness." Verse 11 connects enrichment with bountifulness that produces thanksgiving to God. The governing subject is generous service, divine provision, righteousness, and thanksgiving. It is not a guaranteed multiplication table for personal wealth.

The distinction matters because biblical sowing and reaping are genuine principles, but they must never be separated from their scriptural context. Galatians 6:7 declares, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The surrounding verses concern sowing to the flesh or the Spirit, perseverance in well-doing, and doing good as opportunity permits. They do not authorize believers to treat offerings as lottery tickets with religious printing on them. God may materially provide for generous Christians, and His providence is certainly capable of supplying needs through unexpected circumstances. But Scripture does not promise that every dollar donated will return as a predetermined amount of money. Paul himself experienced hunger, suffering, imprisonment, and need while remaining faithful to the Lord. If financial abundance were the unavoidable result of spiritual maturity, somebody would have needed to explain to the apostle why his own account repeatedly failed to demonstrate the theory. Apparently, the prosperity formula works best when the preacher collects the money and the congregation supplies the faith.

First Timothy 6 exposes the deeper corruption. Verse 5 describes men "supposing that gain is godliness," and verse 6 answers, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Paul then warns about the desire to be rich and declares in verse 10 that "the love of money is the root of all evil." The passage does not condemn every wealthy Christian or suggest that possessing resources is inherently sinful. It condemns covetousness and the spiritual destruction associated with making riches the object of life. Second Peter 2:3 warns that false teachers will "through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." There is a description of the modern religious money machine that needs no improvement. The congregation becomes merchandise, the offering becomes a transaction, and Scripture becomes advertising copy. The faithful giver should refuse that arrangement altogether. Supporting genuine gospel work is honourable. Financing religious greed while accepting fabricated promises of financial multiplication is not faith. It is deception wearing a Sunday suit.

6. The Widow's Two Mites Exposed the Difference Between Amount and Sacrifice

Mark 12:41–44 records the Lord Jesus Christ observing people casting money into the temple treasury. Many wealthy individuals contributed substantial amounts, but a poor widow came and deposited two mites. Jesus called His disciples and declared, “Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.” The passage belongs to Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, with the temple still standing and the Mosaic economy still operating. It is not an account of a New Testament church offering collected under Pauline instructions. Nevertheless, the Lord's evaluation exposes the difference between outward amount and personal sacrifice. The wealthy gave from their abundance, while the widow gave from her want. Her two mites possessed little purchasing power, but their significance could not be measured by the size of the coins. God sees what the public offering total cannot reveal. An accountant can count the money. Only the Lord can perfectly judge the heart.

The immediate context makes the account especially sobering. In Mark 12:38–40, Jesus warned against scribes who loved religious recognition and “devour widows' houses.” Then the narrative records a poor widow giving all her living. That arrangement should make every religious fundraiser extremely careful about using her example. The Lord identified her extraordinary sacrifice, but the passage does not command impoverished Christians to surrender their last resources to wealthy ministers. Nor does it authorize religious leaders to pressure widows into giving money needed for food, medicine, housing, or other necessities. First Timothy 5 establishes responsibilities concerning the care of widows, while 1 Timothy 5:8 warns against neglecting one's own household. The widow's offering must not become an excuse for religious exploitation. A preacher who uses a poor widow's sacrifice to finance his own luxury has managed to admire the two mites while ignoring the warning against devouring widows' houses.

Christian generosity also includes helping believers whose material needs require attention. Romans 15:25–27 records Paul's intention to minister unto the saints at Jerusalem, explaining that Macedonia and Achaia had made a contribution for the poor saints there. Paul connects the Gentile believers' material assistance with their participation in spiritual blessings associated with the Jews. This was a particular collection within the historical circumstances of the apostolic churches, not a universal financial tax imposed upon Gentiles. Nevertheless, it demonstrates genuine fellowship expressed through practical giving. First Corinthians 16:1–3 likewise discusses organizing a collection for the saints, emphasizing deliberate preparation rather than last-minute pressure. The New Testament recognizes both the support of gospel workers and the relief of legitimate need. Neither requires a magnificent fundraising campaign. A faithful giver

may contribute modestly, privately, and consistently while accomplishing something worthwhile. The importance of the gift cannot always be determined by counting its dollars.

7. Honest Stewardship and the Judgment Seat Will Expose the Motives Behind the Money

Second Corinthians 8:20–21 establishes an important principle concerning financial accountability. Paul explains that he and his companions arranged the administration of the generous contribution carefully, "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Notice that the apostle did not consider transparency an insult to his spiritual authority. He wanted the handling of funds to withstand legitimate examination. The surrounding passage describes trusted brethren participating in the administration of the collection. A modern ministry should learn something from that example. Honest records, responsible oversight, clear purposes, and safeguards against misuse are not evidence of unbelief. They are ordinary measures of integrity. When a religious leader refuses accountability while demanding unquestioning financial obedience, the congregation has reason to examine the arrangement carefully. A preacher who handles money honestly has no need to treat ordinary financial questions as rebellion against God.

The motives of the giver also require examination. A Christian may contribute generously while secretly hoping to purchase influence, recognition, or control over church decisions. Another may insist that every donation be announced publicly so everybody can admire his sacrifice. Such conduct turns material generosity into a contest of pride. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus warned in Matthew 6:1 against performing alms before men for the purpose of being seen by them. Although the Sermon on the Mount must be understood in its proper historical and kingdom setting, the condemnation of religious hypocrisy is unmistakable. Church Age believers receive further instruction in 1 Corinthians 4:5, where Paul declares that the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. The amount appearing in the financial records is not the complete account. God knows whether the contribution arose from charity, obligation, vanity, greed, or sincere devotion. Heaven does not require a donor recognition wall to remember faithful service.

Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the believer's future accountability before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment concerns saved people and their conduct, not lost sinners appearing at the Great White Throne of Revelation 20. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, while Christian service will be examined for its character and worth. First Corinthians 3:11–15 distinguishes the foundation, Jesus Christ, from the works built upon it, describing reward for what abides and loss for what is burned. The Scriptures

do not provide an exact heavenly payment schedule for every offering, and nobody should manufacture one. Nevertheless, the Lord will judge faithfully. The wealthy donor cannot purchase a favourable judgment, and the obscure giver is not forgotten because his contribution was small. A magnificent religious building financed through manipulation may impress the public, but its appearance cannot establish the righteousness of the work. Money can purchase a platform, a building, and a reputation. It cannot purchase the Lord's approval.

Conclusion — The Quiet Hands That Helped Carry the Gospel

The New Testament establishes Christian giving as a genuine ministry of helps without surrendering the gospel to financial manipulation. The Philippians supported Paul's necessities and shared in the fruit associated with his labour. The Macedonians demonstrated voluntary generosity despite poverty and affliction. The Gentile churches assisted needy saints at Jerusalem, and Paul established both the legitimacy of supporting gospel workers and the importance of handling contributions honestly. Second Corinthians 8–9 provides instructions concerning willingness, ability, generosity, responsibility, and thanksgiving. None of those passages authorizes compulsory seed offerings, fabricated promises of guaranteed riches, or the transfer of Israel's Mosaic obligations to the body of Christ. The biblical pattern is straightforward. Saved people, grateful for the grace they have received, willingly use their resources to support legitimate needs and faithful service. Giving does not make them more saved, more justified, or more secure in Christ. It provides an opportunity to demonstrate obedience through practical stewardship.

There is a warning here for both the preacher and the congregation. The preacher must never transform the offering into a weapon for controlling believers, and the congregation must never imagine that generosity excuses careless stewardship or doctrinal compromise. Christians should examine what they support, whether the teaching agrees with Scripture, whether resources are administered responsibly, and whether genuine needs are being addressed. At the same time, believers must resist the covetousness that disguises itself as financial caution while refusing every opportunity to help. First Timothy 6:17–18 instructs those possessing riches not to trust in uncertain riches but to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. The Lord has not commanded every Christian to surrender the same amount, but He has supplied sufficient instruction concerning the proper spirit of giving. A man can possess considerable wealth and remain generous, or possess very little and remain selfish. The condition of the heart matters more than the appearance of the wallet.

And somewhere beyond the reach of religious publicity, ordinary Christians continue supporting the work of the Lord without expecting recognition. A retired labourer

contributes toward Bible distribution. A widow helps provide for a struggling missionary. A family sets aside money to assist believers in genuine need. A faithful church member gives regularly, asks no special privileges, demands no public announcement, and returns to his ordinary responsibilities. These people may never preach the sermons, travel the missionary journeys, or meet the souls reached through the work they help support. But the Lord knows their service, and His judgment will be perfectly righteous. Philippians 4:17 remains the governing reminder: Paul desired fruit that would abound to the Philippians' account. The attention belonged to the Lord's work, not to the financial prestige of the donors. The world measures generosity by the amount of money that changes hands. God knows what the gift cost the giver, why it was given, and whether it honoured His Son. The preacher may be remembered for carrying the gospel, but the Lord has not forgotten the quiet hands that helped keep it moving.

5 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Servants Who Keep the Church From Falling Into Confusion

Key Scripture — 1 Corinthians 14:40 (KJV)

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

There is something remarkably peculiar about a church that can organize a three-day prophecy conference, purchase enough electronic equipment to communicate with the moon, print a magnificent schedule of activities, and still cannot figure out who is supposed to unlock the building on Sunday morning. The preacher arrives expecting everything to be ready, the musicians are wondering where the equipment went, the nursery workers have not received their instructions, and somebody discovers that the necessary supplies were never ordered. By the time the congregation begins assembling, everybody is running around like the children of Israel looking for Moses after he disappeared up the mountain. And the strangest part is that some Christians will defend this confusion as evidence that they are allowing the Holy Ghost to lead. Apparently, in their understanding, the Spirit of God specializes in misplaced records, forgotten responsibilities, unnecessary arguments, and people who cannot remember what they promised to do. But that is not what the King James Bible teaches. The Holy Ghost who inspired the Scriptures also inspired the command, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

The modern church suffers from two opposite diseases, and both can become equally destructive. On one side stands the religious corporation that has practically buried the

gospel beneath committees, financial reports, administrative departments, organizational charts, and an endless procession of meetings about previous meetings. Such a congregation may possess enough written procedures to operate a small government while having difficulty finding somebody who can plainly explain salvation by grace through faith. On the other side stands the disorderly assembly where nobody knows who is responsible for anything, financial records are questionable, announcements contradict one another, and every practical problem becomes a fresh emergency. One group worships organization, while the other mistakes disorganization for spirituality. Neither represents the biblical pattern. God did not establish the local church to become a religious corporation obsessed with its own machinery, but neither did He authorize His people to neglect ordinary responsibilities while blaming the resulting confusion on the Holy Ghost. Organization makes a useful servant, but it becomes a miserable master.

The Scriptures contain direct instruction concerning practical responsibilities, responsible oversight, honest administration, and the orderly cooperation of believers. Acts 6:1–7 records an early controversy involving neglected widows and the appointment of seven men to oversee a necessary responsibility. Romans 12:8 emphasizes diligence in ruling, while 1 Corinthians 12:28 includes governments among the ministries God placed in the church. First Corinthians 14:40 establishes the principle of decency and order within the assembly, and the pastoral epistles provide detailed qualifications for men entrusted with church leadership and service. These passages do not authorize an elaborate bureaucracy, nor do they make administrative competence a substitute for spiritual character. They demonstrate that practical responsibilities matter because people matter, and faithful organization can protect the ministry from unnecessary distractions. The servant who maintains accurate records, communicates essential information, coordinates legitimate activities, or safeguards church resources may never receive public recognition. Nevertheless, his diligence can prevent confusion that would otherwise hinder the preaching of the word of God.

1. Acts 6 Reveals What Happens When Practical Responsibilities Are Neglected

Acts 6:1 begins with a problem that arose during a period of significant growth among the early disciples. The Scripture declares, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” Notice that the problem involved actual people with legitimate needs. The congregation was increasing, but the arrangements for distributing assistance were failing to serve certain widows properly. The Grecians and Hebrews represented groups within the Jewish community whose distinctions contributed to the controversy. This was not a theological dispute over the

deity of Christ or the bodily resurrection. It concerned the administration of practical assistance. Yet the neglect was serious enough to produce murmuring and threaten the fellowship of the growing congregation. A church can possess sound preaching and still develop trouble when legitimate responsibilities are handled carelessly. Spiritual truth does not excuse practical negligence.

The historical setting must be preserved. Acts 6 records events in Jerusalem during the early apostolic period, when the testimony concerning the risen Messiah was being proclaimed among Israel and the unfolding transition recorded throughout Acts had not yet reached its later developments. The twelve apostles occupied a foundational position that cannot simply be transferred to every modern pastor. The communal arrangements described earlier in Acts also belonged to the particular circumstances of those Jerusalem believers. We must not pretend that every detail establishes a permanent financial system for all churches. Nevertheless, the passage supplies a genuine example of responsible action when practical needs threaten the orderly functioning of an assembly. The apostles did not dismiss the widows as unimportant. Neither did they suggest that the offended parties should simply endure neglect because the church was accomplishing important spiritual work. The problem was acknowledged, and an appropriate arrangement was established to address it.

There is a lesson here that deserves attention from every congregation. Growth increases responsibility. More people generally mean more needs, more communication, more opportunities for misunderstanding, and more work requiring careful attention. A church may begin with twelve believers meeting in a living room, where everybody knows what is happening because the entire congregation can fit around one table. But when the assembly grows, informal arrangements that once worked may become inadequate. Somebody must recognize the difference between genuine spiritual opposition and ordinary administrative failure. Not every problem requires a sermon about rebellion. Sometimes the groceries were simply delivered to the wrong household. A preacher who turns every legitimate complaint into evidence that somebody is attacking his authority may be protecting his pride rather than shepherding the flock. When the widows are being neglected, the answer is not to preach louder about charity. The answer is to make certain the widows receive the care they need.

2. The Apostles Refused to Abandon the Word, but They Did Not Ignore the Tables

Acts 6:2 records the response of the twelve: “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.” This statement has occasionally been twisted into the notion that practical work is beneath spiritual leadership. That is not the point. The apostles were not declaring themselves too important to perform ordinary labour. They were recognizing

the responsibilities specifically entrusted to them and the danger of abandoning those responsibilities to administer every material detail personally. Verse 4 explains their intention: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Their priorities were correct. The apostolic ministry required attention to prayer and the proclamation of God's word. But the practical needs remained legitimate and necessary. The answer was not neglect. It was responsible delegation. The church needed faithful men to handle the distribution while the apostles remained devoted to their appointed work.

Verse 3 establishes the qualifications for the seven men: “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” Notice that the responsibility involved serving tables, yet the required qualifications concerned spiritual character. The apostles did not suggest selecting seven men merely because they were unemployed, possessed attractive personalities, or happened to own reliable transportation. They were to be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. That tells us something important about practical church responsibilities. A man handling food distribution must be trustworthy. A person administering financial assistance must exercise sound judgment. Somebody responsible for sensitive information must possess integrity. The importance of the task is not determined by whether it requires a pulpit. The seven were entrusted with a responsibility affecting the welfare of people, the reputation of the assembly, and the peace of the congregation.

The names of the seven appear in Acts 6:5, including Stephen and Philip, whose subsequent ministries receive additional attention in the biblical record. The apostles prayed and laid their hands upon them, and verse 7 reports that the word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. Notice the relationship between practical responsibility and the continued progress of the ministry. The passage does not say that distributing assistance replaced preaching. It shows that proper attention to legitimate needs helped prevent those needs from consuming the apostles' primary responsibilities. We should also recognize that Acts 6 does not explicitly call these seven men deacons, although their service provides an important example frequently connected with the later office. The qualifications for deacons are expressly given in 1 Timothy 3. Careful Bible study distinguishes what the text states from what religious tradition later assumes. The apostles did not solve confusion by pretending the tables were unimportant. They appointed qualified servants so neither the tables nor the word would be neglected.

3. Biblical Governments Require Diligence, Not Religious Dictatorship

Romans 12:4–8 establishes that believers possess differing functions within the body of Christ. Paul explains that all members do not possess the same office and then identifies

several forms of service, including ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. Concerning ruling, verse 8 specifies, “he that ruleth, with diligence.” The instruction is plain. Responsibility requires conscientious attention, not laziness concealed behind an impressive title. A man entrusted with overseeing work ought to know what needs to be done, whether it is being accomplished, and whether the people involved are being treated properly. The word “diligence” leaves little room for an irresponsible fellow who enjoys giving orders but disappears whenever actual labour begins. Authority does not make negligence respectable. A leader who remembers every privilege of his position while forgetting every obligation attached to it has misunderstood why responsibility was entrusted to him in the first place.

First Corinthians 12:28 also mentions “governments” among the ministries God placed in the church. The context concerns the body of Christ and its differing members, not a political constitution for an earthly kingdom. We should not confuse church government with Israel's national administration, nor should we imagine that the Lord established a new priestly aristocracy possessing unlimited authority over the lives of believers. The New Testament recognizes legitimate oversight, but it also restricts that oversight according to Scripture. First Peter 5:2–3 commands elders to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight willingly and not for filthy lucre, “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” A man who believes church authority gives him permission to control every private decision, silence legitimate questions, or intimidate members into unquestioning submission has gone beyond his commission. Christ is the Head of the Church. The pastor is not His replacement.

The distinction between oversight and domination is essential because religious organizations frequently confuse the two. A pastor may appoint responsible workers, establish appropriate procedures, and expect legitimate duties to be performed faithfully. That is not automatically tyranny. Conversely, a congregation should not treat every organizational decision as an assault upon Christian liberty. Somebody must determine when the building will open, who will oversee necessary work, and how responsibilities will be coordinated. But legitimate administration becomes corrupt when leaders demand personal loyalty above obedience to Scripture. Hebrews 13:17 concerns submission to those who have the rule and watch for souls, yet it does not establish the infallibility of church officers. Acts 5:29 still declares, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Biblical leadership supplies direction under Christ. Religious dictatorship demands obedience in place of Christ. The difference is not merely administrative. It is doctrinal.

4. Decency and Order Are Commandments, Not Enemies of the Holy Ghost

First Corinthians 14:40 declares, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” Those words are often quoted when discussing schedules, announcements, and practical arrangements, but their immediate context must be understood. Paul was correcting confusion involving the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian assembly, particularly speaking in tongues and prophesying. Throughout the chapter, he emphasizes intelligibility, edification, proper participation, and regulation of public speaking. Verse 33 declares, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” Verse 40 then supplies the concluding command. This passage does not mean that every minor scheduling inconvenience constitutes direct rebellion against God. It does establish that disorderly conduct should not be defended as evidence of greater spirituality. The Corinthians were not being congratulated for producing confusion. They were being corrected because Christian assembly requires conduct consistent with God's revealed order.

The principle has a legitimate practical application to ordinary church affairs. If a congregation schedules instruction for children, somebody should know who is teaching and whether those individuals are qualified and trustworthy. If financial assistance is promised, somebody should ensure the arrangement is handled accurately. If a meeting is announced, members should receive correct information concerning its time and location. These matters do not require a new apostolic revelation. They require ordinary faithfulness. Unfortunately, some churches treat common sense as though it were a dangerous theological innovation. A volunteer asks where the supplies are stored, and nobody knows. A family requests information about a scheduled activity, and three officials provide four different answers. Then somebody announces that the congregation is simply moving by faith. No, it may simply be moving without direction. Faith believes what God has said. Confusion forgets what men have agreed to do. The two should not be mistaken for one another.

