

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

VOLUME FORTY-NINE

1986 1987 1988

*Editor:*

COLIN CURRY

Central Bible Hammond Trust Ltd.,  
30 South Road, Wooler, Northumberland,  
England NE71 6SP

## INDEX

### Study Series

Balderston, T.	<b>COMING TO GOD</b> 1: According to the Word 44 2: By Blood 56 3: By Faith 75
Blackburn, J. S.	<b>BIBLE STUDY — JOSHUA</b> 9: Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim 17 10: The Land and Nations of Canaan 91 11: The Wives of the Gibeonites 165 12: The Day the Sun Stood Still 241
Brown, E.	<b>THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE TO THE SCRIPTURES</b> 1: Our Lord's Attitude to Them 12 2: (i) Approach to Scripture (ii) Value, Uses and Benefits of Scripture 46 3: (ii) Continued 62 4: (ii) Continued 84 5: (iii) The Christian's Main Resources 125
Chambers, A. M.	<b>EMPTY LIVES (a talk to women)</b> 1 : The Emptiness of Sin 97 2a: The Emptiness of Sorrow and Bereavement 2b: The Emptiness of Idleness and Unfruitfulness 117
Curry, Colin	<b>CREATED, FORMED, MADE</b> 1 : In Genesis 1 and 2 121 2a: In Isaiah 169 2b: In Isaiah 43:1-7 188 3a: In the New Testament 268 3b: New Creation 277
Davison, Donald	<b>HIGH POINTS IN ROMANS</b> 1: Doctrine 138 2: Practice 151
Griffiths, N.	<b>JOB</b> 1: The Patience of Job 53 2: The End of the Lord 86

Spratt, Gordon	<b>THE FORWARD-LOOKING MIND</b>	
	1: Philippians 3, Introduction	145
	2: Philippians 3, Discussion	151
Tyson, Tom	<b>TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES</b>	
	1: Ephesus	113
	2: Smyrna	141
	3: Pergamos	173
	4: Thyatira	200
	5: Sardis	225
	6: Philadelphia	254
	7: Laodicea	265
	<b>Single Papers</b>	
Anderson, David	The Benediction	257
Barnes, John	Praise, Honour and Glory	29
	New Tongues	101
	Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs	250
Bruins, Cor	The Need for Spiritual Leadership	4
	Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership	23
	The Nazarite	215
Bellett, J. G.	“The Form of God” and “The Form of a Servant”	233
Christie, J.	The Report	81
Creeth, R. A.	“Our Gathering Together Unto Him”	1
	The Calling of God in Peter’s Epistles	108
	The “Better Things” of Christianity	161
	The Sons of Korah	246
Curry, Colin	The Crucifixion Story according to Luke	37
	Shibboleth	219
Dixon, H.	Peter at the Gate	129
Dronsfield, W. R.	The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ	280
Flett, John	Gold	8
Girard, Martin	Getting the Best from the Scriptures	193
	Elijah: A Man Just Like Us	273
Hole, F. B.	One Loaf: One Body	33
Hubbard, J.	The Manna	186
Hughes, Gordon	The Fourth Gospel	49
	Fellowship	133
Johnson, M.	The Sufferings of Christ — in the Closing Stages	65

Kell, Gordon	Philemon	26
	Colossians 3:1-17	262
Kerr, W.	Love and Obedience	148
McCann, Allan	Five Orphans	71
Reprint of:	John 16:16-22	77
	A Much Maligned Coin	285
Retallick, A.	All Saints	58
	Fear Thou Not!	177
	"I John"	238
Spratt, Gordon	Amram and Jochebed	101
	The Three Ministries (1)	210
Turner, Alistair	"When I see the Blood"	16
Wallace, F.	A Man of God	204
	An Un-named Man of God	282
Wren, Nigel	Men-Pleasers	197
Young Enquirer	On 1 Corinthians 12-14 (Editor's reply)	154

### **Book Reviews and Notices**

William Kelly	John Nelson Darby as I knew him	78
W. G. Turner	John Nelson Darby: a Biography	78
F. Cuendet	Souvenez-vous de vos Conducteurs	80
Derek Kidner	The Message of Hosea	144
B. H. Edwards	God's Outlaw: Wm. Tyndale and the English Bible	203
Henri Blocher	In the Beginning (Genesis 1-3): reviewed by T. Balderston	225ff.
D. C. Spanner	Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution	230f.
J. N. Hawthorne	Windows on Science and Faith	231f.

### **Poetry**

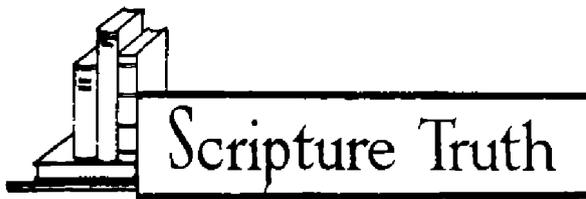
A. M. Chambers	"Jesus Himself"	209
(from) Ter Steegen	"Ittai"	112

### **Editorial Remarks**

On reading the book of Hosea	143
In reply to correspondence on the article on page 101 entitled 'Amram and Jochebed'	160

### **Fragments**

Short Scripture quotations, some with a few comments, and other short extracts from many sources, appear throughout the volume. Most of these will be found on the following pages: 15, 25, 32, 61/64, 96, 104, 116, 120, 128, 159, 164, 176, 191f., 192, 206ff., 224.



Incorporating *Words of Help*

JANUARY, 1986

# "Our Gathering Together unto Him"

R. A. CREETH

*Could it be that 1986 will see the realisation of that final, joyous, 'gathering together unto Him'? We see the day approaching! This being so, this paper urges us to grasp all intervening opportunities of gathering to Himself and to His Name.*

In a remarkable verse in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 the apostle writes, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our gathering together unto Him . . .*". What a momentous event it will be when the Lord Jesus comes in fulfilment of His promise in John 14:3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". All believers will then be gathered together unto Him. "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Let us now consider the significance of the expression "our gathering together unto Him". The Greek word "epi-sun-agoqe" means "a gathering together unto", not merely "a gathering together". The word "synagogue" is derived from the same Greek word, and denotes a gathering together or an assembly, but the word in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 implies *a gathering together unto a Person*, and that Person is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though it occurs several times as a verb in the New Testament, this word is found only twice as a noun, the other occurrence being Hebrews 10:25, where saints are exhorted not to forsake the assembling (or the gathering together unto Him) of themselves, as the manner is with some. This scripture is a solemn warning not to

neglect the precious opportunity of gathering ourselves together unto our Lord Jesus Christ in this present day.

No true believer will miss the gathering together in the air at His coming: not one saint will be left behind: all will be gathered unto their Lord. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, the rallying call for all the redeemed. The trump of God will sound, and the voice of the archangel will be heard, thus assuring adequate heavenly protection for the redeemed host as they pass triumphantly through the domain of the "prince of the power of the air". Thus will the glorified Redeemer gather His own unto Himself, and they shall be forever with the Lord.

Beloved brethren, let us challenge our hearts. Who would wish to miss that great assemblage in the heavens, supposing it were possible to do so? Who would wish to be absent from the gathering together unto the One who loves us and has given Himself for us? Surely our hearts recoil from such a thought! How then can we think lightly of the inestimable privilege of being gathered unto Him in this present day of His rejection? How can we forsake the assembling of ourselves together unto Him when He is so worthy? How can we absent ourselves, without legitimate cause, from the feast of remembrance which He himself instituted when here on earth, and which means so much to Him now as He sees His own responding in answering affection to His loving request made on the night of His betrayal?

I would emphasise that it is not a gathering together to a creed, or even to a doctrine such as baptism, neither is it gathering to a great Christian leader such as Wesley or Luther, nor do we gather as a national church. Let us remember that we are gathered unto a Person, and that Person is our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to notice the first mention of the Greek word "epi-sun-ago" as a verb. This is in Matthew 23:37. "O Jerusalem . . . how often would I have *gathered* thy children *together unto* (Myself), even as a hen *gathers together* her chickens *unto* (herself) under her wings; and ye would not." This scripture illustrates the beauty and significance of the word we are considering.

Let us ask ourselves, do we value as we should the immense privilege of being gathered together unto our Lord Jesus Christ? What a precious truth is enshrined in our Lord's own words in Matthew 18:20! "For where two or three are *gathered together unto* My Name, there am I in the midst of them." As it is His pleasure to take His place in the midst of His own, so should it be ours to be found where He is, gathered unto the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no obligation put upon us to be there, no commandment that we must obey, no compulsion save the compulsion of answering affection to His own immeasurable love in laying down His life for us. It was otherwise with the children of Israel, for under the law it was

strictly laid down, "But unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come" (Deuteronomy 12:5). Thus we see that the people were not to choose for themselves: the Lord would choose for them, and they were to obey. If the place of His choice was to be His habitation, His dwelling place, it indicated that it was His desire to be found in the midst of His people. So now our Lord and Saviour loves to gather us around Himself, and to engage our hearts with His precious love. Should we not value such a privilege, for it is when gathered together unto Himself that we most appreciate the glory and beauty of His Person and the perfect efficacy of His atoning work.

It is a striking fact that the Holy Spirit chooses exactly the same word both for the gathering together unto Him in the air at His coming and for the gathering together unto His Name in the present day. Just as truly as the glorified Lord will be the Centre of the raptured assembly, the church caught up to be with Himself for ever, so is He today the Centre of the two or three gathered to His Name, for He pledges His word, "there am I in the midst of them".

It will be seen from the context that this verse, Matthew 18:20, refers primarily to assembly prayer, for the Lord is saying, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them". How important, therefore, is the assembly prayer meeting, when we are gathered together unto the Lord's Name to beseech His power and His grace! As one has said, "God honours the Name of His Son and sends down His omnipotent power to united prayer". Let us see to it then that we do not neglect the opportunity the prayer meeting affords to receive power from on high to sustain us in our pilgrimage here.

May we appreciate more and more the privilege of gathering ourselves together unto our risen and glorified Lord for prayer and worship, and above all for the remembrance of Himself in His sufferings and death. Let us be characterised by the diligence and perseverance of the early believers who continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

# The Need for True Spiritual Leadership

COR BRUINS

*An address given in June 1985 at Catford.*

*The tape of this address shows how feelingly it was spoken. It obliges us to face its message seriously. I have had to curtail it — I hope without weakening it — but where delicate issues are being handled, I have left the words exactly as said. It is still long, so that I have broken it up into two pieces. It is clear that its importance requires this length.*

*Perhaps it is right to press a serious matter at the start of Volume 49.*

Scriptures: Genesis 33:13, 14; Isaiah 40:11; John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Ezekiel 34:1-10.

In the address this afternoon, on the holy anointing oil (Exodus 30), our brother spoke of the wonderful graces in the Lord Jesus: His sweet gentleness and kindness in the myrrh, His meekness in the sweet cinnamon, His compassion in the sweet calamus; we saw His witness in public in the cassia — and all was in the power of the Holy Spirit. Is that not also exactly what should characterise *us*, dear brothers and sisters? The burden on my heart is “The need for spiritual leadership”. We have read how Jacob with all his shortcomings expressed something very beautiful: “I shall lead on gently”: and in Isaiah this is exactly what the Lord through the spirit of prophecy says “Carry the lambs, lead them on gently”. We saw Peter, in the N.T., how he was made a leader. Leading may perhaps be in teaching a class in Sunday School, in a boys’ club, in the summer camps, or in a conference ministering the word, or being at the head of a family. Helping others! Oh, the desperate need for Spirit-filled leaders; shepherds, with the same feelings as filled the heart of the Good Shepherd.

Now that section in Ezekiel 34:1-6 shows six conditions of need — all examples of soul-destitution — and a need for faithful shepherds. What are these conditions? First, the need to *feed* the hungry. Secondly, to *strengthen* the weak; then to *heal* the sick; fourthly, to *bind up* that which was broken; then to *bring back* that which was driven away; and lastly, to *seek* the lost. This six-fold spiritual need cries out to be alleviated today. Who will step into the breach? Those shepherds in Ezekiel’s day were selfish; they fed themselves and

didn't care for the flock. They were proud, they ruled with harshness and self-will, with no love for the flock at all. They were ruinous to the flock, allowing those sheep to be scattered, leaving them as meat to every beast of the field. Think of those false philosophies today, that clamour for a hearing, the pride of intellect today, and the sheep without a leader. Oh! how we need a leading voice today — the authoritative voice of the Word, that does not bear any argument, that demands submission. Is that voice still heard among us, brothers and sisters? There is a hunger that must be satisfied, the spiritual hunger of young ones, and older ones. Does it happen sometimes with you as it does with me, that when we go to a fellowship meeting we come away disappointed? Does that happen? That there wasn't, it seems, the kind of food that was necessary? I'm just asking the question. Then there are so many weak ones that need to be strengthened, that need to tell out their hearts, that need some comforting words from a heart that beats for them, and with them. There are sick ones, the spiritually sick — how much sickness there is among the children of God. And what about those breaches — what about those saints that cannot bear to live with one another? Am I a bit strong in my expressions? I think not. Broken hearts, broken relationships, they need to be healed, to be bound up.

Next, to bring back those that are driven away. Are there some perhaps who used to be amongst us, and are no more with us? Did we ever ask *why*? These are not accusations — these things *trouble* me to the depths of my soul. The address book of meetings, my dear brothers and sisters, shows that in ten years more than forty assemblies have shut down. I wonder whether there was that burden to bring back that which was driven away. Then, lastly, to seek the lost. To *seek* the lost in active evangelism! I travel a lot over here in Europe. But I must honestly say that I know no other country in Europe where, on the Lord's Day, brethren travel so many miles, and spend so much on petrol, to go from one meeting to another to preach the gospel in front of believers! It's *got* to be said, brothers and sisters. Where is that compassion? Our brother asked this earlier. The compassion that Jesus had for the multitudes, does *that* fill our hearts at all? Am *I* concerned for my neighbour? — for those that I meet day by day? Seeking the lost! Is it not *astonishing* that we might read in a paper that circulates among us a phrase that stuck, and I haven't forgotten it. I've written it down: "Our calling characteristically is not evangelical". I beg your pardon! Is *that* in line with the heart of Christ? Are we trying to separate the preaching of the gospel from the doctrine of the church? Look at Paul, who clearly realises his two-fold obligation. In Colossians 1 he says (v. 23) that he is first of all a minister of the gospel, and then (v. 25) I am also a minister of the church. This is a balanced believer — not over-emphasising the one at

the expense of the other. To go into how evangelism is done is not my object tonight. But just to press this question; are you and I *burdened* for the salvation of precious souls? Never have there been so many unsaved souls as today. Yet our halls are empty, and closing down. Does it not move your heart?

What a need for true spiritual leaders today! For men and women of *vision*, men and women of *burden* — men and women who sit in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and learn of Him. Men and women who read the Gospels, and trace the footsteps of Christ, and seek to imitate Him. This is more than singing beautiful hymns, and listening to wonderful messages. People who will go home and go on their knees, asking “Lord, make true in my life what I heard this afternoon” — that Thy sweet characteristics may be true in *me*.

