

The Epistles.

THERE are 27 books in the later Scriptures; of them 21 are epistles, and the last book contains 7 epistles from the Lord Jesus. The number "7" is thus Divinely emphasized. "7" epistles are evidently not through God's servant Paul, 13 are named, and 1 seems to many to be suggested by 2 Peter 3. 15; this would mean twice 7; 7 assemblies or groups of assemblies are specially brought before us (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica).

We would never forget that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that the Bible of the early Church was the "Old Testament." Never be satisfied with a little knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. They are full of the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus beautifully said, "Moses . . . wrote of Me." Further, never omit the words of the Lord Jesus, when He walked this earth. Many would take away His commands from His people in the present dispensation. But the striking message, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14. 15) seems to have been given to His disciples in view of this present age (note Matt. 28. 19, 20). Always be afraid of any interpretation that would deprive you of the address on the mount with its clear unveiling of the heavenly calling. But the words of the Holy Spirit in the epistles need emphasis too. The words first uttered in this dispensation,

for this dispensation, were mainly in the form of letters. God has brought His people into His family; there is an intimacy. All those who are saved by grace should seek to enjoy this. Seek to read the epistles carefully and prayerfully. Sometimes you can read one "right off." A letter is usually meant for such reading.

And the words are easy to learn. If your copy of the epistles were taken away, how much could you write from memory? Persecution may come sooner than many expect, and this question is not unimportant.

The epistles give us a homely, yet grand, introduction to the standpoint of a child of God as a heavenly one in this world, and they show what the attitude or "atmosphere" of a Christian home should be, and likewise of an assembly.

And possibly God has another precious lesson. If He has emphasized letters, cannot we thus minister comfort to others. The relation of a letter to conversation is seen in 2 John 12 and 3 John 13. 14. It may be there are some you cannot see face to face, some who are lonely and shut in, to whom you can minister His comfort by a loving letter. Do not forget this privilege. A few words, with Christ as their centre, may refresh a tired pilgrim, and bring glory to God's Name. Take every privilege you can; the joy of serving amid strain will soon be over.