Titus 1:5 adds another important consideration. Paul instructed Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” This instruction concerns the establishment of properly qualified church leadership, not merely the arrangement of furniture or the preparation of an activity calendar. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the apostolic concern included correcting deficiencies and establishing appropriate order within the churches. Paul did not instruct Titus to preserve every existing problem out of respect for tradition. Matters requiring correction were to be addressed. The following verses establish qualifications for elders, proving that order must be governed by spiritual standards rather than organizational convenience. A congregation may have perfectly arranged records and still possess unqualified leaders. Biblical order requires more than efficiency. It requires

submission to the instructions of the Lord. A neatly organized error remains error, regardless of how impressive the filing system becomes.

5. The People Handling Money and Information Must Be Worthy of Trust

First Timothy 3:8 begins the qualifications for deacons with the words, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.” Here the Holy Ghost addresses character before discussing organizational accomplishments. The deacon must be serious-minded, truthful, temperate, and free from covetousness. Verse 9 requires “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,” while verse 10 states, “And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.” These are not suggestions for selecting the most popular men in the congregation. They are qualifications governing a recognized church office. A deacon is not merely a successful businessman whom the pastor would like to place on a committee. Neither is he a political representative elected to protect a faction. The office requires demonstrated character, doctrinal fidelity, and faithful conduct.

The practical implications extend to those entrusted with church finances. Second Corinthians 8:20–21 describes Paul's care in administering a substantial contribution for needy saints. He wanted to avoid legitimate accusation concerning the funds, declaring that he was “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” Notice that Paul did not consider accountability an insult to his apostolic authority. He arranged matters so the handling of money could withstand proper examination. Churches should therefore maintain accurate financial records, appropriate safeguards, clear authorization, and responsible oversight. No single individual should be permitted to treat church contributions as personal spending money simply because he possesses a religious title. Money given for gospel work should not quietly disappear into somebody's private luxuries. An offering plate is not a preacher's personal wallet, and a church treasury is not an account from which religious royalty may withdraw at pleasure.

Confidential information requires similar integrity. Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” Although Proverbs belongs to Israel's wisdom literature, the moral principle is readily applicable. A church worker who handles records concerning financial hardship, family circumstances, personal contact information, or sensitive requests must exercise discretion. Such information is not material for entertaining other members over Sunday dinner. A secretary who turns confidential records into neighbourhood gossip has confused the office desk with a newspaper press. Yet confidentiality must never become a covering for criminal behaviour, abuse, financial dishonesty, or serious misconduct requiring proper action. Concealing private information to protect legitimate dignity differs from suppressing

evidence to protect a religious institution. Those entrusted with responsibility should know the distinction. Faithfulness requires honesty, restraint, and courage to address wrongdoing appropriately. A trustworthy servant protects people, not corruption.

6. Good Communication Prevents Small Problems From Becoming Great Divisions

Communication is another neglected responsibility that can determine whether an assembly functions peacefully or spends its time correcting preventable misunderstandings. First Corinthians 14:8 asks, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” The immediate discussion concerns intelligible speech in the assembly, but the illustration also demonstrates the importance of clear communication. An uncertain signal produces uncertainty among those expected to respond. When workers receive conflicting instructions, members hear contradictory announcements, and important decisions are communicated carelessly, confusion should surprise nobody. The congregation does not need a complicated communication department to understand this principle. It needs responsible people who speak truthfully, convey necessary information, and follow through upon legitimate commitments. A church should never require its members to possess the gift of prophecy merely to discover what time the next meeting begins. Clear information is not a luxury. It is part of responsible cooperation.

Consider the damage created by careless promises and poorly communicated responsibilities. A family is assured that assistance has been arranged, but the person responsible never receives the message. Volunteers arrive expecting supplies that nobody purchased. Two workers are assigned the same task while another essential duty is completely forgotten. Such failures can generate unnecessary frustration and even suspicion among believers. Ephesians 4:25 commands, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” The instruction concerns truthful conduct among members of Christ's body. Communication must therefore be accurate rather than convenient. If a promise cannot be fulfilled, the responsible person should communicate that honestly. If a mistake has occurred, acknowledge it rather than inventing excuses. A little truth spoken promptly can prevent a considerable amount of trouble later. The church does not need professional excuse-makers. It needs Christians whose word can be trusted.

At the same time, orderly communication must never become an excuse for endless discussion without action. Proverbs 14:23 declares, “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” The proverb distinguishes productive labour from empty talk, and the principle remains recognizable in every generation. Some religious organizations appear capable of discussing a broken light fixture for six weeks, appointing a

committee to investigate it, and scheduling another meeting to determine whether the original committee possessed sufficient authority to purchase a replacement. By the time the paperwork is completed, the congregation may have learned to appreciate darkness. Necessary consultation has its place, especially when decisions involve doctrine, finances, safety, or the welfare of others. But endless discussion can become another form of negligence. Responsible workers should establish what needs doing, determine who is authorized to do it, communicate the necessary information, and complete the task. A meeting that produces no obedience, no decision, and no useful action may simply be confusion wearing a necktie.

7. Organization Must Serve the Ministry Without Becoming the Ministry

Ephesians 4:11–16 establishes the larger purpose of the ministries Christ gave His church. Pastors and teachers are provided for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. Verse 16 describes the whole body as “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” Every member has a responsibility within the functioning body, and useful administration contributes by helping those responsibilities operate together. A dependable worker may coordinate schedules so teachers can concentrate upon instruction. Another may maintain records so legitimate needs are not forgotten. Others may organize supplies, communicate arrangements, or ensure that the gathering place is prepared. These responsibilities are not substitutes for spiritual ministry. They assist its proper operation. The church's organization should be judged according to whether it supports biblical priorities, not according to how impressive the organizational chart appears on an office wall.

But there is a danger when an institution begins existing primarily to preserve itself. A congregation may become so preoccupied with property, budgets, committees, promotions, and administrative expansion that sound doctrine gradually moves into the background. The preacher becomes a chief executive, the church members become customers, and the gospel becomes a slogan attached to a religious business plan. Second Timothy 4:2 still commands, “Preach the word,” and verse 3 warns of a time when people will not endure sound doctrine. No amount of organizational efficiency can compensate for abandoning that responsibility. A church that maintains perfect financial records while teaching another gospel is not spiritually healthy. Neither is a congregation faithful merely because its meetings begin precisely on time while the Scriptures are being twisted to satisfy itching ears. Administration must serve the truth. A perfectly organized church that has abandoned sound doctrine is like a beautifully maintained ambulance with no intention of helping the injured. The machinery works, but the purpose has disappeared.

The individual servant must also examine his motives. Colossians 3:23–24 declares, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” These words were given in the context of servants performing their responsibilities, but the principle of faithful labour unto Christ applies directly to Christian conduct. The person maintaining records should do so honestly. The one coordinating responsibilities should act diligently. The worker handling supplies should avoid waste and carelessness. None should imagine that obscurity excuses laziness or that public recognition determines the value of service. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” That is the standard. Not famous, impressive, indispensable, or constantly praised. Faithful. A servant who becomes bitter because nobody applauds his work has forgotten whom he is supposed to be serving. The Lord sees the labour, and His judgment will not overlook it.

Conclusion — The Faithful Servants Who Protect the Work From Confusion

The ministry of helps includes responsibilities that seldom attract public attention but often determine whether a congregation functions properly. Acts 6 demonstrates the seriousness of practical neglect and the wisdom of assigning qualified servants to necessary work. Romans 12 emphasizes diligence in responsibility, while 1 Corinthians 12 recognizes differing functions within the body of Christ. First Corinthians 14 establishes the importance of decency and order, and the pastoral epistles provide qualifications for trustworthy leadership and service. These Scriptures do not authorize organizational vanity or establish administrative efficiency as a substitute for spiritual maturity. They teach that responsibility matters because the church belongs to Jesus Christ. The believer who maintains accurate records, safeguards resources, communicates necessary information, and fulfils ordinary obligations is not performing meaningless work merely because no congregation gathers to applaud him. Faithful administration can protect the assembly from avoidable confusion and allow other servants to carry out their biblical responsibilities more effectively.

There is a warning here for both church leadership and those entrusted with practical responsibilities. The pastor must not become an organizational dictator who treats the congregation as personal property, and the congregation must not become a collection of independent workers who refuse legitimate oversight. Financial accountability must never be dismissed as unbelief, confidential information must never become gossip, and administrative positions must never become prizes distributed according to popularity. Equally important, the church must refuse the temptation to create so much machinery that the machinery consumes the ministry it was supposed to assist. Every committee,

procedure, schedule, and administrative responsibility should have a legitimate purpose connected with the orderly functioning of the assembly. If an arrangement creates unnecessary burdens without serving a biblical need, it deserves examination. If a responsibility genuinely protects the congregation and helps its members serve faithfully, it deserves attention. The objective is neither bureaucracy nor chaos. It is responsible Christian service under the authority of the Scriptures.

And when the Judgment Seat of Christ reveals the character of Christian labour, many servants who rarely received public recognition will have their work examined by the Lord Himself. Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the believer's accountability before Christ, while 1 Corinthians 3:11–15 distinguishes the secure foundation of Jesus Christ from the works built upon it. Salvation remains by grace through faith, but faithful service is not meaningless. Somewhere a church secretary has preserved accurate records for years without receiving a public thank-you. A treasurer has handled contributions honestly when dishonesty would have been easy. A dependable worker has remembered necessary supplies, communicated important information, and prevented countless small problems from becoming serious distractions. Such labour may never produce an impressive testimony on a conference platform, but it can contribute significantly to the peace and proper operation of a congregation. The preacher may be remembered for the sermon, and the congregation may remember the meeting, but somebody faithfully performed the ordinary responsibilities that allowed both to proceed without unnecessary confusion. Heaven does not need an administrative title to recognize a faithful steward. And the Lord who commanded that all things be done decently and in order has never considered obedience to that command a small matter.

6 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Hands That Carry the Chairs and the Feet That Never Stop Serving

Key Scripture — Galatians 5:13 (KJV)

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

There is something mighty peculiar about a church where everybody wants to be recognized as a servant of God until somebody asks them to carry a stack of chairs. Suddenly, the man who was prepared to conquer the world for Jesus Christ discovers an urgent appointment, the fellow who claims to possess extraordinary spiritual gifts develops an unexpected weakness in both arms, and the woman who has been explaining the

importance of Christian humility for the last twenty minutes cannot possibly be expected to help clean the fellowship hall. Apparently, serving the Lord becomes considerably less exciting when the assignment involves a broom instead of a microphone. Yet every Sunday, before the congregation assembles, somebody may already have unlocked the doors, cleaned the floors, adjusted the furniture, checked the equipment, prepared the classrooms, and made certain that everything necessary for the meeting is available. And when the final hymn has been sung, the last handshake exchanged, and the congregation has departed for dinner, those same faithful workers may still be carrying chairs, collecting rubbish, and making preparations for the next assembly. Nobody calls them celebrities. Nobody advertises their appearances. But somebody had better thank God for them.

The modern religious world has developed a rather strange system for determining which activities qualify as spiritual service. Standing behind a pulpit is considered important. Singing before a congregation is considered important. Speaking at a conference, publishing a book, or appearing before a television camera can establish a reputation that follows a person for years. But cleaning the building where the Bible is preached, repairing the equipment used in the meeting, and arranging the seats where people hear the Scriptures are frequently dismissed as ordinary work unworthy of serious recognition. That distinction did not originate in the King James Bible. Scripture certainly recognizes different gifts, responsibilities, and offices, but it does not authorize believers to despise necessary labour simply because that labour involves physical effort rather than public speaking. First Corinthians 12:22 declares, “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” The Lord knows the difference between a prominent member and a necessary one, and the two are not always identical.

The ministry of helps includes practical service that supports the orderly gathering, instruction, fellowship, and care of God's people. Such work does not purchase salvation, increase the value of Christ's blood, or establish a superior spiritual standing before God. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, while verse 10 declares that believers are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The order is essential. We do not labour to become God's children; we labour because we already belong to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. And when a saved person willingly uses his strength, time, skill, and possessions to assist the legitimate work of a congregation, that service should be evaluated according to Scripture rather than human prestige. The Bible provides examples of willing workers, practical responsibilities, spiritual diligence, and proper order. It also exposes the pride that considers ordinary labour beneath supposedly important people. A Christian who believes carrying a Bible into the pulpit can honour God ought to explain why carrying a chair so somebody else can hear that Bible is beneath his dignity.

1. The Holy Ghost Commanded Service, Not a Competition for Recognition

Galatians 5:13 begins with a declaration concerning Christian liberty: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.” Paul was writing to churches troubled by false teaching that sought to bring believers under legal bondage. Throughout the epistle, he defends justification by faith and the believer's freedom from the Mosaic law as a system governing righteousness. Galatians 5:1 commands, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” But Christian liberty was never intended to become an excuse for selfishness. Paul immediately adds, “only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” There is the governing principle. The Christian has been set free from the bondage of the law, not liberated from every responsibility to his brethren. Grace does not produce a spiritual aristocracy that expects everybody else to perform the necessary labour. Grace teaches the redeemed to serve willingly.

Notice that Paul does not restrict his command to the elders, deacons, teachers, or individuals possessing publicly recognized spiritual gifts. He addresses the brethren and instructs them to serve one another through love. The following verse declares, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” That statement must be understood within Paul's argument concerning Christian liberty and the moral conduct produced by the Spirit. He is not returning believers to the Mosaic covenant as the means of justification. He is showing that genuine Christian love acts for the welfare of others. And love is not merely an emotion expressed during a sentimental sermon. Sometimes love prepares a meal. Sometimes it visits a suffering believer. Sometimes it repairs a broken door, moves a heavy table, or cleans a room so others can gather without unnecessary difficulty. A fellow who claims to love the brethren but refuses every opportunity to assist them may possess a magnificent vocabulary and a remarkably unemployed pair of hands.

Galatians 5:16 supplies the spiritual foundation for such conduct: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The works of the flesh include strife, variance, emulations, wrath, and other expressions of sinful conduct, while the fruit of the Spirit includes love, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Those qualities should govern the manner in which believers serve. A man may perform an impressive amount of physical labour while complaining bitterly about everybody else. Another may help only when he can be certain his name will appear in the church announcement. Such conduct requires correction because the attitude is part of the service. God is not impressed with pride simply because pride happens to be carrying a toolbox. The Christian should be willing to perform legitimate responsibilities without

treating every inconvenience as a personal insult. The flesh wants a title, a chair at the front, and somebody to admire it. The Spirit teaches a man to pick up the chair and help somebody else sit down.

2. The Tabernacle Was Built by Willing Workers, Not Religious Spectators

Exodus 35–36 provides a remarkable historical example of skilled and willing labour, but the doctrinal setting must be established before making an application. God had delivered Israel from Egypt and entered into a covenant relationship with that nation. The tabernacle belonged to Israel's worship under the Mosaic economy and was constructed according to the pattern God revealed to Moses. Its furnishings, priesthood, sacrifices, and ordinances were not inventions of religious imagination. They belonged to a particular arrangement established by divine command. Hebrews 8:5 explains that the earthly priests served "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," referring to the pattern shown to Moses. We are not authorized to take those instructions and pretend that every modern church building is another tabernacle or that its construction carries the same covenant significance. Nevertheless, the passage provides an unmistakable illustration of people willingly contributing materials, abilities, and physical labour toward a work God had specifically appointed in their own dispensation.

Exodus 35:21 declares, "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation." Notice the emphasis upon willingness. The people brought materials necessary for the assigned work, and those possessing particular abilities contributed their skills. Verse 25 mentions wisehearted women who spun with their hands, while verse 26 describes women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom to spin goats' hair. Verses 30–35 identify Bezaleel and Aholiab, men endowed with wisdom and understanding for the required craftsmanship. The work involved actual materials, actual tools, actual labour, and actual responsibilities. The tabernacle did not descend from heaven completely assembled while everybody stood around singing about their willingness to serve. God appointed the work, provided the instructions, equipped the workers, and used their abilities to accomplish the construction. There is a lesson worth remembering whenever somebody imagines that physical labour must be inferior to spiritual responsibility.

Exodus 36:2 describes Moses calling Bezaleel, Aholiab, and the wisehearted men "in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it." Then something happened that would probably cause considerable alarm in certain modern fundraising departments. The people brought more than enough materials, and Moses commanded them to stop giving. Verse 7 explains, "For the stuff they

had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." Imagine that! A religious leader recognized that the necessary resources had been supplied and informed the people that further contributions were unnecessary. The tabernacle was not an excuse for endless fundraising, and the workers were not instructed to construct something more elaborate merely because additional materials were available. The application is straightforward without confusing dispensations. Willing labour, honest stewardship, practical ability, and proper direction belong together. God provided the pattern, the people supplied the materials, and the craftsmen performed the work. Nobody needed a television fundraiser to explain why the hammers were spiritual.

3. Acts 6 Demonstrates That Practical Needs Cannot Be Dismissed as Unspiritual

Acts 6:1 records a serious difficulty in the early Jerusalem congregation: "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." The historical setting concerns the early apostolic ministry among Jews in Jerusalem, during the transitional events recorded in Acts. The passage does not provide a detailed manual for modern church maintenance, but it certainly demonstrates that practical responsibilities can affect the peace and testimony of an assembly. The widows were not receiving the necessary attention, and the problem demanded action. The apostles did not announce that distributing assistance was beneath spiritual people. Neither did they dismiss the neglected widows because more important religious activities were taking place. They recognized that the situation required responsible workers. A church may preach magnificent sermons about charity, but when the people needing assistance remain neglected, the congregation has a practical problem that cannot be solved by merely increasing the volume of the preaching.

Acts 6:2 records the apostles declaring, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." Their responsibility involved prayer and the ministry of the word, as verse 4 explains. But notice what happened next. They instructed the brethren to select seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who could be appointed over the practical business. Verse 3 does not say the responsibility required seven men who were spiritually unqualified because the work was insignificant. Quite the opposite. The men needed demonstrated character and wisdom. Handling ordinary necessities within the congregation was important enough to require trustworthy servants. The apostles maintained their proper priorities without allowing other responsibilities to disappear through negligence. That is the difference between biblical delegation and religious arrogance. A preacher may have a responsibility to prepare the sermon, but that does not mean the chairs arrange themselves through a special revelation from heaven.

The practical principle is unmistakable. A congregation requires different people fulfilling different legitimate responsibilities. Somebody must prepare the place where believers gather. Somebody may need to arrange equipment, assist those with physical limitations, maintain necessary supplies, or address problems that could interfere with the meeting. These activities should be performed responsibly without pretending that every worker possesses the same office or spiritual gift. First Corinthians 14:40 commands, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” In its immediate context, Paul was correcting disorder concerning spiritual gifts and public participation in the Corinthian assembly. The verse is not a direct instruction about arranging furniture, but the principle of responsible order certainly has a practical application. A broken chair should be repaired, hazardous conditions should be corrected, and equipment should be handled competently. The purpose is not to create a flawless religious performance. It is to remove unnecessary distractions so the congregation can gather, hear the Scriptures, and carry out its responsibilities in a proper manner.