Now what *are* these characteristics of spiritual leadership? Leadership simply means being at the head, guiding, helping, being an example. Let me quote a few things the Lord Jesus said about this. Sometimes I am afraid when I notice a kind of spiritual intellectualism among us; that is almost more concerned with the amount of knowledge a certain brother has, rather than his spirituality, his deep compassion, and his deep feeling for people. In Matthew 18, replying to the question of His disciples; who is the greatest? “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest” — the same is qualified to lead, to be followed. Our brother Tom asked this, Is Christ Jesus so manifesting Himself in me that others can follow me? Do they say, you’ve got the answer; what is it you’ve got that I haven’t got? In Matthew 23:11 “He that is greatest among you all, the same shall be your servant”. Servant! In Luke 9:48 “He that is least among you, the same shall be great”. Finally, Luke 22:26 “But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth *serve*”. We read from 1 Peter 5, and I want to read it again. It speaks to *all*, younger persons and elders. Verse 5, “Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and — now notice it — be *clothed with humility*”. The Greek for “be clothed” is the same as found in John 13, when the Lord Jesus *girded* Himself, putting on the apron I say, the apron of service, getting down before His disciples and to wash their feet. That is true service, true greatness, spiritual stature, in His sight — to be humble, a servant, little in one’s own estimation. He who manifests these virtues is qualified to be a leader. You see, authority in an assembly, or amongst the saints of God, is not *imposed*. Spiritual authority is *recognised* — others recognise that this is a godly man, or that is a godly woman. That person lives close to the Lord Jesus, he meditates on the Word of God — that’s the person I can go to with my problems. So, the Lord Jesus says “I am amongst you as He that serves”, and He is the good Shepherd.

Now another point I want to raise is: What is the level of true littleness? What does the Lord Jesus mean by that? What do I have to do to be little? Well, the level of littleness is the level of *imperfection*. You know, in speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, some people misread, and say: the *gift* of knowledge, the *gift* of wisdom. It doesn't say that at all! It says, the *word* of knowledge, the *word* of wisdom. Don't let us pretend we have received the gift of wisdom. If there was any wisdom in us, by the Holy Spirit supernaturally, it is only just a *word*. The totality of wisdom and knowledge is only in one Person; and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not pretend to any amount of wisdom or knowledge — for what have we that we did not receive? Always look upon yourself as imperfect — I don't know it all, do *you*? Sometimes we get the impression that 'he knows it all', he doesn't bear any correction, or anyone saying anything different. *He* knows it all, and imposes his mind and his wisdom on the others. How truly opposite to the spirit of Christ; how truly opposite to spiritual maturity! So the level of littleness is the level of imperfection. Look at a child — it isn't chafed at being corrected, it's ready for instruction, to develop further. It's child-like. The Bible doesn't say we have to be *childish*. No, we should be *child-like*. Do you know how Paul speaks of childishness? "I couldn't speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto *carnal*". Spiritual childishness is carnality, but child-likeness is spirituality, in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, the level of true littleness is *simplicity*. What do you see in a child? All is still elemental; it's all there *potentially*, it has to be developed. Nothing complex about it, nothing formal — all its powers are expressed freely and naturally. There's no kind of religious language used by a child. And so we should express ourselves before our gracious God and Father. I'm not saying there shouldn't be reverence. I'm not advocating familiarity — but certainly intimacy. A child is intimate — it opens its heart. Of Nathanael, Jesus said "Behold an Israelite in whom is *no guile*". Thirdly, a child is *submissive* (well, most of the time!) — it's characteristic of a child. James says "easy to be entreated" (3:17). A child-hearted saint will receive a child. When Paul starts, in Romans 12, to enumerate the gifts given to the saints, he says first "This I say through the grace given to me, to every man among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think *soberly*". To think *soberly*. This leads to another point: the Lord's strong distaste for what could be called 'usurped greatness', in other words, a spirit of superiority. What was His reaction to this? Go back to Matthew 18; He speaks about giving offence to that which is little, whether literally a little child, or a young believer still in the process of development. Hear the strong language. Let me get it exactly as He says it. "But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in Me, it would be better

for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.” That’s strong language, coming from the gracious, gentle heart of the Lord Jesus. How much *He* loves this littleness, this youngness. Do *we*? The disciples acted to keep the children from the Lord Jesus — and how he rebuked them! One classic example of a man giving offence, cast into the depths of the sea, was Jonah. There he is — told to go to Nineveh. Disobedient! In chapter 1, he is totally indifferent to the need of his fellow men — he’s fast asleep, in a dire storm and need. Is it possible for a saint of God not to be conscious, to be indifferent, with need all around him — is it *possible*? What meanest thou, sleeper? Don’t you cry to your God, says the head of the ship. He’s out of fellowship with the LORD, Jonah is. That’s why he’s indifferent; that’s why he criticises Jehovah. Well, he had to be disciplined. What happened? He was thrown into the depths of the sea. By God’s grace he was swallowed up by a great creature — a big fish; and he passed through three dreadful nights and days. I wonder if this might link up with Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11. Many are weak and sickly among you. When today we are indifferent to the Lord’s tender feelings, He can’t use us. Spiritual death, and even physical death may follow. No blessing in our lives is experienced.

[Though the address continued without a break, we divide the printed version at this point. We hope to print the remainder in the next issue — under the title “Qualifications for spiritual leadership”, which seems better suited to the remaining material.]

# Gold

JOHN FLETT

*“They presented unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*

*(Matthew 2:11)*

*“If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones . . . ; every man’s work shall be made manifest.”*

*(1 Corinthians 3:12, 13)*

*“The trial of your faith . . . more precious than of gold that perisheth . . .”*

*(1 Peter 1:7)*

*“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.”*

*(Revelation 3:18)*

*A free rendering of a spontaneous word spoken at a fellowship*

*meeting. It followed a Bible reading on 1 Corinthians 3 earlier the same afternoon.*

In considering 1 Corinthians 3 it was noted that its message was primarily directed to one local company. God had been at work. Through Paul the true foundation had been laid amongst the saints in Corinth. Christ Himself was the foundation of the work of God in progress there. Paul now raises the following challenge. *What* were they building upon that foundation? *How* was each believer contributing to the work going on? Here is an up-to-date question for each of us. Gold, silver, precious stones are clearly valuable items. Do *we* contribute valuable things, lasting things, to our local meetings? The Scriptures quoted refer to 'gold', and I wish simply to make use of them to press four important points. Gold no doubt often has a typical significance. Here, however, we use it simply as suggesting what is *valuable* in God's sight — a positive contribution to the well-being of the local assembly, helpful, constructive, able to stand under God's thorough assessment.

### **Bring Gold**

The wise men had something to present to that child, the incarnate Christ. *He* was the One to whom they had been drawn. They worshipped Him. They opened their treasures, and gave their gifts freely and unitedly. These gifts were precious things, costly things, unreservedly offered. Do we come to the meeting as those *drawn* there by One Person alone? Is *this* what "gathering to His Name" means to us? Do we go half-heartedly, or because we *must* go, feeling a strong attraction to Him? Do we go to the Lord's Supper only to receive? Admittedly there is much that we can receive, if we are involved in our assembly activities with some commitment and the desire for spiritual progress. But what about worship? *Giving* something, in heart response, and in words that must at times be expressed to our blessed Lord. How often do we go to the remembrance of our Lord in a mute and inert frame of mind, forgetful of the fact that we are there to please *Him*, to appreciate Him, and to pour out our hearts before Him? If we had a true sense of His *worth* — His greatness, His glory, His love, and His loveliness — we should surely, as we arrive at the meeting, be bursting to express ourselves when we get there. While gratitude and praise can be quite spontaneous as He touches our spirits, yet it is also true that we shall have little to offer unless we bring something. Times of personal communion with Himself, gaining some sense of His preciousness, His beauty, and His marvellous love, are vital to us. Only thus can we have a store from which suitable responses to Himself can be drawn. Only what is of God in the first place, having the Lord Jesus as its spiritual content,

can form the substance of “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”. Let us acquire some of this ‘gold’, and esteem it a high privilege to *bring* it to Him.

### **Build Gold**

Supposing the question is asked: What do we, what do I, *put into* what takes place in my local assembly, what answer could fairly be given? Building is an active business. A proper foundation must be at the basis of any building activity. Is Christ right at the heart of what is done in our local assembly? Do I have a good sense of this, that anything worthwhile that I may contribute must be closely associated with Him, closely founded upon *Him*? To take *no* part in this is surely unworthy of Him. But so too are things that may be done that spring from our own fleshly energy. Wood, hay, stubble are mentioned here — lightweight things as God judges them — indicating unhelpful activities that will not stand the test of His discerning judgment in the day when these things are fully weighed. Let us be anxious to avoid cold and dead inactivity, which would surely be shameful in those indwelt by the Holy Spirit; but also let us devote ourselves to contributing positively to our local meetings. Let us put our whole heart into constructive, co-operative and valuable up-building of our local assemblies, such as our Lord will approve, both now and in the day when He openly reviews our conduct here.

Building *gold*, and kindred things. What kinds of things are of high value in God’s sight? First of all, we can hardly contribute to our meeting if we are rarely there! Secondly, what is *like Christ*, in the very spirit of it, is plainly the result of occupation with Him, and produced in us by the Spirit of God. Seeing the objectives that will *honour Christ*, and devoting ourselves to them, learning more the will of God, and sharing our appreciation of these matters with each other; confessing our dependence upon God for help and guidance, encouraging mutual love and the practical expressions of it, zeal that the gospel testimony is not neglected but eagerly supported; — these, plainly, along with many another desire fostered by the Word of God, are no lightweight matters. These, and so much else, are the *gold* that can be built upon the sure foundation of Christ in our own local area.

### **Be Gold**

“What manner of persons ought ye to be?” asks Peter. Not only what we are *doing*, but what we *are* personally, the spirit we show and the character of our lives as individuals ought to have some truly Christ-like stamp upon it. This is important in our meeting-life as well as elsewhere. If we show it, it will be of real influence for good in the local assembly. It will be truly constructive, and of positive help towards the mutual growth and well-being of all. The Lord will

approve of it. It will be found to contribute to His "praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ", as the verse concludes. Surely this is a good incentive for us to seek to be persons of this kind! Let us be subject to God's dealings with us so that something of the refining process described in this verse may progress within ourselves, each of us individually. The product will be better than the finest gold, which after all is not an imperishable material. But persons of this character will retain those features for ever, because they are the product of God's activity, forming Christ within them. What a way to look at trials — as happenings which God allows — and which have an object in view, that we may be persons suitable to Him, helpful to others, by the very character of our faith and the reflection of Christ in our conduct! Surely we can all think of individuals, whose *quality* so impresses us that we recognise that their experience with the Lord, in trials and tests, underlies what they *are*. Such persons may well be self-effacing persons, rarely in the limelight, but they contribute much in local contexts by their very being in the area. What examples to us these are, and how we should notice it, and follow their faith. *Pure gold* well describes such persons.

### Buy Gold

The Church at Laodicea seems to have had nothing that the Lord could commend. As a whole it was distasteful to Him. He stands outside and knocks, appealing to any individual to admit Him. The whole church was proud and self-satisfied — quite unaware of its spiritual poverty — feeling that they had everything and needed nothing. How totally opposite from the 'golden' stamp resting upon those mentioned in the previous section! It would be too sweeping to say that some of our assemblies are exact copies of what went on at Laodicea. But it would *not*, surely, be too extreme to say that the spirit of Laodicea is easily shown. Complacency, indolence, self-satisfaction, pride, are never far from us. Failure to see that we are prone to this is easy. Lack of prayer about this, failing to be on guard lest we sink into this, invites trouble, and invites our Lord's displeasure too.

What does He say to these people? I counsel thee to *buy* of me gold. . . . True riches, valuable things within our local meetings come from Him, are closely associated with Himself. Only so will profitable things be shared in our assemblies. He must be inside, and right at the heart of things. As individuals we must admit Him — strange that it should have to be said! — and each of us must welcome Him freely, to commune with us, and we with Him. *Buying* gold suggests some cost, some outlay. We shall need to have transactions with Him — putting our heart and time into communion with Him — and finding the joy and the gain of these experiences. In this way only we shall

find some precious gold to bring into, and to build into, our local gathering.

# The Christian's Attitude to the Scriptures

E. BROWN

## 1. Our Lord's Attitude to them

*The first of a short series of papers, which will simply fall back on the Scriptures themselves, to make clear their great value, and the importance of a proper respect for them. It is hoped that the substance of these papers will do more than command assent, but encourage devotion to the Word of God, study and use of it, and well-based activity that honours God.*

### Introduction

To the Christian, the judgment on any matter which is most appealing and compelling is that of the Lord Jesus, His Lord and Master. Thus in any situation his first recourse is to ask "What is the view of Christ about it?" This takes him directly to the Scriptures, our only reliable source of information on His views.

What then was *His* attitude to the Scriptures? What is known about this, to guide us in our own approach to them? Next, we shall dwell (in a few short papers, later) on the blessings the Scriptures bring to us, and the resources available to us so that we may receive the maximum benefit from them. Finally, a few practical suggestions will be made.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth the Old Testament Scriptures *only* were in existence. He referred to the Scriptures as they then were, but looked ahead, and made statements which set His seal on later Scriptures too. Thus, His assessments of Scripture apply to the whole canon of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Listing some of the relevant points, then, the Lord Jesus clearly regarded Scripture as:

### 1.1. True

Especially in the 20th century, the truth of Scripture has been under increasing attack, openly or more subtly, by infidels and nominal believers. It has been classified as either myth, fable or allegory; at

best, a moral lesson-book, at worst, a contrived fake. For the Christian it is stimulating and stabilising to be reminded that his blessed Lord accepted fully that the Scriptures are TRUE, in outline and in detail. He quoted freely, as TRUE, the accounts of Creation, the garden of Eden, the Fall of Adam, the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the story of Lot and his wife, all as given in the Bible record.

It is quite clear in all four Gospel records that, throughout His life on earth, the unwavering attitude expressed by the Lord Jesus was that the Scriptures available to Him were the "Scripture of Truth" (Daniel 10:21).

## 1.2. Inspired

The Lord Jesus fully accepted that the Scriptures came into being as a result of the inspiration of God. As He was their Co-Author, this is not surprising but, for completeness, needs to be stated.

"How then doth David *in Spirit* call Him Lord?" (Matthew 22:43, quoting Psalm 110 as an utterance of David as controlled by the Holy Spirit.)

In contrast, the Lord rebuked the Pharisees for "making the *Word of God* of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13).

On the road to Emmaus it was necessary for Him to say to Cleopas and his companion "O fools and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken*. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory. And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

These examples confirm that the Lord Jesus, in His holy manhood, was convinced of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, in totality and in detail.

## 1.3. Authoritative

It is implicit in all the references to the Scriptures by the Lord Jesus that He regarded them as having full authority.

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures?" (Matthew 21:42).

"Have ye not read?" (Matthew 12:3; 19:4; 21:16; 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10; Luke 6:3).

"O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

"Search the Scriptures" (John 5:39).

"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matthew 22:29).

## 1.4. The Answer to every important question

During the Lord's ministry upon earth, many issues were raised and discussed. At all times and on all subjects, He testified that the answer to each important question is found in Scripture. He, the omniscient

God, could have spoken in His infinite personal wisdom. Instead, in His holy manhood He chose to apply what is available to any man, the Word of God, the Scripture of Truth.

Examples are: On His Deity (Matthew 22:42-45).

On Resurrection (Matthew 22:29, Luke 20:27-40).

On Divorce (Mark 10:2-12).

To the Lord Jesus, the perfect Man, the Scriptures have the answer to all vital questions coming to man, or raised by man.

### **1.5. The final court of appeal in any controversy**

Critical people often confronted the Lord Jesus. In the controversies they raised, He chose not to assert Himself by use of any of the powers undoubtedly at His command (e.g. Matthew 26:53, 54), intellectual or supernatural. Instead, for Him, Scripture settled the issue.