4. The Man With the Broom Is Not Inferior to the Man With the Microphone

First Corinthians 12:14 declares, “For the body is not one member, but many.” Paul then explains that the foot does not cease belonging to the body because it is not the hand, nor does the ear become useless because it is not the eye. The illustration exposes the absurdity of measuring spiritual worth according to public prominence. Verse 21 continues, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” The body functions through members possessing differing responsibilities. Within the local assembly, preaching and teaching are necessary, but they do not exhaust the work believers perform. The individual cleaning the building is not therefore holding the office of pastor, and the pastor is not automatically performing the same assignment as the person maintaining the property. Nevertheless, differences in responsibility do not establish differences in personal worth before God. The Lord appointed the members, and their work must be evaluated according to His word.

Some Christians have developed the strange impression that physical labour is beneath anybody claiming spiritual importance. They will gladly describe themselves as leaders, ministers, visionaries, and men of extraordinary calling, but ask them to help move a table and suddenly their calling develops a very narrow jurisdiction. Evidently, the Lord has appointed them to supervise the movement of furniture without personally touching any of it. Yet the Scriptures provide no such excuse for arrogant conduct. In John 13, during His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus washed His disciples' feet and exposed their need for humble service. The event belongs to its proper historical setting and should not be confused with the apostle Paul's later instructions concerning the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, the Lord's example directly rebukes pride. He who possessed all authority was willing to perform an act ordinarily associated with lowly service. A Christian who considers ordinary assistance beneath his dignity ought to examine that scene very carefully before announcing how much he resembles his Saviour.

Philippians 2:3–5 provides direct instruction for believers concerning the attitude they ought to possess: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Paul continues by instructing Christians to look upon the things of others and to possess the mind of Christ. This does not eliminate distinctions between church offices or require every person to perform every possible task. It condemns the selfish ambition and conceit that make believers despise necessary service. A preacher who refuses to acknowledge the workers assisting his ministry demonstrates poor judgment. A volunteer who becomes bitter because he does not receive the recognition given to the preacher also needs correction. Both should be serving the same Lord. The person with the microphone must faithfully preach the Scriptures, and the person with the broom must faithfully perform his assigned work. The value of the servant is not determined by whether he holds a microphone, a hammer, or a mop. The Lord examines faithfulness, not the equipment.

5. A Church Building Is a Useful Facility, Not the Dwelling Place of God

One of the great confusions in modern Christianity involves treating a religious building as though it possessed the same doctrinal standing as the tabernacle or temple of Israel. Under the Mosaic economy, God established particular arrangements concerning the tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, and eventually the temple at Jerusalem. Those things belonged to Israel and carried covenant significance. The body of Christ is a different matter. First Corinthians 3:16 declares, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” The passage addresses believers collectively in the context of the Corinthian congregation. Ephesians 2:21–22 likewise describes believers being built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The New Testament church is not constituted by bricks, stained glass, expensive furniture, or a particular architectural arrangement. Saved people are members of Christ's body. A congregation may gather in a beautiful building, a modest rented room, or an ordinary house without changing that fundamental truth.

Acts 20:20 records Paul teaching “publickly, and from house to house,” while Romans 16:5 mentions the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. These passages demonstrate that believers did not require elaborate religious facilities before they could assemble, receive instruction, and participate in gospel work. A suitable building can certainly provide practical advantages. It may accommodate larger gatherings, protect people from weather,

provide space for children to receive instruction, and allow orderly fellowship. There is nothing inherently sinful about maintaining a comfortable, safe, and functional meeting place. But the building must remain a servant of the ministry rather than becoming its object of worship. A congregation that cannot afford to maintain its extravagant property without constantly pressuring struggling believers ought to reconsider its priorities. The Lord never commanded His Church to construct a palace so impressive that nobody can afford to keep the lights on without another emergency offering.

The contrast becomes especially troubling when a congregation spends enormous sums on impressive facilities while treating the people who maintain those facilities as disposable labour. The entrance is decorated beautifully, the auditorium receives expensive improvements, and the leadership regularly announces another construction project. Meanwhile, the elderly man who has repaired the plumbing for years receives little consideration, the woman who cleans the restrooms is treated as though her service carries no importance, and the volunteers responsible for preparing the building are expected to remain available without reasonable limits. That is a disgraceful arrangement. First Corinthians 12:25 commands that the members "should have the same care one for another." The command applies regardless of who occupies the platform or performs the cleaning. A church that honours the carpet more than the people caring for it has confused property with ministry. Maintenance matters because the facility serves people. When the institution begins sacrificing people to preserve appearances, its priorities have become badly distorted.

6. Faithful Service Requires Diligence Without Turning Volunteers Into Servants of Men

Colossians 3:23–24 declares, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." These words occur in Paul's instructions to servants concerning their earthly responsibilities, but the principle of faithful labour unto Christ applies directly to Christian conduct. The believer should approach legitimate service with diligence rather than carelessness. If he promises to unlock the building, he should arrive as agreed. If he accepts responsibility for maintaining equipment, he should perform the work competently. If he agrees to prepare a classroom, he should not expect somebody else to discover at the last minute that nothing has been done. Christian service is not improved by giving negligence a religious name. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." A willing heart and dependable conduct ought to belong together. The Lord deserves better than promises delivered with enthusiasm and forgotten before the following Sunday.

Diligence, however, does not require recklessness. A responsible church should provide appropriate equipment, observe necessary safety precautions, and avoid assigning dangerous work to unqualified individuals. A man should not be expected to repair hazardous electrical equipment simply because somebody discovered he owns a screwdriver. Neither should elderly believers be pressured into lifting heavy objects beyond their physical ability merely to prove their devotion. First Corinthians 12 recognizes differing members and abilities, while Galatians 6:2 commands believers to bear one another's burdens. The objective is cooperation according to legitimate responsibilities, not a competition to determine who can endure the greatest unnecessary hardship. Practical wisdom is not evidence of deficient faith. A congregation that neglects safety and then praises injured volunteers for their sacrifice has confused preventable carelessness with spiritual dedication. When work requires trained assistance, proper tools, or professional skill, responsible leadership should recognize those requirements. God has not commanded His people to abandon ordinary judgment merely because the activity occurs on church property.

The same responsibility extends to how church leadership treats its workers. First Timothy 5:18 declares, “The labourer is worthy of his reward,” within Paul's instruction concerning elders labouring in the word and doctrine. The passage does not establish a universal salary requirement for every volunteer, but it certainly demonstrates that Scripture recognizes the legitimacy of compensation for labour. A congregation should not automatically expect qualified tradesmen to donate unlimited professional services while spending lavishly on less important matters. Willing contributions are legitimate, but generosity must remain voluntary rather than becoming an obligation enforced through religious guilt. Church members also possess responsibilities toward their families, employment, health, and other duties. First Timothy 5:8 warns concerning neglect of one's household, and legitimate ministry should not encourage such negligence. There is a difference between sacrifice freely offered unto Christ and exploitation demanded by an institution. A faithful pastor will appreciate willing servants without treating their time, strength, and abilities as property belonging to his personal kingdom.

7. The Judgment Seat Will Reveal the Work Nobody Thought Important

The believer's future accountability gives ordinary Christian service a significance far beyond the immediate appreciation it receives. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This judgment concerns saved people and their service, not lost sinners appearing before the Great White Throne described in Revelation 20. Salvation remains secure through the finished work of

Jesus Christ, received by grace through faith. The Judgment Seat concerns the examination of the believer's conduct and labour. First Corinthians 3:11 identifies Jesus Christ as the only foundation, while the following verses describe works being examined and tested. Some work receives reward, while other work results in loss. The Lord will not judge according to the congregation's publicity arrangements. He knows the character of the service, the truth governing it, and the motives behind it.

First Corinthians 4:5 adds another necessary consideration: the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” That statement ought to humble both the prominent preacher and the unnoticed volunteer. A man may perform an impressive amount of work while secretly desiring recognition, influence, or personal control. Another may serve quietly, faithfully, and without resentment because he understands whom he is serving. The Lord knows the difference. But obscurity itself does not guarantee righteousness. A person can become proud of being humble, resentful about being overlooked, or convinced that his unrecognized labour makes him spiritually superior to everybody else. Such attitudes require correction just as surely as public vanity. The biblical standard is not whether a person receives applause but whether he faithfully serves Christ. The man who demands applause for carrying a chair and the man who demands applause for preaching a sermon may have more in common than either would care to admit.

There is also a danger in assuming that every task produces the same eternal result regardless of its purpose. A church can organize tremendous activity that accomplishes little toward obedience to the Scriptures. Maintaining an impressive religious facility is not automatically spiritual service merely because the property contains a pulpit. If the congregation teaches false doctrine, promotes another gospel, or operates through deliberate deception, the work supporting those activities must be examined carefully. Ephesians 4:15–16 connects the proper functioning of Christ's body with truth, love, and growth under its Head, Jesus Christ. The Christian should therefore consider not only how faithfully he performs a task but whether the task serves a legitimate biblical purpose. A clean building is useful when it provides a suitable place for sound instruction and Christian fellowship. It cannot sanctify heresy preached inside it. The responsibility of the believer is to serve with diligence, sound judgment, and fidelity to the Scriptures. God has never required His people to become efficient workers in the service of error.

Conclusion — The Chairs Are Put Away, but the Labour Is Not Forgotten

The ministry of helps reaches into responsibilities that may appear insignificant until somebody fails to perform them. The doors must be opened, the meeting place prepared, the supplies maintained, the equipment cared for, and the practical needs of the assembly

addressed. Exodus 35–36 illustrates the importance of willing workers using their abilities under God's appointed instructions for Israel's tabernacle, while Acts 6 demonstrates that practical responsibilities cannot be neglected merely because spiritual leadership possesses other duties. Galatians 5:13 establishes the Christian obligation to serve one another through love, and 1 Corinthians 14:40 teaches the importance of proper order within the assembly. These passages do not make a modern church building sacred in the manner of Israel's temple, nor do they establish physical labour as a means of earning salvation. They remind believers that genuine service involves more than visible religious activity. The same Lord who commands sound preaching also instructs His people concerning love, faithfulness, humility, and practical responsibility.

There is a rebuke here for every Christian who believes ordinary work is beneath his spiritual importance. The preacher is not excused from humility because he possesses a calling to preach, and the congregation is not excused from service because somebody else has been assigned the public responsibilities. At the same time, the willing worker must guard against bitterness, pride, and the temptation to measure his usefulness by the appreciation he receives. Some responsibilities require considerable skill, while others require little more than availability and a willingness to help. All should be approached with proper judgment. A church that continually exploits its volunteers needs correction, and a congregation filled with members who refuse every legitimate opportunity to serve also needs correction. The biblical answer is not compulsory labour, administrative tyranny, or endless religious activity. It is saved people willingly cooperating under the authority of Jesus Christ. The church does not need a hundred men competing for the largest chair on the platform while nobody is willing to arrange the chairs for the congregation.

And when the meeting has ended, when the last visitor has departed, when the lights have been turned off and the doors locked, somebody may still be finishing the work that everybody else has forgotten. He may have spent the morning repairing a fixture, the afternoon moving equipment, and the evening preparing the building for another gathering. Perhaps nobody thanked him. Perhaps the congregation never realized how much labour was involved. Perhaps his name will never appear in a church publication, and no preacher will ever mention his faithful service from the pulpit. None of those circumstances can establish the final value of his work. That judgment belongs to Jesus Christ, who sees what men overlook and knows whether the labour was performed faithfully unto Him. First Corinthians 15:58 commands believers to be “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” reminding them that their labour is not in vain in Him. The promise is sufficient without inventing special heavenly rewards for particular tasks. The preacher may carry the Bible into the pulpit, but somebody carried the chairs so others could sit and hear it. One man may be remembered for the sermon, while another is forgotten before the

building is empty. But the Lord who sees the preaching also sees the preparation, and faithful labour performed unto Christ never becomes worthless merely because the congregation forgot to applaud.

7 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Drivers, the Journeys, and the Souls Who Needed a Ride

Key Scripture — Titus 3:13 (KJV)

“Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.”

There is something mighty peculiar about a church that can raise fifty thousand dollars for a new sound system but cannot find somebody willing to drive an elderly widow three miles to hear the preaching. The microphones are magnificent, the auditorium looks impressive, the announcements are professionally prepared, and the preacher has enough electronic equipment to broadcast his voice halfway around the world. Unfortunately, the woman who has attended that congregation for thirty years no longer drives, and apparently nobody has considered how she is supposed to get there. Meanwhile, another Christian quietly gets up early on Sunday morning, warms up his vehicle, drives across town, helps an elderly believer into the passenger seat, and makes certain she arrives safely. He receives no special introduction, no prominent position, and no public recognition. By the time the service begins, he has already performed a ministry that somebody with a microphone may never think about. The world calls him a driver. The Scriptures give us a considerably more important principle to consider.

When the apostle Paul instructed Titus concerning two travelling servants, he wrote, “Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them” (Titus 3:13). Notice those words carefully. Paul did not merely tell Titus to wish the travellers a pleasant journey, shake their hands, or offer a few religious compliments before sending them down the road. He commanded diligent assistance so that their needs would be supplied. The verse does not tell us that Titus personally drove a vehicle, operated a transportation ministry, or maintained a schedule of passenger pickups. Those things belong to another age and another set of circumstances. But the principle is unmistakable. Faithful gospel workers sometimes require practical assistance in travelling from one place to another, and the people of God ought to recognize legitimate opportunities to help them. The journey matters because the service connected with it matters. Sometimes the person

assisting the traveller accomplishes something important without ever becoming the person delivering the message.

This ministry must be understood within the proper boundaries of the gospel of grace. Nobody earns salvation by transporting people to church, operating a bus route, purchasing gasoline, or assisting a missionary. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation to be by grace through faith, apart from works. Yet verse 10 reminds believers that they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The saved Christian has genuine opportunities to serve the Lord through practical assistance, including transportation. A person may need a ride to hear biblical preaching, receive instruction, visit a suffering relative, or participate in legitimate gospel work. Providing that assistance does not guarantee that a soul will be saved, nor does it substitute for preaching the word of God. It simply removes an obstacle that may prevent somebody from reaching a place where necessary ministry can occur. Sometimes the most important thing a Christian carries into the church parking lot is not a Bible under his arm, but another person sitting beside him.

1. Titus Was Told to Help the Travellers, Not Merely Admire Their Ministry

Titus 3:13 appears near the conclusion of Paul's epistle, where the apostle provides personal instructions concerning fellow workers, necessary responsibilities, and the practical conduct of believers. The preceding portion of the chapter establishes salvation by God's mercy, not by works of righteousness which we have done. Titus 3:5 declares, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” Then verse 8 instructs believers to maintain good works because such things are good and profitable unto men. There is the proper doctrinal order once again. Salvation is entirely grounded in the mercy and grace of God through Jesus Christ, while practical service is expected of those who have been saved. By the time Paul mentions Zenas and Apollos, the reader has already been instructed concerning the distinction between salvation and Christian conduct. Helping a traveller is not an attempt to purchase eternal life. It is an expression of obedience by somebody who has already received it.

The wording of Titus 3:13 deserves careful attention. Paul says, “Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently.” Zenas is identified as a lawyer, while Apollos is known from Acts 18 and 1 Corinthians as an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures who laboured in the ministry. Scripture does not provide a detailed travel itinerary explaining every destination, expense, or arrangement associated with this particular journey. We should therefore resist the temptation to invent a dramatic story about roads, wagons, companions, or specific dangers the text never describes. What we do know is sufficient.

Two men were travelling, and Paul instructed Titus to ensure that they received diligent assistance. The word “diligently” rules out careless arrangements, forgotten promises, and casual indifference. If the assistance was important enough for the Holy Ghost to preserve the instruction in Scripture, it ought to be important enough for modern Christians to recognize the principle without manufacturing details.

The final expression is especially revealing: “that nothing be wanting unto them.” Paul wanted legitimate necessities addressed so the travellers would not be hindered unnecessarily. This does not establish a blank cheque for travelling ministers or require churches to finance luxurious accommodations, expensive personal preferences, and endless demands. The surrounding context concerns good works, necessary uses, and fruitful Christian conduct. Titus 3:14 immediately declares, “And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” Notice the relationship between necessary uses and fruitfulness. Genuine ministry involves recognizing actual needs and doing something worthwhile about them. A congregation may spend considerable time praising missionary work while never offering to assist a visiting missionary who needs transportation. Such admiration is inexpensive because it requires no personal inconvenience. It is easy to congratulate a man for going into all the world when you are unwilling to take him as far as the next town.

2. Paul Recognized the Saints Who Helped Him Continue His Journeys

Romans 15:24 supplies another important passage concerning practical assistance connected with gospel work. Paul writes, “Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.” Notice that Paul was describing a proposed journey and expressing his expectation that the Roman believers would assist him along the way. The passage does not establish that the journey to Spain occurred exactly as anticipated, and we should not confuse Paul's stated intention with a detailed historical record of its completion. Nevertheless, his expectation reveals something important about the relationships among the early churches. Gospel workers did not necessarily travel as isolated individuals who refused every form of assistance. They benefited from fellowship, encouragement, and practical support supplied by other believers.

First Corinthians 16:6 contains a similar expression. Paul writes, “And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.” The apostle was making plans while recognizing that those plans remained subject to circumstances and the Lord's direction. Verse 7 explains that he hoped to spend some time with the Corinthians “if the Lord permit.” That qualification deserves attention. Paul

did not pretend that every itinerary he considered had been guaranteed through an extraordinary revelation. He made reasonable plans and acknowledged God's authority over their fulfillment. The believers' assistance would contribute toward his continued travel. This was practical cooperation, not religious entertainment. Nobody needed to invent a special apostolic transportation corporation to understand the arrangement. The need arose, the brethren could assist, and the journey could continue. The apostle knew how to preach the gospel, but he also knew that getting from one place to another required more than preaching about transportation.

The expression “bring me on my journey” should not be reduced to the modern idea of somebody sitting behind a steering wheel. The first-century world possessed different methods of travel, and providing assistance could involve supplies, provisions, companionship, financial support, or arrangements necessary for continued movement. The Scriptures do not provide enough detail to reconstruct every arrangement Paul expected. What matters is the principle of helping faithful servants proceed with their work. Modern transportation may therefore become a legitimate application without being falsely inserted into the historical record. A Christian who takes a visiting preacher to the airport, assists missionaries travelling between congregations, or transports necessary supplies is not reproducing the exact circumstances of Romans 15. He is applying the biblical principle of practical assistance. The distinction matters because rightly dividing Scripture requires honest interpretation before application. We do not need to put Paul behind the wheel of a modern automobile to understand why helping somebody travel can be useful Christian service.

3. Gaius Became a Fellowhelper to the Truth by Receiving Those Who Carried It

Third John provides one of the strongest New Testament statements concerning practical support for travelling gospel workers. The apostle John commends Gaius in verse 5, saying, “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.” Verse 6 continues by referring to those who had borne witness of his charity before the church, adding, “whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.” The expression is remarkably similar to Paul's instructions concerning assisting travellers. These believers had legitimate needs connected with their journeys, and Gaius had demonstrated genuine charity toward them. John recognized his faithfulness without treating him as a second-class Christian because he was not the man travelling to preach. The receiving and assisting of faithful workers was itself meaningful service. A man does not need to deliver every sermon personally to assist the spread of the truth contained in those sermons.