Examples given under 1.3 apply with equal force in this respect. But also, one more in which the heated opposition was intense and yet His use of Scripture completely nonplussed His critics, may be added. In John 10:32-38 their correct assumption that His words carried the implication of equality with God, was no false claim on His part. And to parry their opposition He quotes something from "the Scripture" which "cannot be broken".

### **1.6. A true safeguard in temptation**

In the three synoptic gospels the record of the temptations is given. The consistent testimony is that each temptation was combated by the use of Holy Scripture.

We can see clearly in Matthew the necessity for the King to demonstrate His moral strength and suitability to reign by resisting the temptations of the devil. Similarly, the perfect Servant in Mark must be seen to be morally fit for whatever service would come His way. In Luke, the perfect Man shows one side of His perfection in His capacity to resist the overtures of the devil.

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 6:16), and so the temptations do not appear in John, where His essential Deity is emphasised. Jesus, the Mighty God, Father of eternity (Isaiah 9:6) could have called upon twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). By the word of His power He could have cast the devil into the lake of fire. (He *will* do so one day — Revelation 20:10).

On each occasion, however, He chose to use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). In the face of "It is written" the enemy retired, defeated (read Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:1-13).

Thus, in the face of any and every test, from however evil or strong a source, *His* sole resource and safeguard was in the Word of God.

### 1.7. Reliable, and a guide to life

The basic attitude underlying all His references to the Scriptures in the days of His flesh, was that the Lord Jesus treated them as *completely reliable* and *thoroughly consistent*. To Him they were what they declare themselves to be, the Word of God to man.

To underline this particular point consider His quotation from the written Word which silenced Satan — but which *also* He claimed as His own principle of living: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”. It was His life, His supply, His guide, His food. His attitude, as the One here in perfect service to God, is beautifully depicted in Isaiah 50 — “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (verse 4). We might understand “the learned” (twice in this verse) *wrongly*. Its meaning is “the one being instructed” or “one in the disciple’s place”. Note also the sequence: *hearing*, in order to *know*, and thus to *speak* and *act* for God. What a model for ourselves!

---

#### ON ISAIAH 50:4-9 (the last-quoted passage above) — a quotation

“Note the repetition of the divine appellation, *Jehovah Adohnai* (the Lord GOD); nor is this without its appropriateness in the mouth of the perfect Servant. *Jehovah* is to Him indeed *Adohn*, a word that carries the idea of the most supreme authority and ownership. It is only used when the utmost reverence is desired to be expressed, and here the very Lord of glory, taking the place of the perfect Servant, calls *Jehovah*, ‘*Adohnai*’ — ‘My Lord and Master’.”

“See then that perfect Servant reading, pondering, meditating upon the Word of God. Morning by morning from the slumbers of the night He awakes, and as a *disciple*, as all who are really taught of God, He listens to the living Voice that may be heard in those inspired pages. . . . The ‘evil’ that lies before Him, and which He refuses, is the smile and favour of a world at enmity with His Adohn-LORD. The ‘good’ that awaits Him and which He chooses is rejection and persecution, yet He willingly addresses Himself to that path, surrendering His back to smiters, His face to spitting.” (see Isaiah 7:15.)

(Quoted from F. C. Jennings, *Studies in Isaiah*)

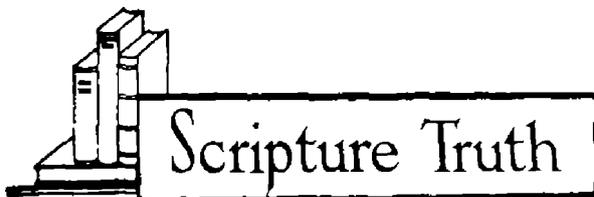
# “When I see the blood”

ALISTAIR TURNER

*This short piece from a relatively young man is not only highly acceptable, but on an absolutely basic matter.*

The promise to the Israelite family on that dreadful night in Egypt was “When I see the blood I will pass over you”. There must have been great assurance in the words “When I see the blood”. Not when you see it, but when *I* see it. Who but God alone can rightly assess the value of the precious blood? Who but He could ever know the cost to Himself and His only Son that the blood of the Lord Jesus should be shed at Calvary that we may be saved? Scripture tells us that “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”, and referring to that same sacrifice, “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”. Were salvation to depend on our appreciation of the value and the efficacy of that shed blood, how far short we would come. What peace and assurance could *that* give? Peace is surely knowing that God, who knows us through and through, knows what we were and what we are, says “the blood of Christ . . . cleanses us from all sin”! He who knows the meaning of sin, the death and distance it had brought in, so far as His creature is concerned, knows *also* the value of the blood. He says “but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”.

We have joy and assurance in knowing that Christ has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Soon He will call us to be with Himself. Our present hope is to meet the Lord in the air, to see His face, once marred more than any man’s. We have the full and certain knowledge that we, once dead in trespasses and sins, alienated and enemies by wicked works, are even now made fit for the presence of God through the precious blood of Jesus. In a future day our song of praise to the Lamb will be “Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood”. Already we sing “unto Him who loveth us, and washed us from our sins by His blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen”.



Incorporating *Words of Help*

MARCH, 1986

# Bible Study — Joshua

J. S. BLACKBURN

## 9. MOUNT EBAL AND MOUNT GERIZIM: CHAPTER 8:30 to 35

*In his letter with this paper Mr Blackburn speaks of the shortage of written ministry on the chapters in Joshua now ahead. So, this and later papers are particularly the outcome of direct consideration of the verses only. He also speaks of much help for himself gained from these meditations. While help received from others is valuable, there is special profit in close and first-hand living with the Word alone.*

We are first introduced to these two locations in Deuteronomy 11:26 to 30, part of the long discourse delivered by Moses "in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho". "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of Jehovah your God . . . and a curse, if ye will not obey. . . . And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal." The translation of v. 30 seems to present difficulty, and it seems to me most meaningful in J.N.D.'s New Translation: "Are they not on the other side of Jordan, beside the oaks of Moreh (Shechem), beyond the way to the west which crosses the land of the Canaanites". The words seem to draw attention to the hazardous nature of this journey of thirty miles across unconquered territory to perform a very public ceremony taking possession of Canaan in the name of Jehovah with burnt offerings and peace offerings. Nothing could more distinctly proclaim the presence of Jehovah with His people to fulfil His promises with a mighty hand.

Deuteronomy 27:2 to 26 also deals with the events on these mountains. There is considerable difference of detail between Deuteronomy 27 and our text in Joshua 8, but we do not concern ourselves

with these, but study the passage in Joshua as it lies before us. At the same time the emphasis in verses 34 and 35 on the scope of the reading permits us to take account of the blessings and the curses in Deuteronomy 27:14 to 30:20. The latter extends to the captivity, the dispersion and the restoration of Israel still in the future.

The future of Israel in literal fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham was mentioned in chapter one of these studies. In the intervening chapters our thoughts have been entirely on the typical meaning of this book. We have seen it as a book of history which is also a book of pictures illustrating in detail the Christian's warfare in heavenly places as set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

In meditating on this portion of the book of Joshua we are constrained to return to emphasise most strongly that the promises made to Abraham and Israel remain to be fulfilled to the last letter. It is important, therefore, to see precisely the close connection between these blessings and the promises.

Read carefully Deuteronomy 28:3 to 6. These blessings apply to a people who belong to this earth. They apply to the literal Israel in the literal Canaan and to no one else. They belong "in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" and nowhere else (v. 8). The sphere of their application is clear: "thy body . . . thy ground . . . thy cattle . . . thy sheep", v. 4; "Thy basket . . . thy store", v. 5.

The outworking of the blessings and of the curses is continued into the far distant future in the conversion and restoration of Israel after the captivity and dispersion. Are the blessings promised by the prophets of Israel to apply after this interval of milleniums still the same in character? Indeed they are. Read of Israel's final conversion in Deuteronomy 30:6, and in verse 9 the nature of the blessings thereafter to be restored to them: "the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good". Read also Jeremiah 31:12. The last words of this blessing reveal the absolute finality of this blessing for Israel, and that blessing is still appropriate to a people belonging to earth and not to heaven. "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden: and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

At this point we return to our principal theme, the instruction given in this book in a *typical* way regarding the Christian's Canaan.

It is once again to Ephesians that we turn to find the nature of the blessings bestowed upon us in Christianity. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Is Jehovah now the name of God in (this) action? No; an immense advance has been made. The

same God, but now using a Name unknown to Israel: the Father (see Ephesians chapters 1 to 3). May we never forget or fail to adore the divine love that has given the Christian knowledge of that new Name. The summit of the divine love for man is in it. The place where these heavenly blessings dwell — is it Canaan? No; the Christian's Canaan is 'heavenly places'. This expression, while not synonymous with heaven, nevertheless clearly centres on heaven, for this is where Christ appears in glory. Are these blessings of the city and the field, of cattle and sheep, of basket and store? No; they are blessings in the spiritual realm. Do they stem from Abraham? They are 'in Christ', and stem from Abraham only in the sense that Christ is Abraham's seed.

The great value of having these earthly blessings brought before us would be to stimulate the spiritual exercise of meditating in detail on the blessings set out primarily in Ephesians chapters 1 to 3. We have no light in ourselves to realise such blessing, and the apostle's prayer underlines this. He prays (1:18) for the enlightening of the eyes of our hearts, so that we may possess and enjoy them, have their grip over us increased, and be deepened in our response to God.

Let us notice just two parallels. Deuteronomy 28:9a seems to be matched by Ephesians 1:4b.

"The *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus . . . *has chosen us* in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame *before Him* in love."

"Jehovah shall establish (*hath chosen* 7:6) thee an holy people *unto Himself*."

Jehovah the God of Israel, while saying "ye shall be holy, for I am holy", had so far revealed Himself as One whose holiness requires obedience of the "touch not, taste not, handle not" kind. How different the connections when this word is quoted in the N.T.: 1 Peter 1:16 — "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts". The holiness of "touch not the unclean thing" is directly contrasted with "perfecting holiness" in "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit" in 2 Corinthians 6:17 and 7:1. The special point to note, however, in the first of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Ephesians 1:4 is that the holiness here is not that of state but of standing. Under the eye of God the believer is now given a standing in Christ according to which he possesses that moral character of blameless holiness and love in which alone God can delight, because it is His own moral perfection of God fully revealed. That this holiness should now be the believer's state as well as his standing is one of the chief burdens of the later part of the epistle. All this broaches themes of surpassing splendour. God has reached out to achieve His own joy in putting upon the believer all that perfect delight in His Beloved One by blessing them in Christ. Here is the centre of God's counsel and purpose

of blessing "before the foundation of the world".

The second parallel relates to Deuteronomy 28:12. "Jehovah shall open unto thee his good treasure". What a beautiful verse is this! "the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to *bless* all the work of thy hand". The blessings on Mount Gerizim all relate to these chapters in Deuteronomy which Joshua proclaimed. In every case when the land is described there is emphasis on the various features setting out Jehovah's "good treasure, the rain". It will be helpful to distinguish two aspects of the blessings of Canaan. First, *the nature of the land*, so explicitly contrasted with the land of Egypt whence Israel had been redeemed. This has already been underlined and will be considered in greater detail. Secondly, there is *Jehovah's good treasure, the rain*, on which we must now meditate further. There can be little doubt as to the meaning for us in Christianity of this feature; it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. At the moment of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the little band about to become the Church, Peter quotes the Old Testament promise: "he will cause to come down for you the rain. . . . And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:23 and 28). What was poured out like rain on the waiting believers in Acts 2 was the Holy Spirit. And this is abundantly amplified regarding the Church (and not at that time the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh still future), in the express context of the Christian's struggle, in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Let us pray as we read, that God will grant us to realise the distinct greatness of the gift of the Spirit in this Epistle. It is "the wealth of the Father's glory" (3:16) in order "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

It is to many a familiar study to trace the theme of the Holy Spirit through the Ephesian epistle. Let us notice afresh its salient features, bearing firmly in mind as we do so its relevance to the fight. The theme begins in 1:13, 14 where we find expressions such as 'promise', 'inheritance', and 'possession' very specifically connected with the same expressions in Joshua (for example, 'promise' 22:4, 23:5, 10, 15; 'possession' 12:1, 22:4; 'inheritance' 11:23, with 54 more references).

In times when a form of Christianity which has spread like a fire over the world seems to leave the impression that God's purpose in the gift of the Spirit is achieved in the miraculous powers which accompanied it in the early days, it is of supreme importance to devote a major measure of attention to the spiritual exercises emphasised in the Ephesian epistle and, for example, in 2 Corinthians. What, in the daily exercises of your Christian discipleship is meant for you by the words occurring in 2 Corinthians 3:3; "the epistle of Christ written,

not with ink, but *with the Spirit of the living God . . . in the fleshy tables of the heart*”?

As has just been remarked, Jehovah's good treasure, the “rain unto thy land” (our present meditation), corresponds to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, never to be repeated nor withdrawn. The individual believer comes into the blessing of this original outpouring ‘on believing’ the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. At the moment of such saving faith the believer receives the Spirit, and the indwelling Spirit is the seal and the earnest of the future inheritance. In the present life the believer possesses no part of the inheritance. He possesses the EARNEST, and the word clearly means that the Spirit's indwelling is our present enjoyment, and the certainty of our future possession of that inheritance. What is the inheritance? Do not think lightly of the question or the answer. All “the exceeding riches of His grace” and “the exceeding greatness of God's power” are in it. It is nothing less than a universe where every trace of evil is done away, and which is penetrated in its remotest detail with the beauty and the glory of the Father's Beloved One.

It would not be fitting, in writing on the book of Joshua, to enter on a detailed exposition of Ephesians, but let us admit that our great lack in these matters is exercise in private and in detail with the Lord and His Word. Jeremiah's word is especially applicable here: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they (became) the joy and rejoicing of my heart”. Let us go away from this page and apply ourselves in Jeremiah's way of exercise to *the words* of Ephesians regarding the experiences which accord with the believer's reception of the Holy Spirit; “Access by one Spirit to the Father” (2:18), “Strengthened with might . . . in the inner man” (3:16), “There is one body and one Spirit” (4:4), “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” (4:30), “Be filled with the Spirit” (5:18), “Take . . . the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God” (6:17), “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (6:18). These *words* just quoted lead us on from the basic fact of the gift of the Spirit (that is, His outpouring corresponding to Canaan's blessing, “the rain from heaven”), to the way in which the Spirit's power flows out in the details of life (corresponding to the springs and wells of Canaan, our next theme).

In coming to an end in our consideration of the blessings on Mount Gerizim we must not overlook the danger of despising the blessing. Many in Israel, back to Esau, despised the blessing. “Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word” (Psalm 106:24). Two references have already been made to 1 Corinthians 2:7 to 3:3. It will be of great value to read this passage again, and to pause to meditate earnestly upon it. First, there is a most beautiful statement of the Christian's Canaan. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for

them that love him.” Next, *rain from heaven*, the work, once for all, of the Holy Spirit; “But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”.