John explains the reason in verses 7 and 8: “Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” Notice the doctrinal precision. These men were going forth for the Lord's name, and the receiving believers became fellowhelpers to the truth. They were not purchasing salvation, earning spiritual superiority, or financing an entertainment business. They were supporting faithful servants engaged in legitimate work for Christ. That establishes a valuable principle concerning material assistance. The person preaching is responsible for his doctrine and conduct, while the person supporting that work should exercise biblical discernment concerning what he assists. A church cannot automatically claim spiritual credit for every journey it finances. If the message is corrupt, helping spread it is not a virtue. But where the truth is faithfully proclaimed, practical assistance can become genuine participation in supporting that proclamation.

The contrast appears immediately in 3 John 9–10, where Diotrephes is exposed as a man who loved to have the preeminence and refused to receive the brethren. He even hindered others who wanted to receive them and cast them out of the church. Here was a religious fellow so consumed with his own importance that he opposed legitimate Christian hospitality. His behaviour was not a minor personality difference. It was a serious expression of pride that interfered with faithful workers and those willing to assist them. John condemned it plainly. The lesson is especially appropriate when church officials attempt to monopolize ministry opportunities or discourage believers from helping sound gospel workers because those workers do not belong to their preferred religious circle. Biblical discernment is necessary, but personal jealousy is not discernment. Gaius helped the brethren travel. Diotrephes loved his own importance so much that he became a roadblock. One helped the truth move forward, while the other tried to make himself the tollbooth.

4. Sometimes the Distance Between a Soul and a Sermon Is a Ride

Consider the elderly believer who once attended every meeting but can no longer operate a vehicle safely. His mind may remain sharp, his Bible may remain well worn, and his desire to fellowship with the congregation may be as strong as ever. But age has changed his circumstances. Perhaps a widow lives alone, a disabled Christian cannot arrange reliable transportation, or a family possesses no dependable vehicle. These are not imaginary religious emergencies requiring extraordinary revelations. They are ordinary human circumstances in which practical Christian charity may accomplish something valuable. Galatians 6:10 declares, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” The instruction does not require every Christian to own a vehicle or provide unlimited transportation. It does establish the

responsibility to recognize legitimate opportunities for doing good. A willing driver may possess precisely the ability another believer presently lacks.

The same principle applies to somebody who desires to attend a meeting where the Scriptures are faithfully taught. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In its immediate context, Paul is discussing Israel, the proclamation of the message, and the necessity of hearing and believing. The verse does not mean that entering a church building automatically produces saving faith, nor does it establish attendance as a requirement for salvation. A sinner may hear and believe the gospel in a home, workplace, hospital, or countless other places. Nevertheless, helping somebody reach an opportunity to hear sound preaching can be useful service. Acts 8 records Philip preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch during an encounter involving travel and a chariot. That historical event was directed by divine intervention and is not a pattern authorizing modern Christians to claim supernatural appointments for every passenger. But it certainly demonstrates that the gospel can be proclaimed during a journey. The saving power is in Christ and His gospel, not in the vehicle carrying the listener.

A transportation ministry must therefore remember the distinction between removing an obstacle and producing a spiritual result. A driver can bring somebody to a meeting, but he cannot regenerate the passenger through the operation of an automobile. He can show kindness, answer appropriate questions, share Scripture, and provide an opportunity for fellowship. He cannot guarantee that the person will believe the gospel, grow in grace, or remain faithful. First Corinthians 3:6 declares, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” Paul was discussing the differing roles of ministers and the necessity of God's work, not providing a formula for operating transportation programs. Nevertheless, the principle corrects the tendency to measure every activity by impressive numerical claims. A church may count passengers, but the number alone does not establish spiritual fruit. The driver can provide the ride, the preacher can proclaim the word, and the hearer must respond to the truth. Nobody should confuse the steering wheel with the power of God.

5. Dependable Service Requires More Than Good Intentions and a Set of Car Keys

One of the most important qualifications for practical transportation service is dependability. A Christian who promises to collect an elderly believer at a particular time should understand that another person may be organizing the entire morning around that promise. Failure to arrive can leave somebody waiting, worried, or unable to attend the intended gathering. Matthew 5:37 records the Lord Jesus instructing His hearers, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.” The immediate setting belongs to Christ's earthly teaching, where He corrected abuses concerning oaths and truthfulness. Church

Age believers also receive clear instruction concerning truthful conduct. Ephesians 4:25 commands, “speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” The practical application is straightforward. A believer should not casually promise assistance he has no intention of providing. If circumstances prevent him from fulfilling a commitment, he should communicate promptly and arrange appropriate help when possible.

Providing transportation may involve genuine sacrifice. The driver spends time preparing, travelling, waiting, and returning home. Fuel costs money. Vehicles require maintenance. Other responsibilities must be considered. The service may be especially demanding when passengers require additional assistance or travel considerable distances. Yet none of those ordinary expenses makes the work spiritually worthless. Philippians 2:4 instructs believers, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” This does not abolish the Christian's responsibility toward his family, employment, and personal obligations. It commands an attitude of concern beyond selfish interests. A willing servant considers what assistance he can reasonably provide and then fulfils his commitment faithfully. The church should also recognize the costs involved rather than assuming that a generous driver possesses unlimited money and time. Sometimes the congregation can share expenses, organize additional volunteers, or establish arrangements that prevent one person's generosity from becoming an unreasonable burden.

Planning is therefore an expression of responsible service, not evidence of deficient faith. Luke 14:28 records the Lord's illustration of a man intending to build a tower and first considering the cost. The immediate lesson concerns counting the cost of discipleship, so the passage should not be transformed into a divine instruction manual for purchasing church vehicles. Yet the illustration plainly assumes the importance of considering whether a proposed undertaking can be completed. A congregation establishing regular transportation arrangements should consider available drivers, vehicle capacity, travel distances, scheduling, expenses, and the needs of passengers. First Corinthians 14:40 commands that all things be done decently and in order within its context of regulating the assembly. That principle supports sensible arrangements without requiring a bureaucratic empire. A ministry that advertises transportation but has no reliable drivers has not demonstrated great faith. It has demonstrated an impressive ability to make promises on behalf of people who may never arrive. Faithfulness requires more than enthusiasm.

6. Christian Charity Must Never Become an Excuse for Carelessness or Unsafe Conduct

Transportation involving children, elderly passengers, disabled individuals, or others requiring special assistance introduces responsibilities that cannot be ignored merely because the activity is called a ministry. Proverbs 22:3 declares, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” This belongs to Israel's wisdom literature, but its practical lesson concerning prudence is unmistakable. A church should not place vulnerable passengers into unsafe vehicles, assign drivers without reasonable qualifications, disregard proper insurance, or ignore applicable safety requirements. Children require appropriate supervision, lawful restraints, parental authorization, and responsible procedures. Where circumstances call for background checks, designated adult supervision, or documented transportation arrangements, those safeguards should be taken seriously. No congregation should expect parents to surrender ordinary judgment because a volunteer claims to possess a burden for souls. A man does not become a safe driver by putting a Bible on the dashboard, and a dangerous vehicle does not become roadworthy because somebody prayed over the tires.

The character and conduct of those entrusted with passengers are equally important. First Timothy 3 establishes qualifications for recognized church officers, including gravity, sobriety, good behaviour, and trustworthy conduct. Not every transportation volunteer holds such an office, but the moral principles should certainly inform the selection of people entrusted with vulnerable individuals. First Timothy 5:2 instructs Timothy to treat younger women “as sisters, with all purity.” That principle matters whenever transportation arrangements place people in situations involving personal boundaries, privacy, or unequal vulnerability. Churches should establish sensible safeguards against inappropriate one-on-one situations, coercion, harassment, and abuse. A volunteer should not use transportation to demand personal loyalty, obtain private access to children, or create obligations that passengers cannot comfortably refuse. Such conduct is not ministry. It is exploitation. Faithful service protects those receiving assistance, and responsible leaders should welcome safeguards rather than treating reasonable questions as attacks upon their spiritual authority.

Compassion must also govern the treatment of passengers who require additional help. James 1:27 speaks of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, while Romans 12:10 instructs believers to show brotherly affection and honour one another. A driver assisting an elderly saint should demonstrate patience rather than irritation when the passenger moves slowly. A family with young children should not be humiliated because loading and unloading takes additional time. Disabled individuals should receive appropriate assistance without being treated as helpless objects of religious pity. The church should recognize personal dignity, individual circumstances, and the limits of each volunteer's abilities. Some passengers require specialized transportation or trained

assistance that an ordinary volunteer cannot safely provide. Recognizing those limitations is responsible conduct, not a failure of charity. The purpose is to help people, not to produce impressive passenger totals while disregarding their welfare. A ministry that counts the people it carries but neglects the people it counts has confused human beings with cargo.

7. The Judgment Seat Will Reveal the Value of Faithful Journeys

The ministry of transportation may appear ordinary because its activities resemble countless journeys performed every day. A driver starts the vehicle, follows the road, arrives at the destination, and eventually returns home. Nothing about that process necessarily attracts attention. Yet Christian service is not evaluated solely according to its outward appearance. Colossians 3:23–24 declares, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The immediate context concerns servants performing their responsibilities, but the governing principle of labour offered unto Christ is directly relevant. The believer providing legitimate assistance should perform it faithfully, without expecting every passenger to deliver a speech of appreciation. He should also avoid imagining that the mere act of driving automatically establishes spiritual fruit. Motives, conduct, and the purpose of the work remain important. God knows the difference between charity and a desire for recognition.

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This judgment concerns believers and their service, not lost sinners appearing before the Great White Throne in Revelation 20. Salvation is received through faith in the finished work of Christ and remains secure in Him. The Judgment Seat examines Christian conduct and labour. First Corinthians 3:11–15 establishes Jesus Christ as the foundation and describes works being tested, with reward for what abides and loss for what is burned. The Scriptures do not reveal a specific reward for every mile driven, passenger transported, or hour spent waiting outside a church building. We should not invent one. But faithful labour performed unto Christ is not meaningless simply because it lacks public recognition. Men may record the distance travelled on an odometer. The Lord knows the reason the journey was made.

First Corinthians 4:5 adds that the Lord will “make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” That statement should correct the motives of both the celebrated preacher and the unnoticed driver. A man can operate a transportation ministry while secretly craving recognition, authority, or control. Another may perform the same outward task through sincere charity, faithfully assisting others without seeking prominence. The Lord knows

what men cannot see. But there is no spiritual virtue in deliberately cultivating bitterness because one's service receives little attention. The Christian who constantly complains that nobody appreciates his sacrifices may gradually make human recognition the very reward he claims not to desire. Galatians 6:9 commands, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” The believer should continue serving faithfully while exercising proper judgment concerning his responsibilities and limitations. A quiet ministry does not need to become a public spectacle to possess value before God.

Conclusion — The Journey Was Ordinary, but the Service Was Not Forgotten

The Scriptures establish a clear place for practical assistance connected with the journeys of God's servants. Paul instructed Titus to help Zenas and Apollos diligently so that their needs would be supplied. He anticipated assistance from believers during his proposed travels, and John commended Gaius for receiving faithful brethren and helping them forward on their journeys. These passages do not describe modern automobiles, church buses, airport transportation, or organized passenger schedules. They do, however, establish the biblical principle of helping others accomplish legitimate responsibilities through practical support. Applied carefully, that principle includes providing transportation for elderly believers, struggling families, visiting gospel workers, and others who would benefit from dependable assistance. The purpose is not to create another religious institution obsessed with statistics. It is to serve people faithfully while honouring the Lord Jesus Christ. The wheels may belong to the driver, but the opportunity to serve belongs to the Lord who made that driver's usefulness possible.

There is a necessary warning for congregations that desire transportation services without accepting the responsibilities accompanying them. A church should not pressure members into commitments they cannot fulfil, disregard vehicle safety, neglect vulnerable passengers, or treat volunteers as though their time and resources belong permanently to the institution. Neither should Christians use ordinary inconvenience as an excuse for refusing every legitimate opportunity to assist others. The biblical balance requires willingness, diligence, sound judgment, and genuine charity. The driver must remain dependable, the congregation must exercise proper oversight, and passengers must be treated with dignity and respect. Most importantly, the service must remain subordinate to the truth of God's word. Transportation cannot save a sinner, replace biblical preaching, or manufacture spiritual maturity. It can help somebody reach an opportunity to hear, learn, fellowship, or receive necessary care. That is a worthy purpose when pursued faithfully. A church does not need another impressive religious program that exists primarily to advertise itself. It needs Christians willing to help real people with real needs.

And somewhere this coming Sunday, before the first sermon begins and long after the advertisements have been forgotten, a faithful believer may be travelling down an ordinary road to collect somebody who cannot reach the congregation alone. Perhaps the passenger is an elderly widow who has served the Lord for decades. Perhaps it is a family experiencing financial hardship, a disabled believer requiring assistance, or a Christian who simply needs somebody dependable enough to keep a promise. The driver may never preach a sermon, lead a congregation, or receive public recognition for those journeys. His name may never appear in a ministry announcement, and the preacher may never know how the passenger arrived. Nevertheless, the opportunity to serve has been provided, and the work can be performed unto Christ. The final evaluation belongs to the Lord, who will judge faithfully and without regard to earthly prestige. The preacher may be remembered for the message, the congregation may remember the meeting, and the passenger may remember the kindness. But the Lord knows every faithful servant who helped make the journey possible. Sometimes the road to a sermon begins with an ordinary Christian who was willing to turn the key, open the door, and show up when somebody needed a ride.

8 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Visitors and Encouragers Who Refuse to Let the Forgotten Stay Forgotten

Key Scripture — 2 Timothy 1:16–17 (KJV)

“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.”

There is something mighty peculiar about modern Christianity. A church can spend thousands of dollars advertising a revival meeting, organize a banquet honouring its most prominent members, and publish photographs of every preacher who has occupied its pulpit, yet somehow forget the elderly widow who has not attended a service in six months because her health will no longer permit it. The congregation remembers the building fund, the missionary conference, the special offering, and the anniversary celebration, but the old fellow who faithfully taught Sunday school for thirty years has been sitting alone in a nursing home wondering whether anybody remembers he is alive. And while the religious establishment is busy celebrating its accomplishments, somebody quietly walks into that nursing home carrying a King James Bible, sits beside the forgotten saint, listens to his troubles, and reminds him that his brethren have not all abandoned him. There is no

camera, no applause, and no public recognition. But there is a ministry taking place that the Holy Ghost considered important enough to preserve in Scripture.

When the apostle Paul approached the closing years of his earthly ministry, he knew something about being forgotten. Second Timothy was written under circumstances involving imprisonment, opposition, abandonment, and the expectation of approaching death. The great apostle who had travelled extensively preaching the gospel of the grace of God now found himself in chains, with former companions scattered and some individuals unwilling to remain associated with him. Yet among the names appearing in this deeply personal epistle is a man named Onesiphorus. Paul did not commend him for building a cathedral, establishing a religious corporation, or collecting a tremendous following. He wrote, “for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.” Those words describe a ministry of personal loyalty, encouragement, and practical assistance during a difficult season. Onesiphorus did not merely admire Paul's preaching when the circumstances were favourable. He sought the suffering apostle when association with him had become inconvenient. That is a considerable difference between religious enthusiasm and Christian faithfulness.

The ministry of visitation and encouragement rests upon the same gospel that establishes every other legitimate Christian responsibility. A sinner is not saved through compassionate visits, charitable donations, personal encouragement, or hours spent comforting afflicted people. Salvation comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, while verse 10 declares that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Those good works include genuine concern for others, especially members of Christ's body experiencing hardship. A hospital visit cannot redeem a soul, and a comforting conversation cannot replace the blood of Christ. But the Christian who has received God's mercy ought to demonstrate something of that mercy toward others. The church has no business preaching about the compassion of Jesus Christ while treating suffering believers as though they have disappeared from the membership simply because they can no longer occupy their usual seats.

1. Onesiphorus Went Looking for the Man Everybody Else Was Avoiding

Second Timothy 1:15 establishes the immediate background for Paul's commendation of Onesiphorus. The apostle writes, “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” The statement does not mean that every saved person throughout Asia had abandoned Christianity or forfeited salvation. Paul was describing a painful withdrawal of association and support within the

circumstances of his imprisonment. His situation had become dangerous, and some who formerly maintained connections with him were no longer standing alongside him. Then comes the contrast in verse 16: “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.” Notice the expression “oft refreshed me.” This was not one ceremonial visit performed so the visitor could announce that he had fulfilled his religious obligation. Onesiphorus repeatedly provided encouragement to a suffering servant of Christ. His faithfulness continued when convenient association had become costly.

Verse 17 makes the testimony even more remarkable: “But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.” The words “very diligently” deserve serious attention. Onesiphorus did not wait for Paul to arrange an appointment, prepare a comfortable reception, or make himself easily accessible. He undertook the effort necessary to locate him. The Scripture does not provide every detail of that search, so there is no reason to invent conversations with guards, secret passages through Roman prisons, or dramatic adventures that the passage never records. What it plainly states is sufficient. The man went looking, continued looking diligently, and found the imprisoned apostle. That is Christian concern translated into actual conduct. Some people will spend an hour telling everybody how deeply burdened they are for a suffering Christian and then spend the following six months doing absolutely nothing about it. Onesiphorus did not merely possess a burden. He acted upon it. He did not send Paul a beautifully worded explanation of why visiting was inconvenient. He found the man.

Second Timothy 1:18 adds, “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.” Paul remembered a history of service, not merely one isolated incident. The reference to “that day” must be considered in light of the apostle's expectation of appearing before Christ, not transformed into a speculative doctrine about Onesiphorus's spiritual condition or an authorization for practices the passage never establishes. Scripture does not explicitly state that Onesiphorus was dead when Paul wrote these words. What it does reveal is that Paul valued his faithfulness and commended him before the Lord. The apostle who had preached to multitudes, established churches, endured persecution, and received extraordinary revelations was not too important to appreciate a man who refreshed him during imprisonment. If Paul needed encouragement, no ordinary preacher should imagine that receiving it is a confession of spiritual failure. And if Onesiphorus could serve Christ by visiting Paul, the Christian who visits a suffering brother today should not despise the opportunity.

2. Barnabas Demonstrated That Encouragement Requires More Than Flattering Words

Acts 4:36–37 introduces another man whose ministry deserves careful attention. The Scripture declares, “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.” He possessed land, sold it, and brought the money to the apostles. This occurred during the early Jerusalem period recorded in Acts, when believers were sharing resources under particular circumstances following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. We must not take that historical arrangement and impose compulsory communal ownership upon the Church Age, nor confuse voluntary giving with a condition of salvation. But Barnabas's willingness to contribute reveals something about his character. His concern for others was more than pleasant conversation. He gave practical assistance. His name became associated with consolation, and his conduct demonstrated why that description was appropriate. Biblical encouragement does not require a man to possess great wealth, but it does require something more substantial than an impressive collection of comforting phrases.

Acts 9:26–27 provides another remarkable example. After Saul's conversion, he came to Jerusalem and attempted to join himself to the disciples, but they were afraid of him because they did not believe he was a disciple. Considering his former persecution of believers, their concern was understandable. Then Barnabas intervened. The Scripture declares, “But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles,” explaining what had happened to Saul and how he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus. Barnabas did not simply tell Saul that everything would eventually work out. He assisted him in a specific situation where his testimony required recognition. Yet this was not blind acceptance without regard to evidence. Barnabas recounted the facts concerning Saul's encounter with the Lord and subsequent preaching. Genuine encouragement is not gullibility. Sometimes it involves standing beside somebody who has been misunderstood while honestly establishing the truth. A Christian who automatically believes every accusation is not discerning, and one who automatically dismisses every legitimate concern is not compassionate.

Acts 11:22–24 records Barnabas arriving at Antioch, seeing the grace of God, and exhorting believers “that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Verse 24 describes him as “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” He then travelled to Tarsus seeking Saul and brought him to Antioch, where they assembled with the church and taught many people. Here was encouragement directed toward doctrinal growth, fellowship, and faithful service. Barnabas did not merely make everybody feel appreciated regardless of what they believed or how they conducted themselves. He exhorted them to remain faithful to the Lord. Later, Acts 15 records a sharp disagreement between Barnabas and Paul concerning John Mark, demonstrating that faithful servants can experience

serious disagreements without becoming perfect heroes in every circumstance. Scripture records the matter honestly. Encouragement does not require pretending that Christians never make mistakes. It requires a sincere desire to strengthen others in what is right. Barnabas was not merely a professional compliment distributor. He helped men move forward in the service of Jesus Christ.

3. Pure Religion Does Not Forget the Fatherless and Widows

James 1:27 declares, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Before turning that verse into a convenient religious slogan, its doctrinal setting must be understood. James 1:1 identifies the recipients as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” The epistle's Jewish setting and its practical treatment of faith, works, trials, and conduct must not be carelessly merged with Paul's revelation concerning justification in the body of Christ. James 1:27 is not teaching that a sinner earns eternal life by visiting nursing homes or distributing groceries to widows. Nevertheless, the passage clearly identifies concern for the afflicted as conduct pleasing before God. The word “visit” involves more than knowing that suffering people exist. It calls attention to personal care during affliction. Religious profession that never reaches the afflicted has failed a serious practical test.

The expression “fatherless and widows” identifies people who were especially vulnerable in the historical circumstances addressed by James. The loss of a husband or father could bring considerable financial hardship, social insecurity, and dependence upon others. Scripture repeatedly recognizes the responsibility to treat such individuals justly. Exodus 22:22 warned Israel against afflicting widows and fatherless children, while Deuteronomy 10:18 declared that the LORD executed judgment for the fatherless and widow. These instructions belonged to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, and we must not transfer that national legal system wholesale to the Church. Nevertheless, the moral concern is unmistakable. God does not approve of powerful people exploiting those who lack ordinary protection. The Christian who possesses opportunities to assist vulnerable people should remember that biblical compassion is not reserved for individuals who can provide something valuable in return. A widow should not have to become wealthy, influential, or famous before somebody in the congregation remembers where she lives.

First Timothy 5 provides direct Church Age instruction concerning the treatment of widows. Verse 3 commands, “Honour widows that are widows indeed,” while subsequent verses distinguish the responsibilities of relatives and the congregation. Paul does not establish an indiscriminate arrangement whereby every request must be financed without examination. He instructs family members to fulfil their obligations and establishes

qualifications concerning ongoing church support. That is important because genuine charity must operate with wisdom rather than confusion. Nevertheless, the responsibility is real. A congregation should not abandon an elderly widow simply because she can no longer contribute financially or participate in visible activities. Perhaps she needs transportation, help obtaining necessities, a visit, or somebody willing to listen without treating her as an inconvenience. The answer is not to organize an impressive annual appreciation banquet while neglecting her the remaining eleven months. Christian honour is demonstrated through continuing conduct, not merely ceremonial recognition.

4. The Bible Commands Believers to Weep With Those Who Weep

Romans 12:15 contains one of the simplest and most searching instructions concerning Christian companionship: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Paul is addressing believers within the body of Christ and describing conduct consistent with sincere charity. The instruction is remarkable because it does not command Christians to manufacture an immediate explanation for every sorrow. Sometimes another believer has received good news, and the proper response is genuine rejoicing without jealousy. Sometimes another believer has experienced grief, and the proper response is sorrow shared rather than a hurried attempt to end the conversation. A Christian who attends a funeral determined to deliver a complicated explanation for everything God has permitted may accomplish considerably less than the faithful friend who quietly sits beside the grieving family. Not every tear requires a lecture, and not every sorrow can be settled with a sentence borrowed from a religious greeting card. Sometimes Christian charity begins by acknowledging that the other person is suffering.

Consider the account of Job and his three friends. Job 2:11 explains that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar arranged to visit him, “to mourn with him and to comfort him.” When they first saw his terrible condition, they wept, rent their mantles, and sat with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights. Verse 13 explains, “and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.” Their original willingness to come and sit with their suffering friend was commendable. Unfortunately, the following chapters reveal what happened when they began confidently explaining Job's affliction through accusations and assumptions that did not accurately represent his situation. In Job 16:2, Job finally declared, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” The book belongs to its own historical and doctrinal setting, and Job's experience must not be turned into a universal formula for every Christian affliction. Nevertheless, the contrast is instructive. Their presence initially provided companionship, while their careless accusations intensified his suffering.

Second Corinthians 1:3–4 identifies God as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,” explaining that He comforts believers in tribulation so they may comfort others

with the comfort they themselves have received of God. Paul does not teach that Christians can eliminate every affliction through sufficient encouragement. The surrounding passage speaks honestly about trouble, suffering, dependence upon God, and deliverance. Biblical consolation directs attention toward the Lord's faithfulness without denying the reality of pain. A grieving parent does not need somebody inventing a secret reason why a child died. A suffering believer does not need a confident declaration that every illness resulted from hidden sin. A discouraged minister does not need another religious expert explaining how all his troubles would disappear if he possessed greater faith. Sometimes the faithful response is to acknowledge the difficulty, open the Scriptures where appropriate, provide practical assistance, and remain present. Christian comfort should bring the suffering person nearer to the God of all comfort, not make him endure another man's performance of superior spirituality.

5. The Thessalonians Were Told to Comfort, Warn, Support, and Exercise Patience

First Thessalonians 5:11 declares, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” The instruction follows Paul's explanation concerning the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of departed believers, and the gathering of living saints to meet Christ. First Thessalonians 4:13–18 provides the blessed hope that distinguishes Christian expectation from the hopelessness of those without Christ. Verse 18 commands, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Notice the source of comfort. Paul does not direct believers toward imaginary revelations, emotional manipulation, or fabricated promises concerning earthly circumstances. He directs them toward revealed truth. The departed Christian is not permanently lost to the body of Christ, and those alive at the Lord's coming possess the promise of being caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet Him. This is comfort anchored to the finished work and coming of Jesus Christ, not temporary reassurance manufactured by religious optimism.

The same epistle establishes that encouragement requires discernment concerning different conditions. First Thessalonians 5:14 declares, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” There is enough practical instruction in that verse to expose a considerable amount of modern foolishness. Paul does not command the congregation to respond identically to every circumstance. The unruly require warning. Those needing encouragement require comfort. The weak require support. Everybody requires patience. The expression “feebleminded” appears in the King James Bible and should be understood according to the instruction's purpose rather than used as a contemptuous label for somebody experiencing difficulty. The passage does not authorize diagnosing people, humiliating them, or dismissing genuine suffering. It requires believers to exercise judgment

concerning the kind of help actually needed. A rebellious man does not need his rebellion flattered, and a grieving widow does not need to be rebuked for failing to smile. Biblical ministry knows the difference.

Verse 15 continues, “See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.” That command exposes another common failure within Christian fellowship. Some believers become so offended by another person's difficulties that they begin treating the suffering individual as a burden or personal irritation. A discouraged Christian may ask the same question repeatedly. A grieving parent may struggle to concentrate. An elderly saint may require additional time to explain a concern. Patience is not always convenient, but Paul commanded it. At the same time, patience does not require unlimited availability, tolerance of abuse, or abandonment of other legitimate responsibilities. The instruction concerns the spirit in which believers deal with one another. A faithful visitor should be compassionate without becoming controlling, patient without encouraging sinful conduct, and truthful without becoming harsh. The objective is edification. The church does not need a collection of amateur religious dictators supervising everybody's sorrow. It needs Christians who know when to warn, when to encourage, when to support, and when simply to remain beside a suffering brother.

6. Real Christian Care Requires Willing Hands, Listening Ears, and Proper Boundaries

James 2:15–16 presents a searching illustration: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,” and somebody merely offers comforting words without providing necessities, “what doth it profit?” The passage belongs to James's instruction concerning the practical demonstration of faith and must not be twisted into a denial of justification by grace through faith in the present Church Age. Nevertheless, the illustration exposes empty religious profession. A Christian should not promise practical help while deliberately refusing every opportunity to provide it. Galatians 6:2 commands believers to bear one another's burdens, while verse 5 reminds each person of his own responsibility. These instructions are complementary, not contradictory. Genuine charity assists people without encouraging unnecessary dependence or abandoning personal stewardship. Sometimes the appropriate ministry is prayer and encouragement. Sometimes it is a meal, transportation, a visit, or help obtaining necessities. A religious promise that never reaches the hands may be little more than an advertisement for compassion that nobody intends to deliver.

The visitor must also resist the temptation to become an expert on every form of human suffering. Some Christians have developed the unfortunate habit of answering every illness with an accusation, every sorrow with a slogan, and every difficult question with a

declaration that God has personally revealed the explanation. Scripture does not authorize such presumption. Second Timothy 4:20 records Paul saying, “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” First Timothy 5:23 shows Paul addressing Timothy's stomach trouble and frequent infirmities. These passages demonstrate that faithful Christian service did not eliminate ordinary physical affliction during the apostolic period. A visitor should never discourage necessary medical attention, pretend to possess knowledge he does not have, or promise miraculous healing upon conditions God has not established. Prayer is appropriate, and biblical consolation is necessary, but neither requires inventing divine explanations for circumstances Scripture has not explained. The suffering Christian needs a faithful brother, not a self-appointed prophet who believes every hospital room is waiting for his latest revelation.

Proper boundaries are equally important. Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” Visiting a sick or grieving person does not grant permission to distribute private information throughout the congregation. Sensitive conversations deserve discretion, and personal assistance must respect the dignity of the individual receiving it. That does not mean concealing abuse, criminal conduct, serious danger, or matters requiring appropriate protection and intervention. Faithful care distinguishes legitimate confidentiality from dishonest secrecy. Visitors should also respect family responsibilities, reasonable visiting hours, institutional rules, and the wishes of those they serve. A person recovering from surgery may need rest more than an extended sermon. A grieving family may need practical help rather than another unexpected gathering in its living room. A faithful servant exercises judgment instead of demanding access. Christian charity should relieve unnecessary burdens, not introduce fresh ones through carelessness.

7. The Lord Will Remember the Servants Whom the World Never Noticed

The closing chapter of Second Timothy provides another sobering picture of Paul's circumstances. In 2 Timothy 4:10, he writes, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” Other companions had departed for different destinations, and verse 11 records, “Only Luke is with me.” Paul then describes his first answer before his opponents, declaring in verse 16, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.” Yet he immediately adds, “I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.” Here was an apostle abandoned by men who nevertheless refused to surrender his confidence in the Lord. Verse 17 declares, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” That distinction is essential. Human companionship is valuable, but Christ remains faithful when human assistance fails. Onesiphorus refreshed Paul, Luke

remained with him, and the Lord sustained him. These truths belong together without confusing the servant with the Saviour.

Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the believer's accountability before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment concerns those saved through faith in Jesus Christ, not the lost appearing before the Great White Throne in Revelation 20. First Corinthians 3:11–15 distinguishes the foundation of salvation in Christ from the works believers perform after salvation. Those works will be examined, and Scripture identifies both reward and loss. First Corinthians 4:5 further declares that the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. We are not authorized to invent a heavenly reward schedule assigning particular crowns to every hospital visit or nursing-home conversation. But we are authorized to believe that Christ judges faithfully and that sincere service unto Him is not meaningless. The visitor whose name never appears in the church bulletin may accomplish something eternally valuable without attracting attention. Men remember the preacher who filled the auditorium. The Lord also knows the servant who visited the believer who could no longer enter it.

There is one final danger that must be addressed. Encouragement can become corrupted when the person providing it begins seeking personal importance through another individual's suffering. A visitor may gradually expect constant gratitude, special access, unquestioning loyalty, or the emotional dependence of somebody experiencing hardship. That is not biblical consolation. First Timothy 2:5 declares, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” The Christian helper does not become another mediator, a private spiritual authority, or an indispensable source of guidance. His purpose is to direct people toward the Lord and His word. In Acts 20:32, Paul commended believers “to God, and to the word of his grace.” That is the proper destination of Christian encouragement. A faithful visitor helps another believer stand more securely in Christ rather than making him increasingly dependent upon the visitor. The best encourager does not build a throne in somebody else's sorrow. He points the suffering person toward the throne of grace.

Conclusion — The Forgotten Saints Are Not Forgotten by God

The ministry of visitation and encouragement stands upon firm biblical ground. Onesiphorus diligently sought Paul during imprisonment and repeatedly refreshed him. Barnabas demonstrated consolation through practical generosity, personal assistance, and faithful exhortation. James identified the care of afflicted widows and fatherless children as an important expression of pure religion, while Paul's instructions to Timothy established practical responsibilities toward widows within the Church Age. Romans 12 commands believers to rejoice and weep together, and First Thessalonians requires

comfort, support, warning, and patience according to the circumstances. These Scriptures do not establish sentimental religion, substitute charitable works for the gospel, or require Christians to pretend that every sorrow has an immediate explanation. They call saved people to demonstrate genuine concern for others. The gospel creates the relationship, sound doctrine governs the conduct, and charity supplies the willingness to act. A congregation that faithfully preaches Christ should also demonstrate that His people have learned something about caring for one another.

There is a particular rebuke here for churches that measure importance by attendance, financial contribution, public ability, or social influence. A suffering believer does not become less valuable because he can no longer volunteer, contribute money, or attend every service. An elderly widow is not spiritually expendable because her name no longer appears on an active ministry schedule. A disabled Christian should not have to apologize for requiring assistance, and a grieving family should not be expected to recover according to somebody else's convenient timetable. At the same time, those receiving assistance must remember that other believers possess legitimate responsibilities and limitations. Biblical charity operates through mutual consideration rather than manipulation. The church should neither abandon the afflicted nor encourage unhealthy dependence. It should minister according to Scripture, with patience, wisdom, honesty, and genuine love. A congregation that treats its weakest members as disposable has forgotten the words of 1 Corinthians 12:22: “those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.”

And somewhere tonight, while another religious organization prepares its next impressive celebration, there may be a forgotten Christian sitting beside a hospital window, an elderly widow alone in her house, a discouraged preacher wondering whether anybody still cares, or a grieving family facing another difficult evening. Perhaps the most useful person who reaches them will not possess a title, a microphone, a large following, or any remarkable public ability. Perhaps he will simply arrive, open the Scriptures when appropriate, listen patiently, provide necessary assistance, and remind them through faithful conduct that they have not been abandoned by their brethren. That service may never become a published testimony or receive a standing ovation. But the Lord knows the servant and the circumstances in which he laboured. Onesiphorus did not become useful by collecting religious admirers. He became useful by seeking out a suffering apostle and refreshing him. The world remembers the names written across church buildings, conference banners, and ministry advertisements. But the Lord also remembers the faithful Christian who walked through a hospital door, sat beside a forgotten saint, and refused to let suffering become abandonment. The church may forget who is missing from the congregation, but heaven has never lost track of the person who is missing from the pew.

9 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Little Children, the Patient Teachers, and the Workers Nobody Notices

Key Scripture — 2 Timothy 3:14–15 (KJV)

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 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.”

There is something mighty peculiar about a church that can spend thousands of dollars entertaining children while apparently believing that teaching them the Bible would be far too complicated. The building has colourful decorations, enormous television screens, electronic games, elaborate costumes, and enough refreshments to supply a small army. The children leave remembering the puppets, the prizes, and the fellow dressed like a talking vegetable, but ask them what Jesus Christ accomplished at Calvary and you may discover that nobody managed to explain it. Meanwhile, somewhere in a modest classroom, a faithful Christian sits before eight children with an open King James Bible, patiently explaining the difference between sin and righteousness, law and grace, Israel and the Church, and salvation through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That teacher may never attract a crowd, receive a religious award, or become the subject of a ministry advertisement. But the Holy Ghost has considerably more to say about teaching children the Scriptures than He does about keeping them entertained until their parents return.

When Paul wrote his final inspired instructions to Timothy, he reminded the younger preacher of something that began long before Timothy possessed any recognized ministry. Second Timothy 3:15 declares, “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.” Notice the expression “from a child.” Timothy's familiarity with Scripture did not suddenly appear when he became associated with the apostle Paul. Somebody had been teaching him long before that. Somebody had invested time, answered questions, explained passages, corrected misunderstandings, and established the importance of God's word while Timothy was still young. Second Timothy 1:5 identifies his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice as women possessing unfeigned faith. They were not apostles, bishops, or travelling evangelists, yet their influence belonged to the spiritual foundation of a man who would later labour alongside Paul. That ought to settle the foolish notion that teaching children is an insignificant assignment suitable only for people who cannot obtain a more impressive ministry.

The importance of teaching children must be understood without confusing biblical instruction with religious manipulation. A child cannot inherit salvation from godly parents, obtain eternal life through church attendance, or become a member of Christ's body merely because somebody places him in a religious classroom. Salvation in this present Church Age remains by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death for our sins, burial, and bodily resurrection constitute the gospel recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Nevertheless, children can learn the Scriptures, understand moral responsibility, hear the gospel, ask meaningful questions, and come to genuine faith in Christ. The responsibility of adults is to provide faithful instruction rather than manufacture impressive conversion statistics. The church needs patient teachers, responsible parents, trustworthy helpers, and believers who recognize the importance of ministering to the young. A child is not an interruption to the ministry merely because he cannot yet explain everything he hears. He may be the person who remembers the lesson long after the teacher has forgotten delivering it.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ Refused to Treat Children as Worthless Interruptions

Mark 10:13–16 records an incident that exposes the danger of allowing religious importance to become an excuse for neglecting children. The Scripture declares, “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.” Consider the circumstances. The Lord Jesus Christ was carrying out His earthly ministry to Israel, teaching concerning the kingdom and preparing His disciples for events they did not yet fully understand. The disciples apparently regarded the arrival of children as an interruption requiring correction. Perhaps they imagined that the Lord had more important people to address. Whatever their reasoning, their conduct received a direct rebuke. Verse 14 declares, “But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased.” The disciples thought they were protecting the importance of His ministry, but they were actually hindering people whom He was willing to receive. It is a dangerous thing when religious men become so occupied with protecting the work of God that they begin interfering with the people God intends to reach.