Can it be that the reader feels that he is satisfied not to face the toil and prayer of spiritual exercise? If such be the case, then the apostle’s conclusion is extremely searching: “the things of the Spirit of God . . . are spiritually discerned . . . and I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for . . . ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal . . . ?” When the Christian is in this manner assailed by the works of the flesh, he is to remember the victory of Joshua’s first command, against the Amalekites. Moses puts his finger on the sore in Deuteronomy 25:18. It was “the hindmost . . . all that were feeble behind thee”, in fact the stragglers, hanging back in the race to enter Canaan, who fell victims to Amalek, the flesh.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 2, the conclusion of the matter is that the apostles (Paul in particular), received the Holy Spirit’s revelation of this mystery and of these precious things. By the same Spirit they themselves understood them; and lastly, by the same Spirit they were given the words of God to communicate them to us. The living Holy Spirit uses the priceless treasure of Holy Scripture to lead us into all the truth.

So far in this paper we have considered the blessings on Mount Gerizim. We must have a few words on the curse on Mount Ebal. In the charge given by Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 27, the curses only are to be declaimed on Mount Ebal. They set out in detail the abominable practices from the beginning associated with the name Canaan. The blessings *and* curses set out in the later chapters are quite different in character. The curses in chapter 27 specify the evil behaviour; the blessings and curses in the later chapters give the adverse results of disobedience and the favourable results of obedience.

Just as we turn to the Ephesian Epistle for instruction on the blessings in Christianity, so Galatians deals with the curse; and we rejoice to learn there that there is no curse in Christianity: “Christ hath redeemed us from the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (3:13). It is with this last passage that the curses to be declaimed from Mount Ebal end: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).

The book of God ends with the blessing flowing with the “pure river of water of life . . . out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . . and there shall be no more curse” (Revelation 22:1-3).

# Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership

COR BRUINS

*The continuation of the address started in the previous issue.*

What then, lastly, are the qualifications for true spiritual leadership? We have seen that *Christ-likeness* is the key matter. In John 21 we have the story of Peter. He goes fishing, with five of his brethren. Next morning the Lord is on the seashore. Have you got anything? And they say — we caught nothing. They were out of step with the Master — out of line with His thoughts. Again He exposes the state of failure in the heart of Peter. I would say that the first requirement for a saint to be a leader is that he knows the plague of his own heart; he knows what a big failure he is in himself. If *we* truly were reduced to zero by the cross of Jesus Christ would we still find time to look around and criticise others? We've got enough in hand with ourselves! Certainly Peter knew the plague of his own heart. But he had been restored! He knew the mercy and the compassion of the Lord Jesus. And now he was distrustful of himself. Knowing our own failures, we should surely have learned to be patient with the weaknesses of younger ones. Peter was restored; "Lovest thou Me more . . ." the Lord had said. Thoroughly humbled, he became mellowed — he could now *sympathise* with the infirmities of others. That makes a true leader — sympathy, no critical mind, no judging, no quickness to condemn. Three times the Lord Jesus speaks. Feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep, feed My sheep. Yes, Christ has lambs, and He has sheep. There are different levels of spirituality — and that should be borne in mind by those who present the Word of God. Only an experienced, self-judged, and broken-hearted, tender-hearted, man will bear that in mind — and *he* is qualified to feed the lambs. *Shepherding* the sheep requires a certain amount of authority, guiding, directing, and protecting too. But, the third time, *feeding* His sheep now — providing the right kind of food, at the right time, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Those verses from Genesis 33 touched me deeply some time ago, and I asked the Lord what I had to do with them — and this is the burden now on my heart. Jacob says to Esau "the children are tender and the flocks and herds are with young; that if a man should overdrive them one day and the flocks will die (v.13). Let my lord I pray thee pass over, and I will lead on softly." *There* is a true concern for little ones, for that which is still tender. Jacob had this fear that he might *overdrive*

those little ones. How could *we* overdrive those young in the faith? Perhaps by puzzling them with deep and controversial points of doctrine; or by insisting that they should have an understanding beyond their small experience in the life of the faith; or by showing a spirit of judgment and harshness, or by manifesting a kind of austerity. We can overdrive them that way — they could be driven *away* that way. If we kill the lambs today, there will be no sheep tomorrow! Did we think of that, in the past? That's the lesson of not giving offence. Here are one or two examples. Think of a newly lighted candle. It has to be moved. What happens if you run with it? It will go out! If you have a fire which is almost expiring; if you take the bellows and blow a mighty blow into it, you'll blow it out completely! Gently! Gently! Nothing is as strong as true gentleness, and nothing so gentle as real strength. Think of the Lord Jesus!

Somehow I feel we waste time on non-essentials. On the way certain children of God express themselves in addressing God. I was asked this question somewhere recently. What did I think? Well of course I'm a Dutchman, as you know. To me it was simply a question of linguistics. Passing to other languages, there is no problem. But I want to say this from my heart, dear brothers and sisters. I travel up and down this country, and what I'm seeing today *burdens* me — because the rift is becoming wider between these little ones and those older ones. I'm not pleading for *any* side. You will know that when I speak to the Lord I say *Thou* and *Thee*, and in the rules of grammar I say *Thou* wouldest, and *Thou* savest. I would not change that: but neither would I criticise, or say "Well of course, *they're* unspiritual" (referring to those who do not use Old English). I wouldn't. I would not *dare*. Would *you*? This is from my heart, and please accept it as that: for when I visit the assemblies, up and down this land, and hear the reactions to this — I'm just afraid, what might happen. Oh! let us go gently, gently with one another. And the younger ones, remember what Peter says — submit yourselves to the older ones. *You* can give offence too. The older ones can give offence to the younger, and *vice versa* — it doesn't come from one side, you know. It comes from both sides. And if there is true love, and if we wish to give the death-blow to this so-called generation-gap, then we must begin to love and respect one another, whether we are small or big, young or old. To love one another, to appreciate one another, to realise that we *need* one another, to build one another up in our most holy faith — and to march unitedly, young and old together — how *needful* this is!

The virtues we should develop can, some of them, be indicated in individuals. *Devotion*. Consider Ananias in Acts 9. Ananias! Yes, Lord! Go to the street called Straight, and go to Saul, he's praying. But Lord, he's a dangerous man. Go! — and Ananias went, utterly devoted to his Lord — willing to crucify his own opinions, not to insist on his own

mind, but to submit to the Lord. He goes, and he says "Saul, brother"! And whereas Saul of Tarsus came to lay murderous hands on the saints here is a saint who puts loving hands on "brother Saul". Then Luke, that *dependable* man. At the very end, Paul writes from prison "Only Luke is with me". Then, the *forgiving* spirit. In that same last chapter: "Bring Mark with you". What, Mark? That failure! Bring him because he is profitable to me, and for the ministry. That's forgiveness. Paul could forgive and forget — can *we*? Then Barnabas — his *friendliness*. When Saul first went to Jerusalem nobody wanted him — not even the brethren! Barnabas, the son of consolation, took him by the hand and introduced him to them. Later, he goes all the way to Tarsus, to seek out Saul, and to take him to Antioch so that he might work together with him. Then *kindliness* — that saintly woman Dorcas, or Tabitha, doing nothing else but caring for others, knitting, sewing, etc. The widows wept when she died. Dorcas the kind saint! Epaphras, showing his *loyalty*. Sick unto death, but wrestling in prayer for the Colossians. "He hath great zeal for you", says Paul. Then there is *modesty*. Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, always bringing someone else. Always he was in the background, and someone else to the fore. He steps back — modesty! Think of Moses in the O.T. — not standing for his own rights. Joshua, zealous for his master, says "Forbid them, my lord". What does Moses say? "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put His spirit upon them".

And so we could go on. But this suffices. Now we know what kind of virtues to cultivate, to allow the Spirit of God His way, to meditate on the Lord Jesus as we saw Him in the precious ointment earlier. Oh! brothers and sisters, let us stay close to the Lord Jesus, let us seek to build up one another, in love. Let us stand together in unity. This, the enemy seeks to crush. Let us reflect the compassions of Christ — for the lost, for the young ones, and for one another, for *His Name's* sake. Amen!

---

### **Strength, with Gentleness (Isaiah 40:9-11)**

"Behold your God! Behold the Lord Jehovah will come with might, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.

He will feed His flock like a shepherd: He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead those that are with young."

# Philemon

GORDON KELL

*An address given in Bradford in March 1985.*

When, as is occasionally necessary, one clears out past correspondence, old letters turn up which awaken new interest on re-reading them. The short letter to Philemon is like this, tucked away as it is, a small scrap of paper, wedged between parts of the N.T. which receive much more attention. It is a tiny chapter, which I suspect is not often read. But we shall give full attention to it tonight.

Paul was in prison at Rome when he wrote it. Along with letters to Ephesus and Colosse, he despatched this brief letter to Philemon too. We are familiar with Paul as one who, though confined at Rome, threw his energies into exposition of the truth, correction of misunderstanding of it, and earnest contending for the faith. His letter to Colosse had much in it to warn the Colossian saints about misleading trends, pointing out the glories and the supremacy of Christ. But this separate letter to Colosse, to an individual, Philemon, is different. It is a personal letter, about a personal need, not intended for general reading at all, but which, under the Holy Spirit, has been absorbed into the canon of Scripture. Here we have another view of Paul. The man himself, the private man, his character as an individual outside the public eye, is here revealed. These things must be held in balance; our adherence to the truth, and the character of the personal life that we show, can so easily be inconsistent. The love of Christ, finding its demonstration in the believer's life, shines out in the heart-to-heart spirit shown with Philemon in this little letter. We *need* this example of what suits a person who stands firmly for the truth.

Paul, from early days, had a vigour about him: first used to cause havoc among believers; but later in showing a strong drive in pleasing and serving the Lord Jesus, who had turned him around so completely and wonderfully. But he also learned to be gentle, tactful, gracious, as befits a servant of the Lord. Never in his converted days did he lose sight of *love* as the stamp upon a believer's manner — the love of Christ constraining him, showing itself too in all that he did.

It seems Philemon must have been a wealthy man, who had in some way come to know Paul, and to share his faith. We are not told the background, but verse 19 indicates that Philemon was greatly indebted to Paul — owing his own self to him. His one-time slave, Onesimus, may have committed some misdemeanour. 'Profitable' is the meaning of his name — so named perhaps because that was expected of him on becoming Philemon's slave. We have no details, but in

absconding from Philemon's house and service he had not lived up to his name. He had left quite decisively (Colosse to Rome must be over 1,000 miles). But amazingly the hand of God over-ruled. In Rome, a city big enough to cover all his traces, he turned up exactly in the vicinity where the apostle was confined — and soon Paul meets and speaks to him face to face! Perhaps it was when Paul still was confined in his own hired house (Acts 28:30) — we do not know — but that young man found God's grace pursued him. Meeting up with Paul (surely we cannot say fortuitously) brought him to the Lord! The joy of *that* underlies the letter. But it sets a problem too. Lives rescued by grace need to start again. A place of return after departure must be found. Whether newly coming to the Lord, or after backsliding, there must be return to the Lord, *and* to the point where we were. In Genesis 13:4, Abraham came back to the place of the altar . . . where he was at the very first. Confession is needed. Onesimus must face Philemon again. *Our* point of departure may not necessarily be from the meetings, or from the breaking of bread — though sometimes it is so. We can keep up a façade, yet be away from Christ. We can leave our "first love" so easily, and start on the downhill slide. We need to return in spirit, and in humility, to Him.

Where harm has been done, confession is needed — openly too — by persons of integrity. How many have we seen come within our Christian circles, and go too? When people leave, do we adopt a "so be it" attitude? Might the blame be partly on our own shoulders? How many who have left us have we prayed for, visited, followed up, shown concern and affection for? Onesimus having been brought to the Lord, Paul would willingly have kept him: but he sees it right to send him back to Philemon; and how delicately he eases his return with this letter! How like his Lord Paul is, showing such a true spirit of mediation. Do *we* not need these lessons?

Proceeding down some of the verses, Apphia may perhaps have been Philemon's wife. Archippus, commended as a fellow-soldier here, also needed some direct prompting in the general letter to Colosse (4:17). Verses 3 to 7 give some indication of the kind of man Philemon was. Paul thanks God for him, not only in writing this, but also in his prayers (v. 4). He is more than thankful for all he hears about him, his love and faith towards all the saints is well known. Paul got the order right here! Devotion to the Lord Jesus first, *then* to all the saints. Philemon loved and served the brethren because Christ was the dominant Object of his allegiance. So, his communications with his brethren were effective, and refreshing to them (v. 6), and Paul himself rejoices on hearing of it (v. 7).

These preliminary verses give us a good sample of the relations these early Christians had with one another. Far from being stilted and formal, their love and affection flowed over in their exchanges.

Specially gifted persons (like the apostle, charged to pass on revealed truth), were freely involved along with others in these warm exchanges. Each one, prominent or not, showed the evidence of Christian love at the root of all that they did. Verses 2 to 7 lay the foundation for what follows. He asks for an open welcome to Onesimus. He appeals to their mutual love in Christ, to his imprisonment, and to his age! He does not speak from his standing as an apostle — *that* is not in mind at all in this letter. He seems, in the ensuing verses, to rely on Philemon forgiving Onesimus *handsomely*, despite the past. He suggests that he will receive him, not only because it would be right to take him back, being a believer now; but that he will do it without the slightest trace of reluctance. Frank forgiveness, and a transparently open welcome for Onesimus, would be the kind of reception Paul expected Philemon to give. Receive him *as myself*, says Paul. How wonderfully the spirit of Christ Himself underlies Paul's words in vv. 18, 19! How the One great Mediator between God and men is recalled to us — the One who alone could meet our wrongdoings and debts, and lay a proper basis for God's forgiveness and welcome on a large scale!

We should surely be sobered by the thought that good and loving attitudes can be less well demonstrated with brethren we are *close* to; among those (including ourselves) in our homes, and in our local meetings. Paul wanted a complete clear-up of the matter in Philemon's own house. Frank attention to the healing of problems in our own close circles is needed. Troubles, long in the past, ought to be overcome and dismissed in true Christian love. "Love to all the saints" can be *assumed* to mark us — yet tensions among saints we actually rub shoulders with are not unknown. The warm spirit and close affection between early believers shines out in this little letter. It is an important and necessary part of Scriptural guidance, for demonstration in our lives today — certainly no less important than the valuable doctrinal guidance which is elsewhere in Scripture.

Finally, the cheerful spirit shown here, as well as its tender and frank tone, is to be noted. Onesimus's rescue and conversion was indeed a joyful happening. Philemon's good state as a believer, and the mutual openness between Paul and himself was a cause of rejoicing to them both. Do we rejoice when we see others *entering* the Christian blessing? Do we rejoice and thank the Lord when we see, or when we hear of, persons *growing* in Christ? Enough to bestir ourselves somewhat — to write a letter perhaps, or to exchange in other ways something of our common joy and love in the Lord? Paul did. Philemon had progressed well as a believer. Paul is truly thankful for it. But Paul still looks for growth in Christ with Philemon. He asks for it, looks for it, in this further act of love and graciousness with Onesimus. If he looks for it, he shows it himself in writing this letter, and in its warm style. It is for *our* encouragement and following too.

# Praise, Honour and Glory

JOHN BARNES

*Believers often find their faith is tested, sometimes severely. But the Lord sees to it that there are compensations. These are found amid the trials; but also will be known at the end, when He accords His open approval. This paper finds this kind of encouragement in 1 Peter 1:7.*

The apostle Peter is writing about the believer's faith and its trial, and he shows that what God has in mind is not the destruction of faith but its refinement and that certain results should follow. He uses three words to describe these consequences, and we probably ought not to think of them as roughly equivalent but rather as expressing different aspects of these results.