The Lord continued, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Those words must remain within their proper historical and doctrinal setting. Christ was ministering to Israel before Calvary, and His teaching concerning the kingdom cannot simply be transformed into a Church Age ordinance requiring infant baptism or automatic church membership. Mark 10 does not teach that every child possesses unconditional salvation, that sprinkling an infant accomplishes regeneration, or that the church has authority to manufacture spiritual life through a religious ceremony. The immediate passage concerns the reception of children and the

Lord's teaching about receiving the kingdom of God as a little child. The disciples were wrong to hinder them. Christ received them. Verse 16 records that He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. The passage establishes His concern without authorizing inventions that the text never contains.

There is an unmistakable practical lesson here for modern congregations. Children should not be treated as obstacles merely because their presence requires patience, instruction, supervision, and occasional correction. A church may need appropriate arrangements to prevent unnecessary disruptions during preaching, but those arrangements should serve the spiritual welfare of children rather than communicate that they are unwelcome. Parents should teach proper conduct, and teachers should recognize that young children learn progressively. A four-year-old cannot reasonably be expected to possess the attention span or biblical understanding of a mature believer. Yet that does not mean the child is incapable of learning anything important. The Lord rebuked those who hindered children from coming to Him. A congregation should therefore examine whether its treatment of children reflects genuine care or merely the convenience of adults. The objective is not to make children the centre of the church. It is to direct them toward the Saviour who never regarded their presence as beneath His attention.

2. God Gave Parents the Primary Responsibility Before Churches Invented Children's Programs

Ephesians 6:4 provides direct Church Age instruction concerning the responsibility of fathers: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Notice that Paul does not instruct fathers to surrender the spiritual upbringing of their children to a religious department. The responsibility begins in the home. Christian parents are accountable for teaching their children biblical truth, demonstrating godly conduct, correcting wrongdoing appropriately, and providing an environment in which the word of God is honoured. The expression “nurture and admonition” includes both instruction and correction, not merely entertainment or emotional encouragement. Children require guidance concerning right and wrong, truth and error, obedience and rebellion. But the command also warns fathers against provoking children to wrath. Harshness, hypocrisy, unreasonable demands, and inconsistent discipline can undermine the very instruction parents claim to provide. Biblical authority is not permission to become a domestic tyrant.

Colossians 3:21 reinforces the warning: “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” The Scriptures do not require parents to choose between loving their children and correcting them. Genuine love includes appropriate instruction and discipline, while godly correction must remain governed by righteousness rather than

personal temper. A father who publicly lectures his children about self-control while privately exploding in anger whenever he is inconvenienced has provided an unfortunate demonstration of hypocrisy. Likewise, a mother who continually speaks about Christian charity while humiliating her children before others has confused religious vocabulary with biblical conduct. The home is often the first place children observe whether the adults teaching Scripture actually believe what they teach. A father cannot spend six days demonstrating that his Bible means nothing and expect one hour of Sunday school to repair the contradiction. Parents should support faithful teachers, but they must never use those teachers as substitutes for their own obedience.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 contains a significant Old Testament example of parental instruction, commanding Israel to teach God's words diligently unto their children. The passage belongs to the Mosaic covenant and addresses Israel concerning commandments given to that nation. It does not authorize transferring Israel's national covenant obligations directly to the body of Christ. Nevertheless, the seriousness of parental teaching provides a legitimate illustration. God did not treat the instruction of children as an incidental activity. Within the present dispensation, Ephesians 6 supplies the direct command, while 2 Timothy demonstrates the value of scriptural knowledge received in childhood. Church teachers can assist parents, reinforce truth, answer questions, and provide suitable instruction, but they cannot replace the home. A congregation should therefore avoid building an enormous children's program that unintentionally encourages parents to abandon their responsibilities. The church ought to strengthen the biblical household, not become a convenient institution where parents deposit their children while outsourcing every spiritual obligation.

3. Lois and Eunice Demonstrated the Power of Faithful Instruction Without Public Recognition

Second Timothy 1:5 records Paul's remembrance of Timothy's spiritual background: “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.” Notice that Paul identifies two women by name and connects their sincere faith with Timothy's spiritual upbringing. The passage does not state that Timothy automatically received salvation because his grandmother and mother believed. Faith cannot be inherited through family relationships, and eternal life is not transferred genetically from one generation to another. Every sinner must personally believe the gospel. Nevertheless, the example demonstrates the importance of a household where genuine faith is present and the Scriptures are taught. Lois and Eunice possessed no recorded apostolic office, yet their

names remain preserved in the inspired word of God. Their influence was not measured by a public audience. It was demonstrated in the spiritual preparation of Timothy.

Second Timothy 3:14 instructs Timothy to continue in what he had learned, “knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” The next verse specifically identifies his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures from childhood. Paul was not encouraging Timothy to abandon his early instruction merely because he had become an experienced minister. He was reminding him of the trustworthy foundation upon which his understanding had been established. The chapter's surrounding context warns about perilous times, corrupt men, deceivers, and increasing wickedness. Against that background, Timothy was to continue in the Scriptures rather than surrender to fashionable religious deception. There is a lesson for anybody teaching children today. The objective is not to make children dependent upon the teacher's personality. It is to establish their confidence in God's word. A faithful teacher ought to desire that the child eventually become capable of recognizing truth from Scripture even when the teacher is no longer present.

The historical record also reminds us that Timothy's childhood instruction took place before the completion of the New Testament canon. The Holy Scriptures he had known from childhood necessarily included the Old Testament writings. Yet Paul says those Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” That distinction matters. The Old Testament bears witness to God's redemptive purposes and contains prophecy, types, history, and promises that find their proper significance in Christ, but the full revelation of the gospel of grace must be understood through the New Testament. Romans 15:4 declares that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. A teacher should therefore instruct children from the whole Bible while rightly dividing the dispensational distinctions within it. Lois and Eunice did not need a television studio to influence Timothy. They needed genuine faith, the Scriptures, and the willingness to teach what God had said.

4. Children Need the Word of God, Not an Endless Religious Entertainment Program

Second Timothy 3:16–17 provides the governing standard for biblical instruction: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Paul continues by explaining that Scripture equips the man of God for good works. Notice the four functions. Doctrine establishes what is true. Reproof exposes what is wrong. Correction addresses error. Instruction in righteousness teaches proper conduct. There is no age category in which the word of God suddenly becomes unprofitable because the student is young. Children require explanations suited to their understanding, but those explanations should communicate actual biblical truth. A teacher may use illustrations, questions, visual aids, and suitable

activities to assist learning. The problem begins when the illustration replaces the lesson and the entertainment becomes more important than the Scriptures. A classroom full of laughter is not necessarily a classroom full of learning, and a child who remembers the puppet but forgets the gospel has not received the intended instruction.

The faithful teacher must also recognize that children are capable of asking serious questions. A child may ask why people die, what sin means, whether Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, why God permitted suffering, or how somebody can know he is saved. Those questions deserve honest biblical answers rather than irritation or invented stories. First Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be ready to give an answer concerning their hope, with meekness and fear. The passage addresses suffering Christians, not specifically children's teachers, but the principle of prepared, respectful explanation is applicable. The instructor should know the Scriptures sufficiently to answer common questions and possess enough humility to admit when further study is necessary. There is no spiritual virtue in manufacturing an answer because a six-year-old asked something difficult. The teacher who admits that he must examine the passage more carefully may demonstrate greater faithfulness than the fellow who confidently teaches nonsense and expects the children to applaud his intelligence.

Rightly dividing the word of truth is especially important when teaching young believers. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth. Children should gradually learn the distinction between Israel and the Church, law and grace, earthly covenant promises and the believer's heavenly position in Christ. They should understand that Noah's ark is an actual historical account, David's confrontation with Goliath occurred within Israel's history, and Daniel's prophetic visions must be interpreted according to their scriptural setting. These accounts may provide moral instruction without becoming direct doctrinal commands to Christians today. Above all, children should understand the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ rather than a confused mixture of commandments, ceremonies, and religious performances. Teachers should not overwhelm young minds with unnecessary complexity, but neither should they assume children are incapable of learning accurate doctrine. A child's Bible lesson should be simple enough to understand without becoming so shallow that there is nothing biblical left to understand.

5. A Repeated Prayer Is Not the Same Thing as Genuine Salvation

One of the most dangerous practices in children's ministry is the pressure placed upon young children to repeat a prayer so that adults can announce another conversion. The teacher presents an emotional story, lowers his voice, asks everybody to close their eyes, and encourages children to repeat certain words. A dozen hands are raised, several

children become confused about what is happening, and before long somebody has recorded fifteen salvations for the monthly ministry report. But where does the King James Bible teach that repeating words after an adult automatically regenerates a sinner? It does not. First Corinthians 15:1–4 establishes the gospel concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation through faith, not religious performance. Romans 10:10 declares, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The issue is genuine faith in Christ, not the successful completion of a verbal exercise.

Children can understand the gospel, but teachers must exercise patience and avoid confusing agreement with comprehension. A young child may repeat almost anything when an admired adult asks him to do so. He may raise his hand because his friends raised theirs, answer a question because he wants approval, or repeat a prayer without understanding the significance of Christ's death and resurrection. None of those possibilities means children cannot genuinely believe. It means adults must not manufacture professions through pressure. The teacher should explain sin, the need of salvation, the person of Jesus Christ, His finished work, and the promise of eternal life through faith in Him. Questions should be answered honestly without manipulating fear or affection. A child who needs additional instruction should receive it rather than being hurried into a recorded decision. The object of gospel preaching is not to get a child to repeat the teacher's words. It is to bring the child to understand and believe God's word concerning His Son.

The Scriptures do not establish a universal numerical age at which every child suddenly becomes capable of genuine faith. Religious systems that invent an absolute age of accountability and apply it mechanically to every individual have gone beyond what the Bible explicitly states. Likewise, a child's baptism, confirmation, church membership, or family background cannot replace personal faith in Christ. Acts 16:31 declares, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The following verses show that the word of the Lord was spoken to those in the household, and the passage does not establish automatic salvation through the father's decision. The faithful teacher must therefore avoid both extremes: discouraging a child who genuinely understands the gospel and falsely assuring another who merely performed a religious exercise. Salvation is the work of God, not a statistic produced by human persuasion. A good teacher would rather spend another month explaining the gospel faithfully than spend one afternoon manufacturing decisions that nobody can honestly defend from Scripture.

6. Patient Teachers Must Demonstrate the Truth They Are Teaching

Titus 2:3–5 contains instructions concerning aged women and their responsibilities toward younger women. Paul commands that they be “in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” They are then instructed to teach younger women concerning appropriate conduct within the home and family. The passage is not a direct description of a modern children's Sunday school department, and its original application should not be abandoned. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that spiritually mature women possess a legitimate responsibility to communicate sound instruction to others. The older generation should not simply complain about the younger generation while refusing to teach it. Mothers, grandmothers, and trustworthy Christian women can exert tremendous influence through biblical instruction and godly conduct. Such service must remain consistent with the distinctions governing church offices and authority elsewhere in the New Testament. Teaching children does not require inventing a pastoral office or disregarding Paul's instructions concerning church leadership.

The manner of instruction matters as much as the material being presented. Second Timothy 2:24 declares, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Although Paul is instructing Timothy concerning the conduct of a servant responsible for handling opposition and correcting error, the qualities of gentleness and patience are certainly necessary when teaching children. Children forget instructions, ask repeated questions, misunderstand explanations, and sometimes test the patience of the person responsible for them. A teacher must establish appropriate order without using humiliation as a substitute for correction. Shouting, sarcasm directed at vulnerable children, personal ridicule, and angry displays of authority do not become biblical discipline merely because they occur inside a church building. At the same time, patient instruction does not require allowing deliberate disruption to continue without correction. Faithful teaching combines authority with self-control. A teacher who loses his temper every time a child makes a mistake may know the lesson, but he still needs to learn something about teaching it.

The teacher must also remain a student of the Scriptures. First Timothy 4:13 instructs Timothy, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Verse 16 adds, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them.” These instructions concern Timothy's ministry, but their emphasis upon personal conduct and doctrinal faithfulness establishes an important standard for anybody entrusted with biblical instruction. A children's teacher should not assume that preparing a lesson requires little study because the audience is young. In many respects, explaining difficult truth clearly requires greater preparation than repeating complicated terminology before adults. Children should not be given inaccurate doctrine simply because the teacher assumes they will never notice. They should encounter adults whose speech, conduct, and teaching

are consistent with the Scriptures. A faithful instructor may never know which explanation a child will remember decades later, but that uncertainty is no excuse for carelessness. The lesson may last thirty minutes. The truth properly taught may remain with the child for a lifetime.

7. Protecting Children Is Part of Faithful Ministry, Not an Optional Administrative Detail

Any congregation that accepts responsibility for teaching and supervising children must recognize the seriousness of that trust. Matthew 18:6 records the Lord Jesus warning against offending little ones who believe in Him. The passage belongs to His earthly ministry and must be understood within its kingdom context, but the seriousness with which Christ regarded vulnerable believers should never be dismissed. Children are not possessions belonging to religious workers, and an adult does not receive unlimited authority over them by accepting a classroom assignment. Proverbs 22:3 declares, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” That principle supports reasonable foresight and appropriate safeguards. Churches should establish trustworthy supervision, suitable screening of workers, appropriate classroom arrangements, and clear procedures for protecting children. A man does not become trustworthy merely because he can quote Scripture, wear a suit, or describe himself as called to the ministry. Character must be demonstrated, not advertised.

Practical child protection includes the proper authorization of adults supervising children, appropriate visibility and accountability, clear procedures for receiving and releasing children, and responsible handling of transportation and private communication. Background screening, trained supervision, suitable adult-to-child ratios, and policies limiting isolated one-on-one situations may be necessary according to the circumstances. These particular administrative safeguards are not listed as a modern policy manual in the New Testament, but they represent reasonable applications of prudence and stewardship. A congregation should also have procedures for promptly addressing suspected abuse, contacting appropriate authorities when required, and protecting children from further harm. No pastor, teacher, deacon, or influential member possesses the right to suppress credible concerns merely to protect a ministry's reputation. Ephesians 5:11 commands believers to have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, “but rather reprove them.” Covering up wickedness to preserve a religious institution is not loyalty to Christ. It is loyalty to corruption.

The same principles require appropriate boundaries in the relationships between teachers and children. Workers should not encourage secrecy from parents, demand personal attachment, communicate privately in inappropriate ways, or use religious authority to

intimidate vulnerable children. Parents must retain their responsibilities, and church leadership must remain accountable to Scripture and legitimate oversight. First Peter 5:3 warns elders against being “lords over God's heritage,” and that principle certainly provides no encouragement for domineering conduct toward children. A faithful teacher should desire that children learn the Bible, respect proper authority, understand the gospel, and grow toward personal responsibility before the Lord. The teacher should not attempt to make himself indispensable. Furthermore, the congregation should provide adequate support so teachers are not left to manage unreasonable numbers of children without assistance. Protecting children requires more than an impressive statement printed in a handbook. It requires actual conduct. A church that teaches children about righteousness while refusing to protect them from wickedness has contradicted its own lessons before the children ever open their Bibles.

Conclusion — The Small Classroom and the Eternal Importance of Faithful Teaching

The ministry of teaching children occupies a necessary place within the practical responsibilities of Christian service. The Lord Jesus Christ rebuked those who hindered children from coming to Him. Paul commanded fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Lois and Eunice demonstrated the influence of genuine faith within Timothy's family, while his childhood knowledge of the Holy Scriptures became part of the foundation for his later ministry. Titus established the responsibility of mature women to teach sound conduct, and the pastoral epistles repeatedly emphasize doctrine, patience, character, and faithful instruction. These passages do not establish religious entertainment as a substitute for biblical teaching, nor do they authorize emotional manipulation designed to manufacture professions of faith. They demonstrate that the young require truth, instruction, protection, and adults willing to perform the difficult work of teaching patiently. Children should be treated as people who need the Scriptures today, not merely as future adults who may become useful to the church someday.

There is a searching warning here for parents, pastors, and every person entrusted with the care of children. Parents must not abandon their God-given responsibilities to a religious institution. Pastors must not treat children's instruction as an insignificant department receiving whatever attention remains after the more impressive activities have been financed. Teachers must not substitute entertainment for doctrine, intimidation for discipline, or emotional pressure for genuine faith. Neither should congregations become so concerned about producing impressive attendance figures that they overlook the spiritual welfare and physical safety of the children entrusted to their care. The objective is not to raise a generation that merely knows how to behave inside a church building. It is to

teach children the Scriptures, explain the gospel accurately, encourage genuine faith in Jesus Christ, and demonstrate godly conduct before them. A church that spends more time teaching children how to enjoy its programs than how to understand their Bibles should not be surprised when those children eventually outgrow the programs and discover they were never firmly established in the truth.

And somewhere this coming Sunday, a faithful Christian will enter a modest classroom carrying a King James Bible and a carefully prepared lesson. Perhaps only six children will attend. Perhaps one will ask the same question for the fourth consecutive week, another will struggle to concentrate, and a third will remember something the teacher explained months earlier. There may be no applause, no religious conference invitation, and no public recognition for the hours spent preparing. But those children are hearing the word of God, and the teacher is performing a responsibility that deserves faithful attention. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers of their accountability before the Judgment Seat of Christ, while First Corinthians 4:5 establishes that the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. We cannot predict the exact rewards or future accomplishments connected with any particular lesson, but we can trust the righteousness of Christ's judgment. Lois and Eunice did not know every responsibility Timothy would eventually carry when they helped establish his familiarity with the Scriptures. The faithful teacher today cannot know every circumstance those children will face when they become adults. The world may never remember the name of the Christian who patiently taught a child to open the Bible, but the Lord knows the labour. A child may forget the decorations, the refreshments, and the games, yet remember the Scripture that pointed him toward Jesus Christ. And when the books are opened at the Judgment Seat, some of the most valuable work may have begun in a little classroom where nobody important ever thought to look.

10 of 10 — The Ministry of Helps — The Unknown Fellowhelpers Who Will Stand Before the Judgment Seat

Key Scripture — 3 John 8 (KJV)

“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.”

There is something mighty peculiar about modern Christianity. A preacher can stand behind a pulpit for forty-five minutes, have his photograph printed on a thousand advertisements, collect enough honorary titles to fill a small filing cabinet, and before long somebody will write a biography explaining how he single-handedly accomplished the work of God. Apparently, the fellow who drove him to the meeting, the woman who helped

support his travels, the family who provided his lodging, the Christians who prayed for him, and the faithful workers who prepared everything before he arrived simply materialized out of thin air. Their names never appear on the advertisements, their photographs never decorate the conference brochures, and their contributions are quietly absorbed into the impressive reputation of the man standing beneath the spotlight. But there is one serious problem with that arrangement. The Holy Ghost never wrote the New Testament that way. When Paul finished certain epistles, he did not simply sign his name and congratulate himself. He remembered the people who helped him.

Read Romans 16 carefully sometime instead of treating it like the biblical equivalent of a telephone directory. There are names scattered throughout that chapter which many Christians can barely pronounce and even fewer bother to investigate. Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Epaenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junia, Amplias, Urbane, Stachys, Apelles, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, and numerous others appear in the inspired record. Some are identified through their labour, some through their fellowship, some through their hospitality, and others through their relationship to the apostle and the churches. Their personal histories are not always explained, and Scripture does not authorize us to invent elaborate biographies where God has supplied only a name. Yet the very presence of those names teaches something worth remembering. The ministry of the apostle Paul was not the performance of one magnificent religious personality surrounded by insignificant spectators. The Lord used fellowlabourers, companions, households, messengers, and faithful supporters. God preserved their names because their service belonged to the history He intended His people to read.