## 1. Praise

The thought of praise may often suggest a *Private Approval*. True faith is never dead or inactive, though it may often be feeble; nor does it exist in terms only but is a vital principle. Even where faith is not robust it is energised by the life principle and pursues activities which are pleasing to the Lord. We are assured in scripture that "without faith it is impossible to please" the Lord; but where faith is present he takes pleasure in it. The men of faith who walked here centuries ago "pleased God".

No true believer would require an offer of repayment to secure his devotedness to the Lord and His service, but the fact that this will meet with His approval is an encouragement to staunch committal to His work. Whatever others may have to say about it, and the critics are plentiful, His approval is all that matters. In chapter 14 of his gospel, Mark points out that there were those who carped at the dear woman's offering of spikenard, but the Lord's praise was ready and unstinted. He said, "She hath wrought a good work on me," and again, "She hath done what she could". The Lord Jesus valued her response to His love, and the memory of her devoted act is fragrant in our hearts still today. How grateful she would be for those generous words of praise amid the growlings of the cavillers. To her devoted heart, His praise was of infinitely greater importance than the cheap criticisms of the onlookers. In the parable of the pounds the nobleman commends the faithful traders with the simple words of praise, "Well done!". Such commendation addressed to the diligent servant is not to be lightly thought of. We may well covet such an appraisal of our work, though we may not, personally, rate it very highly, and others may even look upon it with

contempt. Whoever may find fault, if the Lord should approve, it will be worthwhile. If you did what was within your reach, what matters the opinion of those who, perhaps, did little else but find fault with others. Real labourers are mostly too busy to spend time criticising others, but the Lord's praise will outweigh every other consideration; and He will give it to the worker concerned as the expression of His own approbation.

## 2. Honour

This word seems to suggest a *Positional Advancement*. While praise may sometimes be given in the presence of bystanders, it *may* be given quite privately. Honour, however, more than likely assumes that there are others, since various degrees of honour are possible. In the honours systems of countries like our own, distinctions of this kind are considerable. In 1 Samuel 23, where we may read about David's mighty men, it can be seen that the honours conferred upon those heroes differed, as do our modern M.C.s, D.F.C.s, D.S.O.s, etc., and that some were promoted to positions of greater influence than others, though all had honours conferred upon them. The rank of "chief among the captains" was a distinction gained by Adino the Ezrite (v. 8), while Abishai was made "chief among three" of these courageous men (v. 18). Yet, though he was "the most honourable of the three", he "attained not unto the first three" (v. 19). So, in the company of the Lord's servants we may expect that honours will include similar distinctions. It may logically be assumed that servants of God such as Abraham and Moses will be distinguished in honours, while New Testament workers Peter, Paul and the other apostles we should expect to be similarly approved. Indeed, in confirmation of this thought we find that the names of the apostles of the Lamb will be inscribed in the foundations of the holy city.

In the parable of the pounds, recorded in Luke 19, the nobleman not only made known his private approval of his faithful servants who had cared for his concerns during his absence, but he also apportioned them positions of trust according to their devotedness in service, as this became clear when the details of their transactions were examined. The servant, whose trading had gained his master ten pounds, was honoured by being given authority over ten cities; while his fellow-worker, faithful but perhaps less able, whose services had profited his master by five pounds, was given charge of five cities. The distinctions suggested by the term "honour" thus seem to be best considered in relation to the company of the Lord's servants.

In the light of these things, it would seem that our service will be assessed by the Lord Jesus in His own righteous way, and that consideration will be given to the way in which we have used the immense favour of our position; that He will look at what has been committed to our trust and at how we have used the opportunities of

service which the situation afforded. Where there was faithfulness, this will be rewarded by advancement to honour; where there was laxity, or selfish pursuit of personal interests or worldly advancement rather than devotedness to His concerns, there cannot but be loss of reward.

### 3. Glory

The thought of glory may indicate a more *Public Acclaim*. This takes us a step further on as we consider the ultimate destiny of the believer. When I was a young Christian, one of the older brothers used to say: "The outlook for the Christian is glory". The present struggle, the opposition, the current problems are not the end; the end is glory with Christ above, while the trials of the pathway are incidents on the way to the goal. The apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians, says "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). To the Romans he remarks that the present sufferings are unworthy to be compared with the glory ahead (Romans 8). Again, in writing to the Corinthians he points out that "our light affliction" which is of short duration works out for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Other texts confirming this truth will readily occur to the reader. Glory will be enjoyed by believers in a most public way. This is remarkable when we consider how unworthy most of us feel ourselves to be, but it will be centred in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this fact could only fill every Christian heart with satisfaction. The blessed One who for our sakes bore reproach and suffering will be magnified and universally acclaimed. But, while He was alone in His sufferings and death, He will not be alone in His glory. It is His purpose that those who are His shall be elevated with Him and associated with Him in those scenes of dazzling splendour to be enjoyed. We sing: "Alone He bare the cross . . . though we shall share His glorious throne". In His great prayer to the Father, the Lord Jesus prayed; "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". That He will be supreme and the Object of every eye is certain, and this is our deep joy, but it will be His joy to have us there with Him, and to have us share in the glories of those transcendent scenes. The king's consort may, herself, be of common stock, but because she is the king's wife, his chosen companion, she shares in the glory of his position. So, too, the saints, in fellowship today with the Lord Jesus in His continued rejection, will be glorified together with Him in His public exaltation. Glory will be public and universally known. The Lord Jesus told that feeble remnant: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan . . . to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee". The present pressures, endured by many of the saints, have that hour of glory in view.

These three consequences of faithful service may be seen together,

illustrated in the parable of the pounds. There is a private appreciation of service, faithfully carried out; "Well done!"; there is a comparative promotion in answer to dedicated labour; "I will make thee ruler over many things"; and there is the share which all will enjoy in the public manifestation which will take place; "Enter into the joy of thy Lord". This, we may be assured, will be the favoured portion of each believer.

---

## THE NEARNESS OF THE GLORY

The sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us — and here I mean its nearness in *place*, and we need to be at no effort to persuade ourselves of it. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle and as soon as the appointed moment comes the glory is before them (Leviticus 8 and 9). So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple (Exodus 40; 2 Chronicles 5). So when it had business to do (though in different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus, wherever it may have to act and whatever it may be called to do — to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure, to smite to the earth the persecutor, or give triumph to the martyrs, or to conform an elect vessel to itself — it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil which either hides or distances it, the path is short and the journey rapidly accomplished.

We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so, ere long, when the time of 1 Corinthians 15 arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us and bearing the *image* of the heavenly, to bear us up like Enoch to the country of the heavenlies.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints, not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in white and shining in our glories, we shall be the witnesses of what He has done for the sinner that trusted Him.

(from J. G. Bellett)

# One Loaf: One Body

F. B. HOLE

*Requests to print this article again have been received from several quarters. There is clear help in applying Scripture here. While generally favouring more positively edifying material, I include this paper with some readiness, since "the use of the truth of the one body as the great ground for excommunication or rejection, rather than of reception" is a clear misuse of that truth. This current tendency is no doubt sensed by those asking for this reprint.*

When saints endeavour to walk according to the truth of the church as set forth in Scripture, and thus come together in practical fellowship according to the apostolic pattern, we must not expect that they will be left in peace. The adversary of God and His people is too watchful and untiring for that.

More to be feared than open and gross breaches of God's trust or order are the more subtle deviations from truth and simplicity which spring up almost imperceptibly in the course of years, and entrench themselves in peoples' minds or ever they are aware of them; until finally the deviation becomes accepted as the original main road of truth, and is tenaciously contended for as such.

By way of illustration we mention three specific matters which have come under our own observation.

The first concerns the truth of the 'one body'. The chapters in which this truth is alluded to are Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 10 and 12 to 15; Ephesians 1 and 4; Colossians 1 and 2; and if these be carefully read and considered, it will be found that the bearing of this truth is in the direction of *unity, love, consideration, mutual forbearance*, and the like, and that nothing in the nature of church order and discipline stands connected with it. Ephesians 4:1-4 may be taken as summing up the apostolic application and bearing of the truth in question.

We have, however, lived to see a very different use and application

of it. Years ago, when believers walking according to the truth of Scripture somewhat increased in number, and groups of them were found in many parts, it was recognised that the truth of the unity of the body, equally with other truth, should regulate their dealings with one another as much as it would have done, if instead of being a small and insignificant remnant they had been the whole church in their various localities. From this it was deduced — rightly as we judge — that in such matters as cases of discipline, or other assembly acts, the local gathering acted for all, and hence its actions were bound to be respected unless evidently contrary to Scripture. The unity of the body was thus rightly invoked to prevent independency, and consequent confusion of action.

Of later years this last-named ecclesiastical application of the truth of the one body seems in many minds to have been so magnified out of all proportion that it has quite eclipsed the primary application as Scripture presents it. With some it seems now to be regarded as the truth itself, instead of a secondary application, which is deduced from Scripture, rather than plainly stated in it.

Hence in some difficulties that have arisen an altogether disproportionate amount of effort has been expended in trying to show that this or that group of saints is 'off' the ground of the one body by reason of their having made some false ecclesiastical step, such as the non-recognition of a judgment, or act of some other meeting, and the like.

Moreover, by the magnifying of this secondary application to the obscuring of the primary, the truth of the unity of the body has become the great ground of excommunication or rejection, rather than that of reception. Who, for instance, has heard of a meeting receiving someone and then demanding that all other meetings shall receive him under penalty of being regarded as 'off' the ground of the one body? Such dealings are always entered upon in order to produce acquiescence in acts of excision or rejection.

Thus, by over-emphasising the secondary, the primary force of the truth is overlooked, indeed is nullified. Similar cases by which the Word of God was made of none effect were common in the time of our Lord, as the Gospels show.

The above naturally leads one to inquire whether there may not be a further misconception underlying this diversion of the truth from its proper setting. We submit that one such misconception entertained by not a few is the assumption that the fact of saints gathering in the light of the truth upon the ground of the one body confers upon them a corporate status, distinct from that which belongs to the church as a whole.

Certain parts of Scripture contemplate the breakdown in the professing church, and indicate our path and resources in view of it.

Such are Acts 20; 2 Timothy; 2 Peter; and 2 and 3 John. What have these to say, bearing upon this point?

They make it clear that though wolves would enter from without, and there would be no safety in the elderhood (i.e., rule as originally established by God) within, yet God and the Word of His grace are always available: that no matter how high the tide of evil might rise, the foundation of God would stand sure, and faithful men be found able to teach others; and not only so, but that to the end there would be some calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, if only a few: some who love the truth, and have a good report of the truth itself. There is, however, no hint that such faithful souls by so doing acquire any special corporate status. They may enjoy much *collectively* which they would not as single individuals; but *corporately* they have nothing apart from the whole body of Christ.

Indeed, whether in the Old or New Testaments, when once an institution of God fails it does not appear that at some subsequent date He grants any renewed or special incorporation to any fragment of the whole, however godly or enlightened the individuals composing it may be. It is always a case henceforward of individual faithfulness, together with a reverting in heart to the original status, in which status the faithful individual has part by reason of his forming part of the original institution, and not because he may take up with others a true remnant position.

Notice for instance:—

When Israel made the golden calf, they could only proceed from that point as upheld by the individual faithfulness of Moses (see Exodus 33:12-17).

When in the land and Joshua dead, they rapidly fall away. Revivals were granted, but always in the power of individual faith and action. "When the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge [it does not say, then the Lord was with the people], and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (Judges 2:18).

When after the captivity some returned from Babylon, they were evidently led by the faith and energy of individual men of God, such as Zerubabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Under the influence of these men they began brightly, afresh embracing God's thoughts as to all Israel, and holding themselves as connected with such. See for example Ezra 6:17; 9:4-15. It was just because later they began to arrogate to themselves a special position far more exclusive and lofty than Israel's original calling that they developed the frame of mind that prepared them to reject the Messiah when He came.

In the New Testament the truth of the mystery was committed to Paul. He was also the "wise master-builder" who not only laid the foundation, but afterwards in his Epistles treated of matters connected

with order, discipline, and administration in the churches. It is especially striking, therefore, to find that in his farewell Epistle to Timothy he addresses simply a faithful individual, and that he designates the aggregate of faithful individuals, not by a phrase which indicates any special corporate status as belonging to them, but by one which indicates their moral character. "Them which call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

The position of a remnant, then, in all dispensations, is an individual one. The present moment is no exception. Saints who in later years have rallied to the truth and met on the ground of the one body have not acquired any special corporate status by so doing; at best they have been but faithful individuals walking in the truth. The fact that they have no status beyond the original status of the church, which all the saints share with them, does not give them licence to disregard any part of the truth. Though individuals they are responsible to be governed by 'assembly' truth, because by ALL truth.

The third thing to which we now refer is the fact that the cup and the loaf of the Lord's supper are linked with the oneness of the body. The cup and the loaf represent the blood and body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 10 they are spoken of as the communion of His blood and body rather than the representation of it, inasmuch as "we being many are one bread, one body"; and hence not only is there the thought of our identification with the death of Christ, as the Jew is identified with his altar, or the heathen with demons, but also the thought that we are all so identified *together as one body*, for as it adds, "we are all partakers of that one bread" (verse 17).

It should be carefully noted that these words simply indicate that the partaking of the one loaf in the Lord's supper is the expression of that unity, and therefore may be appealed to as the *sign* or proof of it. It does not mean that our eating of the one loaf is the *cause* of the unity. We say, for instance, "It will be fine tomorrow for the barometer is rising", and by this we mean not that the barometer produces the fine weather but that it is the sign of it. So our common participation in the one loaf is the sign and setting forth of the fact of our being one body.

This is important, because the almost certain result of believing that saints who meet upon a Scriptural basis thereby obtain a special corporate status will be to connect the Lord's Supper and its communion with that "inner circle" instead of with the whole body; making it thus the expression of 'our' fellowship instead of proper Christian fellowship. This in turn creates a tendency to the exclusion of people from the Lord's supper apart from the authority of Scripture, because they do not please us, or are out of harmony with the aims we are pursuing, or for other similar reasons.

If an individual sits down and partakes of the Lord's supper, he is thereby recognised as a member of the one body and as fit for Christian fellowship; no such point is raised as that of whether all can agree with all his views and actions. This is pretty clearly indicated by verses 23 to 29 of 1 Corinthians 10.

It is a striking fact, and one for which we beg careful and special attention, that the very chapter which most enforces the fact of fellowship or partnership in connection with Christ's death and His table, does not close without dealing with matters in which liberty for the exercise of individual conscience and faith is claimed. A clear proof this that the extreme view of fellowship which makes all in it responsible for and identified with every individual act, has no foundation in Scripture. We are not, of course, supposing views and acts that challenge the truth.

If one contemplated breaking bread with saints assembling in a certain place, in view of the foregoing, it would be a pertinent question to ask — Do you wish me to regard myself as thereby linked up with an association which you have formed, and committed, so to speak, to your platform; or is it that you wish to receive me as a member of the body, that is, linked up with the association which God originally formed, and committed to identification with the death of Christ?

In practice a great deal hangs upon this. In the one case it is just sectarianism, though the members of the sect may be very enlightened and commendable. In the other case it is walking, so far at least, in the truth.