This final examination of the ministry of helps brings us to the question that settles every argument over religious importance: What will matter when saved believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Salvation itself is not the reward for faithful service. A sinner receives eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works, while verse 10 establishes that saved people are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Those works will be examined by the Lord, not according to human publicity, personal reputation, or denominational prestige, but according to His perfect judgment. A man may be celebrated on earth and suffer loss at that judgment. Another may remain practically unknown and discover that faithful service was never overlooked. The church may keep its records according to prominence, but the Lord has never needed a publicity department to know who actually served Him.

1. Romans 16 Is God's Answer to the One-Man Ministry

Romans 16 begins with a commendation that ought to arrest the attention of anybody who believes only public preachers accomplish meaningful Christian work. Paul writes, “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea” (Romans 16:1). He continues by instructing the Roman believers to receive and assist her, explaining that she had been “a succourer of many, and of myself also.” Notice the description. Phoebe was a servant, and she had provided assistance to numerous people, including Paul himself. The passage does not require us to manufacture an office beyond what Scripture establishes or disregard the qualifications concerning church leadership elsewhere in the New Testament. Her usefulness is already evident without embellishment. She helped people. She served faithfully. The apostle recognized her contribution. Evidently, the Holy Ghost considered an assisting Christian woman important enough to place at the beginning of Paul's closing commendations in one of the greatest doctrinal epistles ever written.

Then Paul writes in Romans 16:3–4, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks.” Here was a husband and wife whose involvement in gospel work extended far beyond ordinary acquaintance. Acts 18 records their association with Paul through their common occupation as tentmakers, while Romans 16:5 mentions the church in their house. They also instructed Apollos more perfectly concerning the way of God, according to Acts 18:24–26. Their assistance was practical, personal, and doctrinally meaningful. Paul said they had risked their lives for him, although the precise circumstances of that danger are not supplied. We should not invent the details. What Scripture records is sufficient. These believers placed themselves in jeopardy in connection with the apostle's ministry. Yet nobody needs to pretend that they became apostles themselves or that their household constituted a religious empire. They were helpers in Christ Jesus, and that designation was honourable enough.

The chapter continues with a remarkable recognition of Christian labour. Romans 16:6 mentions Mary, “who bestowed much labour on us.” Verse 9 identifies Urbane as “our helper in Christ,” while verse 12 speaks of Tryphena and Tryphosa, “who labour in the Lord,” and Persis, “which laboured much in the Lord.” Notice the repeated emphasis upon work. Paul did not commend these believers because they had accumulated impressive religious titles or developed outstanding public reputations. He remembered their labour. Verse 22 even identifies Tertius, who wrote the epistle as Paul's secretary, allowing him to send his own greeting. Verse 23 mentions Gaius as Paul's host. Here are workers, hosts, companions, and assistants scattered through a single chapter. The Holy Ghost did not record the names of every Christian involved, but He preserved enough to destroy the fantasy that the apostle accomplished everything alone. If modern celebrity religion had

edited Romans 16, half the chapter might have disappeared so there would be more room for the preacher's photograph.

2. Phoebe, Priscilla, and the Forgotten Workers Demonstrate the Meaning of Helps

First Corinthians 12:28 declares that God placed various ministries in the church, including "helps." The surrounding chapter explains that the body possesses many members and that those members do not all perform the same function. Verse 18 declares, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." This is not an invitation for every believer to invent a religious office or demand the same responsibilities assigned to another Christian. It establishes the Lord's wisdom in arranging differing members within one body. The believer who possesses opportunities to assist others should not despise those opportunities because they lack public distinction. Equally important, the visible minister should not regard supporting believers as spiritually inferior. The Lord arranged the members. A man's popularity does not give him permission to revise that arrangement. The apostle's recognition of Phoebe and Priscilla illustrates the importance of members whose work involved genuine assistance rather than the pursuit of prominence.

Romans 12:4–8 further develops the principle by explaining that believers possess differing gifts according to the grace given to them. Paul mentions ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy, attaching practical instructions concerning faithfulness, simplicity, diligence, and cheerfulness. The passage does not treat every function as identical, but neither does it present the church as a congregation of spectators permanently dependent upon a small group of admired personalities. Verse 10 commands believers to be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." That is a considerable distance from the religious arrangement in which one prominent individual receives every compliment while the ordinary workers are expected to remain invisible. A faithful preacher should appreciate those assisting him, and faithful assistants should remember that their ultimate responsibility belongs to Christ. The man with a microphone and the woman preparing meals may have different assignments, but neither possesses grounds for personal boasting.

There is another important correction here concerning the distinction between Christian service and church authority. Scripture commends women who laboured, assisted others, extended hospitality, and contributed significantly to the welfare of the churches. Those examples should be recognized exactly as written without pretending that every useful woman occupied the office of bishop or that Paul's qualifications in 1 Timothy 2–3 have somehow vanished. Likewise, the usefulness of an ordinary male servant does not automatically qualify him for pastoral oversight. The New Testament makes distinctions

concerning offices, qualifications, gifts, and responsibilities. Rightly dividing the Scriptures requires maintaining those distinctions rather than flattening everything into modern religious slogans. But proper distinctions must never become an excuse for despising faithful labour. A Christian woman does not need to claim the office of pastor to serve God meaningfully, and a Christian man does not need to occupy that office to become useful. The Lord did not command every member to become the mouth. He commanded the members to function together under the Head.

3. Epaphroditus Nearly Died Doing Work the Religious World Might Overlook

Philippians 2:25 introduces another servant whose example ought to settle the question of whether practical assistance matters to God. Paul writes, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.” Notice the descriptions. Brother, companion in labour, fellowsoldier, messenger, and minister to Paul's needs. This man was not presented as an insignificant errand runner whose usefulness ended when he delivered the supplies. Paul recognized his fellowship in the work and the importance of the service he performed. The Philippian congregation had sent him in connection with its care for the apostle, and his ministry involved genuine personal sacrifice. A messenger can carry more than a letter or a contribution. He may carry the practical expression of an entire congregation's fellowship with a suffering servant of Christ. That work deserves recognition without turning the messenger into a religious celebrity.

The circumstances became serious enough that Paul wrote in Philippians 2:27, “For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” Verse 30 explains that Epaphroditus had come near death “for the work of Christ,” not regarding his life, “to supply your lack of service toward me.” The expression concerning their lack should not be twisted into an accusation that the Philippians were deliberately neglectful. Epaphroditus supplied service they were unable to perform personally under the circumstances. His illness was real, his danger was serious, and Paul acknowledged God's mercy in his recovery. Notice also what the passage does not say. Paul did not condemn Epaphroditus for lacking sufficient faith to avoid sickness. He did not announce that the man was suffering from an inherited curse or demand that he confess financial prosperity into existence. He recognized suffering, mercy, sacrifice, and faithful service.

Paul then commands the Philippians in verse 29, “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation.” There is biblical recognition directed toward a servant who nearly died carrying out practical responsibilities. But notice the reason for honour. Epaphroditus was to be esteemed because of his faithfulness to Christ, not

because he demanded admiration or advertised himself as spiritually superior. The passage supplies an excellent correction to modern religious publicity. Churches frequently honour people whose primary accomplishment appears to be attracting attention, while dependable servants receive little acknowledgment. Scripture tells us to recognize faithful labour without cultivating man-worship. The distinction matters. A congregation should appreciate those who serve, but appreciation must never become the foundation of a personality cult. The work belongs to Christ. Epaphroditus did not need an honorary doctorate, a television interview, or a private jet to prove he was important. He almost died delivering help to a man who needed it, and the Holy Ghost called that the work of Christ.

4. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus Refreshed the Saints Instead of Seeking Applause

First Corinthians 16:15 provides another remarkable testimony: “Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” Consider that expression carefully. The household of Stephanas had devoted itself to serving God's people. In an age when men become addicted to money, pleasure, personal influence, and endless entertainment, here were believers whose energies were directed toward the ministry of the saints. Paul was not describing some extraordinary religious performance designed to impress a crowd. He was recognizing a continuing pattern of useful service. The household had made Christian ministry a serious responsibility rather than an occasional inconvenience. The same apostle who rebuked Corinthian pride, divisions, and carnality could also recognize sincere labour among believers associated with that congregation. Faithfulness deserves acknowledgment precisely because it differs so sharply from religious self-promotion.

Verse 16 continues, “That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.” The instruction connects proper respect with actual faithfulness. Paul was not granting unlimited authority to anybody who happened to volunteer for a responsibility. Nor was he instructing Christians to surrender biblical discernment whenever a prominent religious worker demanded obedience. He was encouraging recognition of those labouring faithfully in connection with apostolic ministry. Verse 17 then identifies Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, explaining, “for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.” Their presence and assistance met a need that others had not personally supplied. The circumstances do not establish every detail of what these men carried or accomplished, and the account should not be enlarged beyond what Scripture records. What remains unmistakable is that Paul valued their contribution.

The apostle had enough sense to know that a faithful helper was worth considerably more than a dozen religious admirers who never lifted a finger.

Then comes the statement in verse 18: “For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.” Notice that their service affected both Paul and the Corinthians. Their contribution brought refreshment rather than unnecessary confusion, pride, or competition. Some Christians possess the unfortunate ability to exhaust everybody they encounter while constantly announcing how indispensable they are to the ministry. Others quietly strengthen those around them through honesty, dependability, prayer, practical assistance, and sound words. Paul recognized the second kind. The instruction to acknowledge such servants also corrects the notion that faithful service should never receive appropriate thanks. The Lord's glory is not diminished when Christians sincerely appreciate one another. The danger begins when gratitude becomes idolatry or recognition becomes the servant's primary objective. We should honour faithful labour without turning its performers into objects of religious devotion. The apostle remembered those who refreshed him, and a congregation should not be too proud to do likewise.

5. Fellowhelpers to the Truth Must Know What Truth They Are Helping

Third John 5–8 supplies the governing expression for this entire subject. John commends Gaius for his faithful treatment of brethren and strangers, including those travelling in the service of the Lord. Verse 6 refers to bringing them forward on their journey after a godly sort, while verse 7 explains that they had gone forth for His name's sake. Then comes verse 8: “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” Notice the important qualification. These believers were not simply fellowhelpers to an organization, a personality, a denomination, or an impressive religious enterprise. They were fellowhelpers to the truth. The nature of the work mattered. The message being supported mattered. The name for which the workers travelled mattered. Christian assistance receives its proper direction from the word of God, not from the popularity of the person requesting support.

This principle requires serious doctrinal discernment. Second John 9–11 warns against receiving and endorsing those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ. Paul declares in Galatians 1:8 that even an angel from heaven preaching another gospel is to be accursed. These passages expose the foolish notion that every religious activity becomes legitimate because somebody attaches the name of Jesus Christ to it. A church can provide excellent transportation, efficient administration, generous financial support, and impressive hospitality while promoting doctrine contrary to Scripture. The activity itself does not sanctify the false message. A believer who knowingly finances another gospel cannot

excuse his participation by announcing that he was merely helping. A well-maintained vehicle travelling in the wrong direction is still travelling in the wrong direction. The driver deserves no spiritual medal for keeping the engine running while carrying error to another congregation.

Third John 9–10 introduces Diotrephes, a man who loved the preeminence and opposed the reception of faithful brethren. Here is the opposite corruption. Instead of helping the truth, he used his influence to obstruct those who served it. His conduct exposed the danger of a religious personality becoming more important than the work supposedly entrusted to him. The church still encounters that spirit whenever leaders demand exclusive loyalty, discourage legitimate assistance to faithful workers, or treat every ministry outside their personal influence as a threat. Yet the answer is not indiscriminate cooperation with anybody claiming to serve God. Biblical fellowship requires agreement with biblical truth. The believer must examine what he supports and whom he assists. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The Christian should therefore be generous without becoming gullible and discerning without becoming jealous. A fellowhelper to the truth serves Christ through sound doctrine. A servant of religious ambition merely helps somebody build a larger monument to himself.

6. The Judgment Seat of Christ Will Expose the Difference Between Salvation and Service

Romans 14:10 asks, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." The immediate context concerns believers judging and despising one another over matters addressed in the chapter, including the observance of days and the eating of certain foods. Paul reminds them that they belong to the Lord and are accountable to Him. Verse 12 concludes, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Notice the personal nature of that accountability. A preacher will not answer merely according to the admiration of his congregation, and a helper will not answer according to the prominence of the preacher he assisted. Every believer must give account. The Lord possesses perfect knowledge of the conduct, motives, and responsibilities of His people. The Judgment Seat will not be a denominational awards banquet where the largest ministry receives the largest trophy and everybody else goes home disappointed.

Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the same future accountability: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This judgment must be distinguished from the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11–15, where the dead are judged and those not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.

The Judgment Seat of Christ concerns saved believers and their service. Their eternal salvation does not depend upon accumulating sufficient religious accomplishments. Ephesians 1:13–14 establishes that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, while Ephesians 4:30 identifies that sealing as extending unto the day of redemption. The believer belongs to Christ through faith in His finished work. His appearance before the Judgment Seat does not reopen the question of whether Calvary was sufficient. It concerns accountability for the life and service of somebody already redeemed.

That distinction exposes two dangerous errors. The first teaches that Christians must earn or maintain eternal life through religious performance, turning every act of service into another payment upon a salvation supposedly never completed. The second imagines that because salvation is eternally secure, Christian conduct carries no serious accountability. Both positions contradict Scripture. Romans 4:5 establishes justification through faith apart from works, while 2 Corinthians 5:10 establishes the future examination of the believer's conduct. Grace does not eliminate accountability; it establishes the proper relationship between salvation and service. A man cannot purchase his way into heaven by preaching ten thousand sermons, and another cannot earn eternal life by driving a thousand passengers to church. Yet neither should imagine that his conduct is meaningless. The blood of Jesus Christ settles the believer's salvation. The Judgment Seat of Christ will settle the question of his service. Confuse those two truths, and you will either corrupt the gospel or make a mockery of Christian responsibility.

7. The Fire Will Test the Work When the Applause Has Finally Stopped

First Corinthians 3:11 begins the examination of Christian labour with the only legitimate foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Paul then describes building upon that foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. Verse 13 declares, “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.” Notice that the passage emphasizes the character of the work. It does not say the fire will determine how many people attended a conference, how much money a ministry collected, or how many flattering articles were published about its leader. The work will be tested. A magnificent religious enterprise may appear impressive to human observers while containing much that cannot survive divine examination. Conversely, faithful service without earthly prominence may possess enduring value.

Verses 14 and 15 establish the consequences. “If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.” But if the work is burned, “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” There is the distinction between eternal security and rewards stated plainly enough for anybody willing to believe the King James Bible. The

believer whose work is burned suffers loss, but the passage explicitly preserves his salvation. The fire does not improve the blood of Christ or complete an unfinished redemption. It tests the works of those whose foundation is Jesus Christ. Neither should anybody imagine that an obscure ministry automatically qualifies as gold while a prominent ministry automatically becomes stubble. Visibility is not the deciding factor. Faithfulness to the Lord is the issue. A preacher may construct a religious empire that looks like Solomon's temple and discover that much of it burns like a haystack. The size of the structure cannot change the character of the material.

First Corinthians 4:5 supplies the final correction to human judgment: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” The Lord will expose motives that human observers could never accurately determine. A generous giver may secretly desire influence. A preacher may pursue popularity under the appearance of evangelistic zeal. A volunteer may perform years of service while cultivating bitterness because his name never appears on the church bulletin. Another believer may quietly labour through sincere devotion to Christ without expecting personal recognition. God knows the difference. The passage does not authorize us to declare beforehand exactly which individuals will receive particular rewards. It commands humility before the One who possesses perfect judgment. The greatest surprise at the Judgment Seat may not be that certain famous men receive less than expected, but that some ordinary servants performed work whose value nobody on earth understood.

Conclusion — The Saints Nobody Applauds But Heaven Records

The ministry of helps is not an insignificant collection of secondary activities invented to occupy Christians who lack more impressive abilities. It belongs to the scriptural arrangement of the body of Christ, where differing members contribute according to the responsibilities God has provided. Across this series, we have examined praying believers, hospitable households, generous supporters, responsible administrators, faithful labourers, dependable drivers, compassionate visitors, patient teachers, and the fellowhelpers whose names appear throughout the New Testament. These are not substitutes for preaching the gospel or maintaining sound doctrine. They are practical expressions of service that assist the proper functioning of the church. Paul did not accomplish his ministry in complete isolation, and his epistles repeatedly acknowledge those who laboured beside him. The Holy Ghost preserved enough of their names and contributions to remind every generation that Christian usefulness is not measured

exclusively by public recognition. The body needs its members, and the Lord has never instructed the hands and feet to become ashamed because they are not the mouth.

There is a warning here for every preacher who has begun believing that the church exists to support his personal greatness. The congregation belongs to Jesus Christ, not to the man standing behind the pulpit. First Peter 5:3 warns elders against becoming lords over God's heritage, while Colossians 1:18 declares that Christ is the Head of the body, the church. The preacher must faithfully proclaim the Scriptures, but he should never confuse his calling with personal ownership of the people. There is also a warning for the quiet servant who becomes dissatisfied because recognition has not arrived. Christian service must not become a secret competition for appreciation. Colossians 3:23 commands believers to work heartily "as to the Lord, and not unto men." Those words expose the motives of both the celebrated minister and the unnoticed helper. The answer to celebrity religion is not to manufacture another class of celebrities from the volunteers. It is to restore Jesus Christ to His proper place and require every servant to remember whom he serves.

And one day, when this present course has ended and saved believers stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, the publicity of earthly religion will possess no authority over His judgment. The expensive buildings, impressive advertisements, honorary titles, enormous audiences, and carefully cultivated reputations will not persuade Christ to reward what He finds unfaithful. Nor will the absence of public recognition cause Him to overlook what was faithfully done unto Him. Somewhere among the redeemed will be people who prayed without an audience, gave without demanding recognition, opened their homes without expecting repayment, carried the chairs, drove the passengers, visited the afflicted, taught the children, and helped faithful ministers continue their work. We cannot announce in advance the particular rewards awaiting them, but we can stand upon the promise of 1 Corinthians 15:58 that labour in the Lord is not in vain. The final verdict belongs to Christ, whose judgment is perfect. The world remembers the man who stood behind the pulpit. The Lord remembers the saints who helped make the ministry possible. Men may forget the names, overlook the sacrifices, and applaud the wrong people, but heaven will not confuse publicity with faithfulness. When the Judgment Seat reveals the truth, the question will not be who received the loudest applause on earth, but who faithfully served the One who bought them with His blood.

Conclusion — The Ministry of Helps

The Saints Nobody Applauds But Heaven Records

There comes a time when all the religious noise has to stop, the microphones have to be turned off, the conference banners have to come down, and the men who have spent their lives collecting applause must face a question that no amount of publicity can answer. What did they actually accomplish for Jesus Christ? Not how many people admired them, not how many titles they accumulated, not how many buildings carried their names, and certainly not how many followers they collected along the way. The question concerns faithfulness to the Lord who purchased them with His own blood. Throughout this series, we have examined a ministry that rarely receives the attention it deserves, although the New Testament repeatedly demonstrates its importance. It is the ministry of helps, the ordinary and often overlooked service performed by Christians whose names may never appear on a church sign. The modern religious establishment has become remarkably skilled at celebrating the man holding the microphone while forgetting the people who helped make the meeting possible. But the Holy Ghost never established that arrangement, and the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be conducted according to the popularity standards of religious celebrities. **The world may remember who stood beneath the spotlight, but the Lord knows who was faithful when the lights were turned off.**

When Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that God had placed “helps” among the ministries of the church, he settled something that modern Christianity has spent generations attempting to complicate. The ministry of helps was not invented by a denominational headquarters, created by a committee, or established as an inferior category for people who lacked the abilities necessary to become prominent. The Holy Ghost included it in the inspired record. And the same chapter explains why it matters. First Corinthians 12:21 declares, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Verse 22 continues, “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” There is the Lord's answer to religious superiority. The body requires its members, and the members possess differing responsibilities according to God's arrangement. A preacher may be necessary to the congregation, but that does not make every other servant unnecessary. A teacher may possess an important responsibility, but that does not justify despising the believer who prepares the classroom. The moment a congregation begins measuring human worth according to visibility, it has started judging the body by standards the Head never established.

We have considered the praying saints whose intercession supports gospel labour without producing a single photograph for the church bulletin. Colossians 4:12 records Epaphras “always labouring fervently for you in prayers,” desiring that believers stand perfect and complete in the will of God. What a remarkable contrast to a generation that has

transformed prayer into public theatre, mystical declarations, and religious performances designed to impress spectators. Epaphras was not attempting to command heaven or advertise his spiritual greatness. He was concerned about the condition of God's people. Paul likewise requested the prayers of ordinary believers, asking in Ephesians 6:19 that utterance might be given unto him to make known the mystery of the gospel boldly. Second Corinthians 1:11 speaks of believers "helping together by prayer." There is genuine ministry without a platform. Somewhere an elderly saint may be praying for a preacher who does not know her name, asking God to preserve him from doctrinal error, strengthen his faithfulness, and bless the proclamation of the gospel. She may no longer possess the strength to travel, teach, or participate in public activities, but she can still approach the throne of grace through Jesus Christ. **The preacher may possess the loudest voice in the building, but the praying saint has access to the One whose power the preacher desperately needs.**

We have also examined the open doors and hospitable homes that strengthened the early churches. Aquila and Priscilla did not require an elaborate religious facility before they became useful to the apostle Paul. Romans 16:3 identifies them as his helpers in Christ Jesus, while verse 5 mentions the church in their house. Acts 18 records their association with Paul and their assistance in instructing Apollos more perfectly concerning the way of God. Their usefulness did not depend upon a magnificent building, a professional religious staff, or a collection of impressive titles. They made themselves available for legitimate service. Romans 12:13 commands believers to be "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." That instruction remains a rebuke to congregations that spend enormous sums decorating their buildings while overlooking lonely believers, struggling families, and visitors who enter without knowing anybody. Christian hospitality is not a competition to determine which household owns the finest furniture. It is the willingness to receive and assist others according to genuine need and biblical wisdom. **A church can possess a magnificent entrance and still have a closed heart, while an ordinary Christian with a simple table and an extra chair may accomplish something eternally valuable.**

Then there are the quiet givers whose generosity helps support the preaching of the gospel, provide Bibles, assist faithful ministers, and relieve legitimate needs among believers. Philippians 4:17 records Paul declaring, "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." The Philippians participated in his ministry through their willing support, and the apostle recognized the spiritual significance of their fellowship. Yet the biblical teaching concerning generosity has been buried beneath mountains of prosperity preaching, compulsory offerings, fabricated financial promises, and the dishonest manipulation of struggling Christians. The Lord never appointed His church to

operate a religious gambling establishment where people surrender money in exchange for guarantees of supernatural financial multiplication. Neither did He authorize preachers to transfer Israel's Mosaic tithing obligations into the present Church Age and threaten saved believers with covenant curses that do not belong to them. Second Corinthians 9:7 establishes the proper principle: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Genuine generosity proceeds from willing obedience, not intimidation. **God does not measure a gift merely by the number printed upon it. He knows what the giver possessed, what the sacrifice involved, and why the contribution was made.**

We have walked through the ordinary responsibilities that keep a congregation from collapsing into unnecessary confusion. Somebody must maintain accurate records, communicate important information, arrange supplies, prepare facilities, coordinate legitimate activities, and ensure that necessary work is completed. Acts 6 demonstrates that practical neglect can become a serious problem even when the preaching is sound. The widows were being overlooked in the daily ministration, and the apostles recognized the need for responsible servants without abandoning their own responsibility to prayer and the ministry of the word. First Corinthians 14:40 commands, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” That principle does not require creating a religious bureaucracy so complicated that nobody can remember what the church was supposed to accomplish. Neither does it permit irresponsible confusion to masquerade as spiritual freedom. The church does not need another committee to investigate whether somebody should replace a broken chair, and it certainly does not need a pastor who treats ordinary questions about finances or responsibilities as rebellion against his authority. What it needs is faithful stewardship under the Scriptures. **Organization should carry the ministry, not become a load so heavy that the ministry can no longer move.**

And what about the hands that carry the chairs and the feet that never seem to stop serving? Before the congregation assembles, somebody may have cleaned the building, repaired the equipment, prepared the classrooms, arranged the seating, and made certain the gathering place is ready. When the preacher has finished and the congregation has departed, those workers may still be performing the responsibilities that nobody else remembered. Galatians 5:13 commands believers, “by love serve one another.” That is not limited to activities performed in front of a crowd. Exodus 35–36 gives an Old Testament example of willing workers contributing their abilities to the construction of Israel's tabernacle. That historical structure belonged to Israel under the Mosaic covenant and must never be confused with the New Testament Church, which is constituted by saved people rather than bricks and mortar. Nevertheless, the example demonstrates the importance of willing labour under God's appointed instructions. The modern congregation

may not need a golden candlestick or a wilderness tabernacle, but it certainly needs Christians willing to perform honest work without demanding public recognition. **A man who considers himself too spiritual to carry a chair ought to reconsider whether he has understood the meaning of serving the One who washed His disciples' feet.**

We have remembered the drivers who provide transportation, the visitors who refuse to forget suffering believers, and the ordinary Christians whose practical kindness removes obstacles that others cannot overcome alone. Titus 3:13 instructed diligent assistance for Zenas and Apollos on their journey, while 3 John 8 described faithful supporters as "fellowhelpers to the truth." That does not mean the early churches operated modern bus routes or possessed automobiles. It means practical assistance connected with gospel work has biblical precedent. A faithful Christian may help an elderly believer reach a church service, transport a family without a dependable vehicle, or assist a travelling preacher. Another may visit a hospital, nursing home, or isolated household where somebody has begun wondering whether the congregation still remembers him. Second Timothy 1:16 records Paul's gratitude for Onesiphorus, "for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." Here was a man who sought out a suffering apostle when association with him was inconvenient. His faithfulness exposes the hollowness of religious fellowship that disappears as soon as somebody becomes sick, elderly, poor, or unable to contribute. **A church that remembers the wealthy visitor but forgets the suffering widow has not demonstrated spiritual discernment. It has demonstrated that worldly importance still governs its attention.**

The patient teachers of children deserve remembrance as well. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the Holy Scriptures, while 2 Timothy 1:5 identifies the sincere faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their names remain in the inspired record, although their ordinary years of instruction are not described in detail. They did not need a religious entertainment empire to influence Timothy. They possessed faith, the Scriptures, and opportunities to teach. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while faithful church teachers can assist parents by providing sound instruction. Children must never become merely an audience for games, prizes, and emotional performances designed to produce impressive attendance statistics. They need to understand the word of God, the seriousness of sin, the person of Jesus Christ, and salvation through faith in His finished work. Nor should children be pressured into repeating a prayer simply so adults can announce another conversion. Genuine faith cannot be manufactured by manipulating a child who wants to please his teacher. **The goal is not to produce children who remember every game the church organized. It is to teach them Scripture they can carry into adulthood when the games have long been forgotten.**

We must also remember that the ministry of helps requires character, wisdom, and proper boundaries. Christian service is not permission for religious leaders to exploit volunteers, disregard safety, mishandle money, neglect vulnerable people, or demand personal authority that Scripture never granted. First Timothy 3 establishes serious qualifications for recognized church officers, while 2 Corinthians 8:20–21 demonstrates the importance of financial accountability. First Peter 5:3 warns leaders against becoming "lords over God's heritage." Those instructions are not administrative decorations. They concern conduct before God. A congregation should protect children through responsible supervision, appropriate safeguards, and trustworthy workers. It should exercise wisdom when transporting vulnerable passengers, maintain honest records, respect legitimate confidentiality, and refuse to conceal serious wrongdoing merely to protect an institution's reputation. Neither should volunteers imagine that serving Christ requires abandoning their families, neglecting legitimate responsibilities, or surrendering every boundary to an unreasonable religious organization. The Lord commands faithfulness, not exploitation. **A pastor does not become the owner of a Christian's time because he happens to occupy the pulpit, and a volunteer does not become somebody's personal servant merely because he desires to serve Jesus Christ.**

There is another warning that must not be overlooked. The ministry of helps can become corrupted by the same pride that has destroyed so many visible ministries. A man may sweep the church floor while secretly resenting everybody who receives recognition. A woman may give generously while expecting the congregation to advertise her sacrifice. A faithful driver may eventually consider himself indispensable, and a teacher may become more concerned about personal influence than the spiritual welfare of the children. Obscurity does not automatically produce humility any more than public prominence automatically establishes pride. Both must be judged according to Scripture. Colossians 3:23–24 commands, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." The proper motive is service unto Christ. The quiet worker must not turn neglect into bitterness, and the visible minister must not turn recognition into vanity. **The Lord is not searching for the most famous servant or the most offended servant. He is looking for faithfulness.**

That brings us to the great future examination that will settle questions human beings have never been qualified to answer. Romans 14:10 declares, "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," and verse 12 adds, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Second Corinthians 5:10 establishes the same accountability concerning the things done in the body. This is not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20, and it is not a second opportunity for saved believers to determine whether the blood of

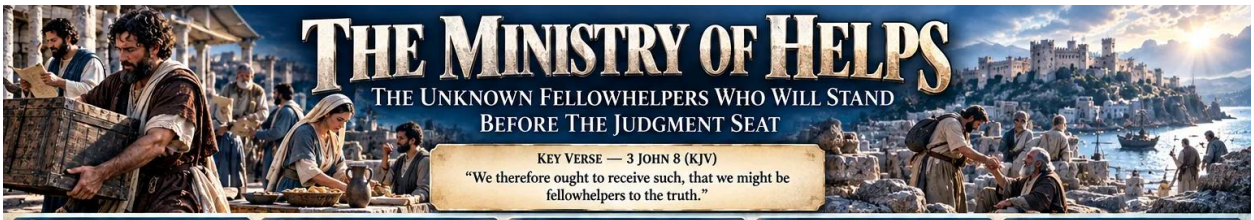
Christ was sufficient to redeem them. Salvation remains entirely by grace through faith, grounded in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The Judgment Seat concerns the believer's conduct and service. First Corinthians 3:11 declares that no other foundation can be laid than Jesus Christ, and the following verses describe works being tested by fire. Some work will abide and receive reward, while other work will suffer loss. Verse 15 plainly declares concerning the man whose work is burned, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” There is the distinction between salvation and rewards, preserved in the inspired text. **Calvary settles the believer's redemption. The Judgment Seat will reveal the character of the service performed by those who have been redeemed.**

And what an examination that will be! First Corinthians 4:5 declares that the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” No committee will be able to influence that judgment. No religious title will impress the Judge. No preacher will be permitted to substitute attendance figures for faithfulness, and no wealthy donor will be able to purchase a favourable verdict. The man who built an enormous following may discover that much of his labour was directed toward personal glory. The obscure Christian who faithfully supported legitimate gospel work may discover that the Lord never overlooked the service. Yet we must not presume to announce the exact rewards of individuals beforehand, because Christ possesses knowledge of motives and circumstances that we do not. A small ministry is not automatically righteous, and a large ministry is not automatically corrupt. The determining issue is faithfulness to the Lord according to His word. **The fire will not be impressed by marble buildings, polished reputations, religious titles, or the number of people who stood to applaud. It will reveal what sort of work was actually built upon the foundation.**

When that day arrives, the ordinary measurements of religious success will no longer carry authority. The church's annual reports, printed advertisements, membership statistics, financial totals, and carefully cultivated public reputations will not establish the final verdict. Jesus Christ will judge with perfect righteousness. Somewhere among those appearing before Him will be believers whose service was never widely known. The praying grandmother, the faithful giver, the hospitable family, the dependable administrator, the worker who maintained the building, the driver who transported the elderly, the visitor who encouraged the suffering, and the teacher who patiently instructed children will all answer for their own conduct before the Lord. Their salvation does not rest upon those accomplishments, but their service will not escape His knowledge. Neither will the motives behind their actions remain concealed. That is why the Christian should labour faithfully without demanding human recognition as the condition of obedience. First Corinthians 15:58 declares, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in

the Lord." The promise does not depend upon the congregation remembering to say thank you.

So when the final sermon has been preached, the last missionary journey completed, the last classroom emptied, the last meal prepared, the last passenger delivered safely, and the last faithful servant has finished his earthly responsibilities, one truth will remain. Jesus Christ has never been confused about who belongs to Him or who has served Him faithfully. The world may have celebrated the preacher while overlooking the people who supported his ministry. The congregation may have applauded the singer while forgetting the believer who prayed for souls to be saved. Religious history may record the names of prominent leaders while leaving countless faithful servants in obscurity. But the Lord possesses perfect knowledge of His people, and His judgment will require no correction. This entire series has been an argument against the pride that measures spiritual importance by earthly recognition and against the laziness that refuses ordinary service because it brings no applause. The ministry of helps is not a consolation prize for Christians who failed to become famous. It is genuine Christian service performed under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. **The preacher may have held the microphone, but somebody held up his hands in prayer. Somebody opened the door, carried the chairs, gave the offering, drove the passenger, visited the afflicted, and taught the child. Men may have overlooked those servants because their names were never announced from the pulpit. But when the Lord examines the work, the only applause that will matter is His approval. These are the saints nobody applauds, but heaven records.**



The Ministry of Helps

The Unknown Fellowhelpers Who Will Stand Before The Judgment Seat

Key Verse — 3 John 8 (KJV)

"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth."

1 God Established Helps in the Church

A Biblical Ministry, Not a Modern Idea

- Helps is listed among the ministries in 1 Corinthians 12:28.
- The body has many members with different purposes (1 Cor. 12:12–27).
- Those which seem feeble are necessary (1 Cor. 12:22).
- Helps is part of God's arrangement, not human popularity.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 12:28
1 Corinthians 12:22

2 Biblical Examples of Fellowhelpers

Names God Remembered

- Phoebe – a servant and succourer of many (Romans 16:1–2).
- Priscilla and Aquila – helpers who risked their lives (Romans 16:3–4).
- Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis – laboured much in the Lord (Romans 16:6,12).
- Tertius – wrote the epistle (Romans 16:22).
- Gaius – hosted and supplied (Romans 16:23).
- Epaphroditus – ministered to Paul's wants and nearly died for the work (Phil. 2:25–30).
- Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus – supplied what was lacking and refreshed the saints (1 Cor. 16:15–18).

Romans 16 • Philippians 2:25–30
1 Corinthians 16:15–18 • 3 John 5–8

3 Fellowhelpers to the Truth

Not to a Personality or Organisation

- We ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth (3 John 8).
- Support must be connected to sound doctrine.
- Do not receive or support those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9–11).
- Even an angel preaching another gospel is accursed (Gal. 1:8).
- Help the truth, not human ambition.

3 John 5–8 • 2 John 9–11
Galatians 1:8

4 Different Gifts and Responsibilities

One Body Under One Head

- Believers have different gifts (Romans 12:4–8).
- Honour one another (Romans 12:10).
- Helps, giving, administration, teaching, and other ministries are all used by God.
- Usefulness does not equal authority.
- It is possible to serve greatly without holding a church office.

Romans 12:4–8, 12:10
1 Corinthians 12:18, 28

5 Salvation and Service Must Be Distinguished

Grace Saves, Works Are Examined

- Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–9).
- We are created unto good works (Eph. 2:10).
- Every believer will give account (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10).
- Our works will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:11–15).
- Loss of reward does not mean loss of salvation (1 Cor. 3:15).

Ephesians 2:8–10 • Romans 14:10–12
1 Corinthians 3:11–15 • 2 Corinthians 5:10

6 Practical Help Strengthens Gospel Work

Real Needs, Real Labour, Real Sacrifice

- Epaphroditus ministered to Paul's needs and was sick nigh unto death (Phil. 2:25–30).
- Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus supplied what was lacking (1 Cor. 16:17).
- Such servants refreshed the saints (1 Cor. 16:18).
- Faithful helpers deserve recognition (Phil. 2:29).

7 Help Without Pride or Exploitation

Faithful Stewardship and Godly Boundaries

- Usefulness must be accompanied by character, wisdom, and integrity.
- Handle money honestly (2 Cor. 8:20–21).
- Observe proper boundaries and accountability (1 Tim. 3:1–13).
- Do not become lords over God's heritage (1 Pet. 5:3).
- Serve heartily as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23–24).

2 Corinthians 8:20–21
1 Timothy 3:1–13 • 1 Peter 5:3
Colossians 3:23–24

8 The Danger of Religious Celebrity

The Opposite of the Ministry of Helps

- Diotrephes loved the preeminence (3 John 9–10).
- Some churches celebrate men instead of the work.
- Publicity does not equal faithfulness.
- A large ministry can contain wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12).
- The Lord will reveal the counsels of the hearts (1 Cor. 4:5).

3 John 9–10 • 1 Corinthians 3:12
1 Corinthians 4:5

9 Honour Faithful Helpers

Appreciation Without Idolatry

- Receive and assist faithful workers (3 John 8).
- Hold such in reputation (Phil. 2:29).
- Submit to and acknowledge those who help and labour (1 Cor. 16:16, 18).
- Gratitude does not glorify man; it encourages faithful labour.
- The work belongs to Christ, not to human personalities.

3 John 5–8 • Philippians 2:29
1 Corinthians 16:16, 18

10 The Judgment Seat Will Reveal the Truth

Heaven Records What Men Forget

- We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10).
- Every one shall give account (Rom. 14:12).
- Works will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:13).
- Some work will abide and receive reward (1 Cor. 3:14).
- The Lord knows the hidden things (1 Cor. 4:5).
- Labour in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

Romans 14:10–12 • 1 Corinthians 3:11–15
1 Corinthians 4:5 • 2 Corinthians 5:10
1 Corinthians 15:58

The Final Verdict Belongs to Christ

The world remembers the man who stood before the pulpit,
but the Lord remembers the saints who helped make the ministry possible.
Men may forget their names, but Heaven records their service.

1 Corinthians 15:58

VerseQuest Ministries