## The Crucifixion Story according to Luke

COLIN CURRY

*Readers will notice the total change of substance as we pass from the previous paper to this. The abundant fulness of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" contrasts so strongly with the relatively arid nature of discussions which sometimes develop when the focus is on matters of the kind in Mr Hole's paper. Of course this does not at all mean that such subjects could well be avoided. Important principles are stressed in the previous article, and we are thankful for such a clear handling of them. But, since our souls thrive on (and are drawn closer together by) the more positive things concerned with Himself, let us place*

*most of our emphasis on these.*

The "sayings from the Cross" recorded in Luke's Gospel are found there alone. We use them here as a means of centring attention upon features of the crucifixion prominent in that Gospel. Before focusing on Luke's version, we first make a few general remarks, covering the full four-fold story of the Cross provided in Scripture.

### **The Crucifixion: how Scripture describes it**

The accounts of the crucifixion in the Gospels recount the facts in a remarkably restrained way. The Spirit-led presentation of those darkest scenes of all is moderate and well-controlled in character. Handlers of the Word of God, preachers of Christ crucified, should consider this well. Over-emphasis on the harrowing aspects of the story of the Cross, on the brutal details of the abuses suffered by our Lord, is not the manner of Scripture. Drama is excluded: the biblical impact is not dependent on special human devices to sway the reader. The facts, quietly related, carry their own weight.

However, these accounts *do* cover a story which is grim indeed, though carefully keeping it to moderate terms. They include some of the blackest deeds and happenings ever to occur within the whole field of human experience. But nevertheless — and here is the marvellous thing — darkness, suffering, torture, death, unparalleled injustice and animosity from wicked human hearts, provide *one part only* of this story. The whole picture is far greater than that! Something very different blends into the picture, and is really quite as prominent as the infamous elements which are so strong. Though human beings run riot under their vicious impulses, evil is *not* the only feature; there *is* a control over the whole scene; evil is *met* and *more than matched* by love — active love, submissive, suffering love, love that only replies to abuse in grace. Such love and such grace are easily the dominant features of the whole picture.

It may be fair to say that the deep shadows over the crucifixion scene seem darkest of all in the early Gospels. Mark, in his terse record, comes closest to touching, almost without relief, the gloom of those dark hours. Both Matthew and Mark refer with some emphasis to the three hours of darkness. They spell out the cry of abandonment from our Lord as He passed under the wrath of God. Luke notices only the period of those sufferings, nor are they to the fore in John. In John, the dignity and glory of the great Sufferer, the mastery of His love even in death, is the main impression conveyed. The passive, submissive aspects of the Saviour's sufferings (though mentioned) are carried alongside the stronger emphasis upon the *competence* of divine love to carry the whole load, to meet every test, and to defeat every foe.

Luke's passage describing the crucifixion may now occupy our full attention.

### The Distinctive Marks of Luke's Passage

Comparison between the Synoptic Gospels shows that, in Luke, the closing stages of our Lord's descent to the Cross are less protracted, and the detail given is less minute. There is quite enough to suggest the heaviness of His sufferings, but the details of men's wickedness, and of the unseen burdens that He sustained, are briefly indicated rather than stressed. We do not read of the scourging, nor of the crown of thorns; the mockery is more briefly given. The cry from the darkness is passed over. We are sure that 'the beloved physician' might have said more about the physical side of such an awful death; the tone of his writing clearly shows his total respect for the One Who carried that immense load. Under the Spirit of God, however, he pays his own particular tribute to Christ by emphasising something which is *also* there, in the same picture alongside the suffering Saviour. He draws attention to the active grace and concern which was *still* wide awake and operative, embodied in our Lord, not at all defeated or quenched even as He was dying. One could scarcely imagine anything brighter than heavenly grace to lighten so dark a moment!

So, Luke relates the story of the crucifixion, letting it be seen as a place where grace was displayed to the utmost, a place of hope, and promise, and salvation. True, there were unmentionable pressures upon the Saviour; the travail of His soul was deep and dark. From many quarters ill-will, hatred, and evil, converged on Him alone; a torrent of abuse and pain was discharged upon Him. But the reactions from Himself were unbelievably pure and good and gracious, and Luke weights his account to press this. While active human sin piled itself high upon that lone Sufferer at Calvary, and the sinister power of evil seemed unrestrained, yet *in that very scene* grace reigned, spontaneous, gratuitous, and unconquerable. *Into* that focus poured all the awfulness of sin, all the wickedness of men: but *out from* that same centre a fountain of blessing and life issued, irrepressible in its sovereign virtue and vitality; and still that matchless stream of grace flows freely!

### "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves" (v. 28)

Three short portions of chapter 23, peculiar to Luke, show this outward flow of strong desire and concern for those around, foremost in our Lord's mind despite the heaviness of His grief. First, there are His words to the women of Jerusalem, who were so deeply stirred emotionally as they saw Him led away to be crucified (verses 27-31). Their attitude contrasts strongly with the cold hard-heartedness shown by so many. Our Lord by no means despised their tender feelings as they lamented for Him, but *His* concern for *them* was at a far deeper level. Their distress was the product of natural human feeling, and their grief touched only the surface of the situation. They were unaware of the true pathos of the events of that day, not sensing the consequences

for themselves. The proud city of Jerusalem, in a few more years, would be tinder-dry for destruction and desolation. He leaves aside His own burdens and overflows in sadness at *their* prospects as daughters of Jerusalem, that city which had ensured its fate (despite His approaches to it) in this act of rejecting Him. In the face of the awful fact of Christ's crucifixion, what is needed is not primarily an emotional response, nor a superficial reaction with the masses, but the awakening and stirring of *conscience*, so that individuals may be brought to thoroughgoing repentance, without which judgment is inevitable. It is important to see this lesson pressed home at the very scene of the crucifixion as this Gospel relates it. But perhaps the most prominent lesson of all from this incident is the depth of the sorrow felt and expressed by our Lord Himself towards those who will persist in setting Him aside, not facing their need for repentance. "Weep not for *Me*, but for *yourselves*"; His spirit is deeply pained, not for His own troubles, but for them, as He foresees the plight that would be theirs. Perhaps few would understand or heed this outpouring of concern and warning for them, but many may have been among the Pentecost audiences (a little later) hearing a still more explicit call for repentance, by the Spirit of God. But let us note principally that, while the Saviour's rejection brought Him a great load to carry, how awfully it hurts those who reject Him, and how much *that* was (and is still) a part of His sorrow.

**"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (v. 34)**

The prayer for their forgiveness, which was His immediate response to the hard men who crucified Him (verses 32-34), is one of the most outstanding outpourings in the whole of the Bible. "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44) had been His teaching. How plain it is that this was no mere high ideal. He Himself was the absolute embodiment, in spirit and in practice, of the high moral standards He had affirmed. Who can gainsay the unparalleled quality of *such* a reaction at *such* a moment? Well is that hour of Calvary recognised as momentous — the hour of all hours — a dark hour indeed, yet there the glory of divine grace shines forth in all its ineffable splendour and purity.

"One hour there is in history's page  
Pre-eminent o'er all the past;  
'Twill shine and shine from age to age,  
While earth, while heaven itself, shall last." (E. Denny)

Indeed, outlasting heaven and earth, the memory of that hour, and the brightness of it, will remain undimmed.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Following verse 33 this reads in the first place as a prayer for those who handled Him, doing their duty in a coarse unfeeling way, the actual executors of

the malevolence and the heartlessness of the masses. For these He prays, with all their dullness to the critical nature of their action. We may be sure His prayer covered the masses too, so deeply involved in agreement with what was done, active in shallow mockery, quickly forgetful of His goodness, coldly insensitive to His sufferings, blind to the shame of their unbelief. Not the most forward in those central actions, but also very much there behind the scenes, were the real instigators of His death. Our Lord had made it clear that the heaviest responsibility of all rested on the Jewish leaders. We find it hard to believe that these, at least, had not already sealed their position at this point; and that their refusal of Christ could still be called ignorant and forgiveable. Yet, without minimising the gravity and deliberate nature of their action, Scripture in some sense supports that view. *Had* the princes of this world known (i.e. really perceived, 'the hidden wisdom') "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). The Spirit-empowered challenge underlining their guilt went out to leaders as well as to the masses only a matter of weeks later. The call to repentance was to *all*. Though a minority, *some* prominent persons, some even prominent in bitter opposition, bowed low under the grace of Christ. We cannot exclude *any* from our Lord's desire for their forgiveness, pleading an extension of their opportunity to receive it. That extension *was* given, though still broadly refused. But what an incredible thing is the grace and patience of Christ! Let us, like Paul, retain a thorough sense that we too have been the objects of extreme long-suffering and the purest mercy, and let all our boast be in the One Whose grace has humbled us and won us for Himself.

### **"Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (v. 43)**

Lifted up upon the Cross, classed among the malefactors, object of repudiation and scorn, the Lord Jesus exhibits still His power to save. Is it not wonderful that, intertwined with the story of the Cross, forming a part of the very event itself, is a lesson of salvation, just in the place where every eye directed to that Cross must see it? From verse 35 the note of *salvation* comes to the fore in many of the jeers directed towards Him. He looks a poor version of a Saviour to them, so impotent (by their reckoning) to save Himself. Yet they were blind to the deeper truth of their words. Saving others had been His objective, achieved again and again in numerous instances. There was no avoiding the Cross, and the self-sacrifice of love made there, if such saving acts were to be done. The one impossible request was that made by the unrepentant thief, "save Thyself *and* us". So our Lord goes on with His work of saving others; and He does it in the teeth of ribaldry and unawareness of the profound transactions which were really afoot. The grace that *will* save, accepting no limits to the cost of such saving acts, nor to the type of persons which it can certainly reach, is beautifully

evident in the account of the repentant thief, and the welcome given by our Lord to his faith (verses 39-43).

Gross misdeeds had filled the active lives of the two malefactors. Nobody would question that these were among the worst of men. It seemed they would both stay defiant, mocking to the end all that was good. But they were to spend their last hours inescapably close to One Who was totally Other than themselves; in all His conduct and bearing He was faultless and gracious. Alike, they each concentrated their coarseness and their railings on *Him* for a time. Certainly, to that point, no distinctions whatever can be made between these two awful characters. Yet the fact that they were thrown alongside the Lord Jesus, able to observe Him closely, and to speak to Him, caused a great divide to open up between these two men, so remote from self-help and humanity. One of them persisted in his brazen attitude, speaking to Jesus in unbelief and scorn. But suddenly the other began to speak sober words with his fellow. The horror and the shame of his own sinful career had burst into his consciousness, no doubt exposed to him by the purity and spotlessness of Christ. The fear of God flooded into his conscience, shaking him to the core. To his partner in wickedness his words contain his own confession of sin, a burden now heavily troubling him; he urges his companion too to wake up to the extreme gravity of their situation as it was before God. Without a direct word from Jesus, he was brought to thorough conviction and repentance, taking sides with God against himself. But he also saw in Christ One Who awakened and indeed encouraged confidence and hope. He knew not how, but such was his respect for the Lord Jesus, and such his high faith in Him, that he ventured to utter a bold plea to Him. What he asked was remarkable in the sense that, on all counts, and to all around, it would seem most unlikely for fulfilment. Yet his faith was *not* misplaced; and high thoughts of Christ can never be too high. Our Lord welcomed such a faith, and we may be sure it was a solace to Him at the time. The dying thief was given far more than he asked. Not at some future time, as he had requested, but *that same day* he was to be *with Him*, in Paradise. It should perhaps be noted, too, that the voice of the repentant thief was the sole voice raised in genuine tribute to the Saviour in that period after the act of crucifixion and before He died. "This man hath done nothing amiss". From unexpected quarters many similar tributes were made, beforehand, and later, but in the most critical hours of all a man was not lacking to honour the One Who was so dishonoured, by his words, and in his bold confidence in Him. That man was a condemned and wicked wrongdoer — beyond reformation; it would seem, but not beyond redemption! Indeed, he provides a sharply-defined example of the long reach and the abundance of the magnificent grace of Christ.

**“Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (v. 46)**

Finally, following this moving story of His love for the sinner, as powerful in death as in life, the emphasis falls on our Lord's perfect dependence and calm submission to His Father, right to the end. “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit”; here is shown His unconquerable trust in His Father's care. The last word, ‘Father’, came at the culmination of a perfect human life, constantly in communion with His Father in prayer, never a hair's-breadth out of line with impeccable human obedience and faithfulness, overflowing with active compassion and kindness to all, from start to finish. Such is the theme of Luke's Gospel. ‘Father’, from the aftermath of the suffering He had borne so patiently, spoken peacefully as His life was yielded in death, bespeaks that willing consent, that utmost heartfelt union with the will of Him Who allowed it so.

Thus He yielded up His spirit, and the story of the crucifixion draws to a close: but it cannot be cut off wholly from its sequel. Such obedience and such faithfulness *must* be recognised. The Father's close care watched over His *body* too. One more act of coarse brutality was allowed (the spear-thrust, related only in John), then devoted hands handled Him, honouring Him with a highly respectful burial. Again from unexpected places loyalty declared itself, and proper care for that body was provided. Further, and more fitting still, *God* raised Him from the dead; His Holy One did not see corruption. Such grace, such meekness, such obedience, was answered by resurrection from death, and the highest exaltation; and *all* must ultimately see this, and concur with it too. But, at present, “where sin abounded grace much more abounded” (Romans 5:20). We have seen how it happened at the Cross, where the grace of our Lord completely over-topped and out-matched all the manifestations of sin which encompassed and assailed Him. But that kind of sovereign grace flows freely still, during His present reign of grace. He is readily accessible as the Saviour of men, and bold yet humble faith is the only right response to Him. “The river of God's grace, through righteousness supplied, is flowing o'er the barren place, where Jesus died”. That era will come to an end, and grace can be despised. A non-serious attitude to the grace of Christ is utterly unwise, and indeed fatal; but to receive it is a deeply precious experience. It brings rich blessing, a major part of which consists in close awareness and deepening knowledge of Him who, in His bearing in suffering, gave a display of grace which surely surpasses any other sight witnessed here on earth.

# Dial Park Talks

T. BALDERSTON

## COMING TO GOD (1) The Epistle to the Hebrews

*Short papers may appear from time to time under the above general heading. At Dial Park Hall, Stockport, provision of some basic teaching for young converts, has been found necessary — and has been undertaken by local brothers. Along with the talks, short handouts have been issued to reinforce the instruction given. We hope to print some of this material. This kind of basic teaching cannot surely come amiss with any of our readers. The sequence of three papers started here, on 'Coming to God', is valuable in crystallising for any reader the main lessons of the Hebrews epistle.*

Hebrews is about coming to God. Its key verb is *proserchomai* — which means just this, and occurs in 4:16, 7:25, 10:1, 29; 11:6, 12:18, 22. If you read these seven verses you will discover, in a nutshell, the teaching of the epistle.

In these three talks I consider three of the principal things the epistle says about coming to God:

- (1) We come to God only *according to the Word of God*.
- (2) We come to God only *by the blood of Jesus*.
- (3) We come to God only *by faith*.

### 1. We come to God only according to the Word of God

The core of the epistle is a comparison between the Tabernacle-approach to God and the "new and living way by the blood of Jesus". The tabernacle was the embodiment of the path man had to follow to contact God. Even though the limitations of the tabernacle-approach contrast in many points with the freedom of the "new path" Christians follow, there are basic similarities, because there are certain fundamental requirements for *any* contact between man and God.

The first similarity, and lesson we can learn from the Tabernacle, is that God, and only God, can prescribe how we are to approach Him.

Read Leviticus 16:2. "See that (Aaron) come not at all times into the holy place, that he die not."

This followed the judgment upon Nadab and Abihu who entered the Holiest with "strange fire", i.e. with fire from a source other than that prescribed by God. *Unless we come to God exactly as He has laid down*

*we will not get admittance.* See Exodus 25:40. "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount".  
*Exact replication.* This is quoted in Hebrews 8:5.

Are things more free and easy now in the Gospel-day?

No!

See Hebrews 1:1-2. God has now spoken (i.e. indicated how He is to be approached), not merely by prophets like Moses, etc., but, in the "Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things". This makes disobedience to the Word much more serious. See Hebrews 12:25 which, in the literary structure of the epistle, "balances" Hebrews 1:1-2. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven".

How, then, are we to know the right way of approaching God?

The epistle's own answer to this question is clear — it is the Scripture that tells us. This was already true in the case of the tabernacle, as we have seen. *These readers took Scripture seriously*, and the writer of the epistle could only deflect them from their allegiance to the tabernacle/temple if he produced very good proofs from Scripture (i.e. the Old Testament) itself that the tabernacle was obsolete, and that God had decreed a "new way".

Every part of the writer's teaching is based explicitly on Scripture; —about the Deity of Christ. Hebrews 1:5-13 is a collection of seven O.T. quotations.

—about the Priesthood of Christ. See Hebrews 5:5-6 with Hebrews 7. These are based on Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4.

—about the sacrifice of Christ. In Hebrews 9 the argument from the day of Atonement sacrifice was purely inferential, deductive. This was not enough, so the writer adds in 10:1-18 three explicit O.T. texts that speak only and exclusively of the sacrifice of Christ.

—about the path of faith. Hebrews 11:8-19 is really a minute exposition of texts in Genesis.

A few specific points. The writer sometimes draws attention to

—what Scripture does say. E.g. the use of Psalm 45:6 in Hebrews 1:8 to prove the deity of Christ.

—what Scripture does *not* say. See Hebrews 7:3. Do we read Scripture so carefully that its silences are full of meaning to us?

—what a particular word in a text is. See Hebrews 10:11-14, based on the single word *sit* in Psalm 110:1.

So he is extremely careful in basing everything on Scripture.

## Implications

(i) We approach God on His own terms — not as pleases us.

(ii) 'Feelings', 'atmosphere', 'a happy time', 'awesomeness', 'grandeur', 'sincerity' — none of these things *on their own* prove that we truly have accessed God in heaven. Only following the way marked

out in His Word proves this, and we shall come to what this way is in the next two talks.

- (iii) We are not left to choose our own form of Christianity as is congenial to us, or to reject another as uncongenial
  - because it's too lax
  - because it's too strict
  - because it's too jolly
  - because it's too sober
- (iv) We do not have the right to impose our *mere preferences* on other people — 'our traditions', etc.

All these preferences are irrelevant. Where they are allowed free play, it reduces the Church of God to a middle class club. We have in hand the business of how sinful, earth-bound men and women are going to stand, unashamed, before the Face of the immortal, invisible, only wise GOD, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. Let us not trivialise it by endlessly whining about *our preferences*.

# The Christian's Attitude to the Scriptures (2)

E. BROWN

- (i) Approach to Scripture
- (ii) Value, Uses, and Benefits of Scripture

*The first paper stated facts about Scripture. In this paper a proper approach to it is indicated first. Next, a start is made on the profit it has for us if our approach is right. Overlap into later papers will be required.*

## (i) Approach

We should approach the Scriptures in a *first-hand* way. While we need to have a healthy respect for the comments of others (especially those with careful, mature, and spiritual judgments) this is no substitute for personal, first-hand, and regular direct contact with the Word of God. This develops and balances the spiritual instinct we have by the Spirit of God (1 John 2:20). Let each reader be "fully persuaded in his own mind".

Scripture must be recognised as *unique*; so that it deserves close and prayerful handling. Since it stands completely apart from any other book — because of its authorship, its authority, its inspiration, its

reliability — it calls for our utmost respect, as well as an unrushed and detailed reading and meditation.

A *spiritual* approach is needed. The Bible is a *spiritual* book. The Word of God takes us beyond the capacity of the natural man — truly into the “depths of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10, N.Trans.). Only the Word of God, revealed, inspired, communicated, received, and apprehended by the Spirit of God, can do this. The Word of God is Spirit breathed, Spirit filled, *Spiritual*.

*Willingness* to receive its message is vital. We must not look there to find support for *our* views, to confirm what *we* believe and do. We must accept without question what Scripture says, showing readiness to obey. We must be *hearers* and *doers* of the Word. Let us have the faith and courage to accept what Scripture says plainly to us. Notice John 7:17, “if any man will (desires to) do His will, he shall know the teaching . . .”. Let us not be as those that decide issues ourselves, reasoning about things, but let the Word of God decide. In the presence of God, who has given us so great a book, such a treasure to possess as His own written Word, let us be totally humble and obedient to its instruction and guidance.

## (ii) What Scripture provides

We now embark on a sequence of *points which are made in the Scriptures themselves* referring to the gains which come to the devoted reader of Scripture. We shall not be able to spell out every passage, but where this is not done we shall refer to the verses. It will be wise to look these up, since the full impact of the pure Word is of chief importance.

### (a) The Scriptures for **LIFE**

The Word of God is the agent by which spiritual life is imparted to us. “*born . . . by the Word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23)

“*Thy Word hath quickened me*” (Psalm 119:50)

We could not have real life, i.e. spiritual life, without it. This was the starting point, used of God to bring us into the wonderful blessing of life in Christ. We have been brought into life through the Word of God, in the power of the Spirit of God.

### (b) The Scriptures for **FOOD**

In natural things, life must be sustained, developed and promoted by a balanced diet of wholesome natural food and refreshment. Even more important, spiritual life must be nurtured and developed by wholesome spiritual food. The Word of God provides it. No other provision, however palatable, can compare with the Word. As in the natural realm, a good appetite is a sign of good health. The internal testimony from Scripture is:

“I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jeremiah 15:16).

“I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness” (Ezekiel 3:3). (See also Revelation 10:10).

### (c) The Scriptures for **GROWTH**

Peter uses the illustration of natural growth to emphasise the importance of spiritual growth, and the requirement of regular partaking of spiritual food in promoting that growth.

“As new-born babes, desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the Word, that by it ye may grow up” (1 Peter 2:2 N.Trans.).

A new-born babe instinctively desires food. Persuasion is not needed — it devours it with relish. Growth results. Something is wrong if a Christian has no desire for the Scriptures. The appetite of *all* believers should follow this pattern. Further growth is needed at every point in a Christian life. This is not just for the young; nor should the keenness flag! Growth will follow a well-balanced diet from the Scriptures. Let us also see to it that we gain full value from what we imbibe in this way, by putting it into practice in balanced practical Christian living. Only so will proper growth be seen.

### (d) The Scriptures for **STRENGTH**

Young men naturally are strong, virile, in peak physical condition. This picture is used to direct us to the spiritual counterpart.

“I have written to you, young men, because ye are **STRONG**, and the Word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14).

This speaks of a condition, a secret underlying it, and the result.

*The condition*    Ye are strong.

*The secret*        The Word of God abides within.

*The result*        Ye have overcome the wicked one (Satan himself).

The Word of God *abiding* within imparts a strength we could never have without it. This is a moral strength, the result of application of the Word within willing and obedient hearts. This strength develops in accordance with the measure in which the Word of God is treasured, and commands our obedience.

(Scriptures referring to Satan as the strong one are: Matthew 12:24-29; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:14-23).

# The Fourth Gospel

GORDON HUGHES

*A survey of John's Gospel as a whole: an address at Bradford in February 1986. The final verses of this Gospel tell how exhaustless is the theme presented in the Gospels. But an outline can be helpful, and seemed well worth reproducing for wider attention.*

*"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and His disciples believed on Him."  
(John 2:11)*

*"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."  
(John 20:30, 31)*

In our New Testament, John occupies a distinct *place* as the last of four complementary accounts of the Lord Jesus. Each approaches the matter from a separate viewpoint, enabling us to obtain a living sense of His great Person as seen from many angles. Matthew, with the Jew in mind, presents Him as the rightful King, whose rejection was so serious. Mark seems to address Roman readers; he draws attention to the perfect Servant, of God and men, seen in that busy pathway of devotion. Luke, thinking perhaps of his Greek readership, focuses principally on the pure and holy Manhood of that One so pleasing to God. But John picks out the Son of God, demonstrating here all that *God is* — revealing His Father's love.

The *purpose* of John's Gospel is as stated in chapter 20, quoted above. "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God," and thus have life through His Name. In keeping with this emphasis, the word 'believe' occurs some 90-100 times in this Gospel.

John had a *problem*, in view of many other things also in his memory. Chapter 21 also refers to this, right at the close. So he selected certain things only — guided by the Holy Spirit. He picked out *seven* signs, pointers to the glory of the Person to whom they draw attention. Chapter 2:11 says that this was the effect of the first of these signs — promoting belief from the disciples. The last of these signs, too, before the events are described, begins with our Lord's words "This (Lazarus's) sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby". There are in fact two words for 'miracle' in the N.T., one signifying *powerful* actions ('the *power* of God unto salvation', for instance), but the other, *meaningful* as well as impressive actions. The latter is John's word. The word is best rendered *signs*. They are *signposts* pointing the way — signalling the glory of the Lord Jesus, inviting our faith in Him.

This then will help us in seeing the pattern of John's gospel. The seven signs form the framework. These are: first, the water changed into wine at the wedding in Cana; then, the healing of the nobleman's son (end of chapter 4); next, the helpless man at the pool of Bethesda (chapter 5); fourth, and centrally among the seven, the five thousand fed (chapter 6); fifth, in the same chapter, the walking on the sea; in chapter 9, the blind man receiving his sight at Siloam; finally, the raising of Lazarus from the grave, and from corruption (chapter 11). What a sequence this is! How many vital and precious *words* centre on, and flow out from, these marvellous deeds of His!

Let us make some general points arising from these passages. From first to last His glory is manifested. His whole concern was for the glory of God. While in a certain sense our Lord's glory was veiled, yet there were times when it *must* burst forth. Unlike men generally, the Lord did not seek His own glory (John 8:50 says this). He was concerned only for the glory of His Father who sent Him. But His glory *was* manifested in many situations. He could not be hid! Then, notice how He is at home, and seems to take charge, in *all* places — in homes, in crowds, where there is joy, where there is grief, with solitary needy individuals. He is Master of every situation!

Of the seven signs the feeding of the five thousand stands at the centre. It has a prominence in the Gospels, being the only miracle recorded in each gospel. The division among the spectators comes into prominence from this point too. Peter's clear outspokenness about the Lord Jesus at the close of the passage (chapter 6) is perhaps one of the high points of the Gospel.

There are, of course, several other things occurring in sevens to be noted in the Gospels. The seven sayings from the Cross, and the seven "I am" sayings, readily come to mind. The seven "I am" words all belong to *this* Gospel and, like the 'signs', are wonderful expressions in which the Lord Jesus bears witness to Himself. Their content is closely

geared to the context, and in step with the sequence of signs upon which John, under the Holy Spirit, is framing the Gospel. A list of these great sayings must suffice. "I am *the bread of life*" comes first here: followed by *the Light of the world* (twice), then, the *Door*, the *Good Shepherd*, the *Resurrection and the Life*, the *Way, the Truth and the Life*, and last *the True Vine*. Central here is the Good Shepherd, who *lays down His life* for the sheep. That, surely, is both central and crucial.

We have been proceeding on general lines so far. Now we shall make a very brief stop at each passage where the accounts are found of the seven signs which point out the glory of our blessed Lord.

First is the marriage at Cana in Galilee (2:1-11). Key verses perhaps are vs. 2 and 11. A marriage is a joyful occasion, and wine is a picture of *joy*. Receiving Jesus, as this couple did, brings us into Christian joy — joy that does not run short. We have not started the Christian life until we have received *Him*, and at the start we little realise how great a person we have with us. Then secondly the healing of the nobleman's son at the very word of Jesus, from a distance, without visible miracle at all, shows the power of our Lord's word, and the kind of bare reliance on it that really honours Him. At first, he asked the Lord to go to Capernaum to meet the need — in itself a real faith in Jesus. But "thy son liveth" was enough for the nobleman — believing without seeing is a better and truer faith in our Lord, as Thomas also was told later. On the return to Capernaum, the report that the cure came exactly at the moment when the word was spoken showed how right his response had been.

The third sign, the man at Bethesda, perhaps has its key verse in 5:9. The man was hopelessly impotent. The pool was the congregating point for such people. Cures *did* occur, rarely, there. There was nothing wrong with the pool, apart from the disappointment when the faint hope it brought was dashed, year by year. Powerless he indeed was, with no power in himself. But power *was* found in Another who came that way. Power is found (in believing) in Christ (Romans 1:16, Philip-pians 4:13). The pool, and the ordinances of the law, were by-passed altogether. Life is received, and the man walks! Note what vital teaching, centred on the Person of Christ, comes out of this 'sign'.

The five thousand fed, and the discourse on 'the Bread of Life' that ensues, in chapter 6 — how significant *this* is! The crowds fasten on the material provision, and He is popular for that reason. But He speaks of receiving life of the spiritual kind, *eternal* life — contrasting it even with an undoubted miracle of the past, the manna from heaven. In a sense we have a double 'sign' here. Life has to be obtained first — eternal life is in receiving (eating) Him, the Bread of life; Life is *obtained* from Him, but also is *sustained* by feeding on Him.

The walking on the water seems almost hidden away within that

great chapter 6. We pick out verse 20 here. "It is I; be not afraid." Despite wonderful experiences recently, now they are in acute trouble without Him. So it is in any realistic Christian experience. When all is topsy-turvy, when everything seems to be falling apart, in storms, He is the Master and His presence dismisses fear. He draws near to bring a calm and to impart peace. This too made a deep impression on His disciples.

The sixth sign, in chapter 9, the man born blind receiving sight at the pool of Siloam, impressed many and stirred much controversy. A good heading to this incident would be *the blessing of obedience*. The essence of the story is in verse 7, "he went . . . and washed and came seeing". Attempts to dispute it gathered, and arguments arose, but the man proved patently true to his benefactor, and in his open simplicity nonplussed his critics, and exposed their insincerity and antipathy to the Lord. He received his sight, but also his perception of the glory of Christ developed. He became a believer, a disciple, and (helped to progress by Jesus Himself) a worshipper — a good example surely of what John the writer seeks to promote among his readers. Happy indeed that day when we could first cry, "I was blind, now I see"! But in a world where our thinking is easily influenced by the standards common around us, how much we need His touch upon our eyes to be able to see things as He sees them (Revelation 3:18).

Notice that the Lord Himself, beforehand, spoke of the blind man's plight as a situation in which 'the glory of God' might be manifested.

A similar comment from the Lord Jesus precedes the last 'sign' — the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (v. 4). Even the delay, so that Lazarus died before Jesus arrived, made the display of His glory more comprehensive, bringing in His power over death and corruption. The key moment is picked out in verses 43, 44 — the cry with a loud voice, and the response from the very burial-place. It stirred the few in deeper devotion, as the next chapter relates. But the plans to do away with Him were all the more determined too.

One of the remarkable features of this incident is the tender sympathy of the Lord Jesus with the two sisters, weeping with them, feeling intensely the weight of the human plight, yet knowing full well what He would do. Truly this 'sign' embodies *many* facets of His glory! The *loud voice* that called Lazarus back to life reminds us of the loud voice from the Cross, when the basic work which even defeated death was *done*! Again that loud voice is yet to be heard — when "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice" and "the last enemy" shall be destroyed (John 5:28; 1 Corinthians 15:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:26).

Those who have lived for years within the atmosphere of John's gospel know that, as yet, they have only touched the fringe of its

vast content. But we must begin by entering 'the shallows': and surely the guidelines which John indicated, by the Holy Spirit, will be the best to follow.

# The Patience of Job and the End of the Lord (1)

**NORMAN GRIFFITHS**

*This paper will be taken in two stages. First, some general background on the ways of God with His people, is indicated. The second part will devote itself to the book of Job almost exclusively.*

The words of the title are taken from the epistle of James (5:11). This epistle is not doctrinal like Paul's to the Romans, for example. It is pre-eminently practical. It has been pointed out that in its 108 verses there are no less than 54 imperatives. One published commentary on the epistle is entitled "The Tests of Faith", and in 1:3 James writes of "the trying of your faith".

Martin Luther, the great reformer, called the epistle of James an "epistle of straw", doubtless because in 2:24 James writes "ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only". The great truth recovered at the Reformation was that a man is justified solely by faith, as Paul writes in Romans 3:20 — "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" and in v. 28 "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law". Unbelieving critics of the inspired scriptures point out the clear (to them) contradiction of these passages, and thus the unreliability of the Word of God — but the believer taught by the Holy Spirit and seeing the different viewpoints taken by the writers can rejoice in the beautiful harmony of Scripture.

Both writers, Paul and James, quote Abraham as the example of the truth of which they write. The viewpoint of Paul's doctrine sees things as God sees them, whilst practical James views them from man's side. In Romans 4:2 Paul writes "For if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory, but not BEFORE GOD". In the sight of God Abraham was justified by faith when he believed God would fulfil His promise (4: 19-22) — "being not weak in faith he considered not his own body now dead . . . he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith giving glory to God . . . and

therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness". BEFORE GOD Abraham was justified by faith.

Practical James, however, writes about what a man sees and so he says "a man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works" (2:18). Without some practical expression of faith it is impossible for men to know whether a man has got faith. Only God can read the heart and know if a man truly believes. So Abraham is again quoted and when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar (21) it was plain to see what faith he had in God. Thus James says "Was not Abraham our father justified by works" — that is, in the sight of men. "By faith, Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17).

The two viewpoints are seen together in Romans 10:10 ". . . with the heart man believeth unto righteousness", God sees the heart and man is justified in His sight by faith, and ". . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"; Christ is confessed as Lord before man and the believer comes into the good of practical salvation.

So James writes in this practical way of the testing of faith which worketh patience, 1:3. Paul, too, in Romans 5:3 says that tribulation works patience. There is profit to be derived from tests and trials, the experience can be used to produce strengthening and resolve. Peter also writes of the "trial of your faith" that it may "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7); it will be seen to have been to glorify God.

The word 'patience' occurs a number of times in the epistle, in the A.V. in 1: 3, 4, and 5:7, 8, 9, 10. Two different words are used in the Greek text. The one word in the N.Tr., translated 'patience' there (in 5:7, 8, 10), has the sense of long-suffering, rather as the little Scots lass defined 'patience', "wait a wee while and dinna wearie". The other word, in 1:3, 4 and 5, 11, is translated 'endurance'. The Greek is HUPERMONE — a compound word from the preposition HUPO meaning *under*, and the verb MENO meaning *I remain* — so, literally, 'remain under' or as we might say 'stick it out'. Other translations have 'perseverance' and 'steadfastness'. In the A.V. the verbal form of the word is 'endure', in v. 11 "we count them happy which endure". It is also found in Hebrews 10:36 — "ye have need of patience", or endurance.

The circumstances and experiences of life are often puzzling. Even in the Psalmist's day it seemed that the wicked prosper and are not in trouble as other men and they say God doesn't know (Psalm 73). So today many things happen which cause people to say "Does God care?", and to question His love asking "Why does God allow this to happen?" In the face of some domestic tragedy the Christian often finds it difficult — indeed, sometimes quite baffling to answer or to speak to those who are suffering in grief and bereavement.

We cannot “judge the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace; behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face”. Our understanding of God must not be limited by our apprehension of His actings in providence, we have to look at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ where we learn that “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

The trials and tests of faith are allowed in order to produce patience or endurance and we need to have our attention directed to the *end* of the Lord, i.e. the end in view. The Greek word is TELOS, and in the R.S.V. is rendered ‘purpose’ — the final issue. To quote one commentator “The word ‘purpose’ indicates that the felicity which came at length to Job was not a fairy-tale way in which this man’s experience happened to end, but was rather the chosen divine objective from the beginning”.

This purpose of God for ultimate blessing is seen throughout Scripture. In the story of Joseph, his experiences — rejection by his brethren, in the pit, sold as a slave, in the prison, and in the end exalted to pre-eminence and rule — afterwards cause him to say to his brethren ‘Ye thought evil against me but God meant it for good’ ” (Genesis 50:20). The end of the Lord. Again, when God saved His people Israel out of Egypt’s hard bitter bondage and brought them through the Red Sea to Himself in the wilderness, although it was but eleven day’s journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea on the border of the promised land, He allowed them to wander up and down the wilderness for forty years. His aim was to “humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deuteronomy 8:2, 6).

The Lord always works towards an ‘end’ in the lives of His children. Through their varied and sometimes painful circumstances, He is always working for their good. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, 29). The ‘end’ in view is to be conformed to the image of His Son!

The story of Job is a wonderful illustration of these great themes. In Part 2 we shall consider briefly some of the lessons for us from this remarkable history. Headings which we hope to use in our brief outline are now indicated. There are four sections or scenes, in which seven actors appear — God and Satan, Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and the young man Elihu. Chapters 1-3 form the first section which we may entitle *Job’s Cry*, the result of Satan’s malignity in which the actors are God and Satan, Job and his three friends. The second section, chapters 4-31, we will call *Job’s Critics* — his three friends who came to comfort him but only condemn him as they react to his plight. He replies to their arguments maintaining his innocence. In the third section we have *Job’s Counsellor*, the

young man Elihu who comes to reason with him (chapters 32-37); and finally in chapters 38-42 *Job's Creator*. He is alone with God, Who reveals Himself to him for his ultimate blessing. God's end in the trial is reached and Job is blessed more than at his beginning.

# Dial Park Talks

T. BALDERSTON

## COMING TO GOD (2) — The Epistle to the Hebrews

*The second of a series of three talks appealing to Scripture to stress essentials for any true approach to God.*

### 2. We come to God only by blood: Hebrews 9

God alone can dictate how vile sinners are to approach Him (see Talk 1). From the day Adam sinned, His requirement has never varied. *Not without blood* (Hebrews 9:7).

From Genesis (4:4-5) to Malachi (1:8, 13, 14) the Old Testament hammers home the message that without the blood of an acceptable sacrifice God has “no respect” unto us. The central O.T. book on this matter is undoubtedly Leviticus, and its central chapter is sixteen — describing the ritual of the day of Atonement. This description is then taken up in Hebrews 9 by the Holy Spirit to show two things, one positive and the other negative:

- what *was* possible under the Tabernacle system. Blood gave men the right to stand before the glory of the Presence of God in the Holy of Holies and yet not die (Leviticus 16:2, 14, 15 with Hebrews 9:7).
- what *was not* possible under the Tabernacle system. Nobody except the high priest had this right — and he only on one specified day a year. Thus the access to God by blood promised in principle under the Tabernacle system was all but denied in practice. This was intentional, so that this tension in the system should make it point beyond itself — to Christ who came “through a greater and more perfect Tabernacle” (i.e. in the power of heaven) and “through (‘in the power of’) his own blood” (Hebrews 9:8-14).

Thus, positively and negatively, the use of blood in the Tabernacle system pointed forward to the ‘better’ blood of Jesus. But what does it really mean to say that we approach God “by the blood of Jesus”?

(1) *The blood is not magical* — though many Christians seem to give it an irrational, superstitious significance. What it signifies is perfectly

straightforward. In Scripture, shed blood is *always* a public, indisputable witness of death (Genesis 4:10; Matthew 23:35). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). It is only by acknowledging this *fact* that sinful creatures can in any sense approach their Creator. This minimal acknowledgement is no doubt the intrinsic sense of O.T. sacrifice.

(2) *Christ's blood was offered once.* The Tabernacle sacrifices removed the penalties attaching to the recurrent ritual defilements of this life. But Christ's death has to do with *death* itself, and this, in the divine appointment, happens *once*, for it is the gateway to absolute, irrevocable judgment. As John Owen put it, "Christ's death is the death of death for the believer". (Hebrews 9:28; note the parallel passives — "is appointed", "was offered".)

(3) *Christ's death perfects the conscience and establishes right relationships with God.* Our relationship with God will not be primarily emotional or intellectual, but *moral*. It will require *pureness of heart* (Matthew 5:8). We shall need perfected consciences to see "face to face", for any shade of self-doubt would destroy us. And we shall have them, for Christ will be there, and His wounds will be the standing evidence that *nothing* can be laid to our charge that He has not paid for in the legal tender of death.

(4) *The blood bears witness before God.* God sees the blood (it is a fact that we do not yet see it) and He alone understands the awfulness of what it signifies — the death of a Man who *is* "the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20, cp. Zechariah 13:7). Our security rests simply upon our acknowledgement of the rightness of God's unvarying estimation of the work of Christ. What God knows about the blood is the solid rock our faith stands on. If it rested on our changeable appreciation of it, it would rest on quicksand indeed.

(5) *Christ's blood cleanses the sanctuary and brings us there.* This is a difficult concept (see Hebrews 9:23 with Leviticus 16:16). It adds up to this: God is not going to be spoiling, or cheapening, heaven by having feeble, unsatisfactory types like us there. Rather, God is going to make it a better place, a more righteous place, by our presence! Why? Because everywhere one looks in heaven people will be seen who add to the evidence of the rightness of what Christ did at Calvary. Each of these is necessary to make up the all-varied reflection of the Face of Jesus. Because everywhere one looks *sinner*s will be seen who are "purged from every spot and stain" and who witness to the greatness of God's righteous triumph over evil in His creation. "To God be the glory, great things He hath done".

(6) *Christ's blood gives us boldness to have to do with God without other props.* The original readers of Hebrews were inclined to "hedge their bets" — to rely both on Christ's blood and on the Temple sacrifices. This was simply wrong. It dishonours Christ. Do we "hedge our bets"?

In this chapter the blood in *heaven* is correlated with perfected consciences on *earth* — in the hearts of believers. Perfected consciences are the door of access, here and now, to heaven. Imperfect (or, perhaps for believers we should say, semi-perfected) consciences impede this access. They tempt us in our daily and public Christianity (the kind other people see) to rest on other things — on ritual, on our self respect, on a diminished sense of God's holiness. We may be saved, but we shall never know the sweetness of the sanctuary without a whole and sole reliance on the blood of Jesus — “the new and living way” (Hebrews 10:19ff).

# All Saints

ALLAN RETALICK

*This article helps to counter any restricted view we may place on the whole scope of the Lord's people. We must recognise, much more than formally, that they are numerous — and show a truly loving interest, and a proper prayerful concern, for them all.*

The Church of God is composed of all the saints, but what do we mean by 'saints'? We may think of some very faithful martyrs and servants of God who were renowned for their faithfulness and holiness, but the scriptural use of the word means simply those that have been separated, set apart for God. Even to a company so divided and carnal as the Corinthian Church Paul could address his letter to the “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”, or rather “saints by calling”. In the Ephesian epistle, particularly, we come across the expression more than once: “all the saints” or “all saints”.

Even in Old Testament times God had His saints — those who, like Abraham, ‘believed God’, and were justified in view of the future work of our blessed Lord. These all died in faith, as we read in Hebrews 11:13, and God was not ashamed to be called their God, as we read a few verses later. So in the Psalms and even in the writings of Moses we read of God's ‘saints’, although we may also translate this as ‘God's favoured ones’.

When Moses blessed the people just before his death, he said: “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words” (Deuteronomy 33:3). This, the first use of the expression ‘all His saints’, gives us the characteristic of this company. First, they are loved. Today every saint

can say: "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me". Then Moses reminded his hearers that they were safe in the hand of the God who loved them. We know, too, that none can pluck us out of His hand, since the Lord Himself has assured us of the safety of the feeblest believer. Like Mary, they sit at His feet to listen to His words. "My sheep hear My voice", said the Lord Jesus, "and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). As Moses could say from experience, "every one shall receive of Thy words".

In Psalm 31:23 we read something more. David says: "O love the Lord, all ye His saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful". Hannah could also sing in this strain, when she joyfully announced: "He will keep the feet of His saints" (1 Samuel 2:9). A brother once wrote to me: "Look after your eyes, and the Lord will look after your feet. 'Looking unto Jesus'." He will keep His own, because He has purposes of blessing for them. They are "kept by the power of God".

In Psalms 148 and 149 we see the present occupation of "all the saints": they praise the Lord. In the latter psalm we see the power of praise — it binds the enemy, and gains the victory. We see an example of this in the days of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, in 2 Chronicles 20. Faced by the combined armies of Moabites and Ammonites, the king "set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (v. 3). When he had laid the matter before the Lord, a prophet came to announce that victory was assured, "for the battle is not yours, but God's." The godly king humbled himself and bowed in worship before his God, and then the Levites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice. We read in verse 22 that "when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten."

We must not think that this is something for kings and apostles only! Psalm 149:9 tells us: "This honour have all His saints. Praise ye the Lord." Brethren and sisters on the mission field, wrestling with the powers of darkness, have told us at times of wonderful deliverances simply as a result of praising God for His goodness. Perhaps many of our minor depressions and struggles would disappear if only we put on "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:3). "This honour have all His saints."

Paul uses the phrase "all the saints" in several of his epistles, but in Ephesians we find the expression four times. In the first chapter he tells the Ephesians that he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love to all the saints, in consequence of which he did not cease to give thanks to God for them. To the saints in Colosse he speaks in a similar vein. Both companies were characterised by a large heart. It is easy to love some of God's people, particularly if they think and act just as we do, but some of God's children put our backs up, and we may

find it difficult to love them, unless we remember that our Lord set His love upon us when we were enemies, and altogether unlovely. If we truly love the Lord, we shall also love all those who are His. Paul points out, in chapter 3, that he was "less than the least of all saints". He could never forget how he had persecuted the saints of God, and that he had heard the reproach from the Lord in glory: "Why persecutest thou Me?" Yet, he could write to Timothy, this wonderful grace that reached him was in order that he might be a "pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life eternal" (1 Timothy 1:16).

In Paul's beautiful prayer (Ephesians 3:14-21) he again uses the expression. His desire was that the Ephesians should comprehend the measureless love of Christ, but this was not to be a unique experience, granted to a few favoured believers. No; he prays that they "with all saints" may enjoy this. It has often been pointed out that we shall never plumb the depths of this wonderful love of our blessed Lord, who gave Himself for us, but the apostle prays that all should "lay hold of it", to give the true force of the word that he uses. Since this letter has been preserved for us in the New Testament, we know that this prayer is being answered in "all the saints" that delight to bask in the sunshine of the love of Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. May we know more of this in our lives from day to day while we wait for our Lord from heaven!

In chapter 6, after outlining the various parts of the Christian armour, Paul adds the significant words: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (verse 6). In the "Pilgrim's Progress" Christian's battle was finally won by the "secret weapon", all prayer. No Christian can live without prayer, but how *do* we pray? We may be sure that the apostle's prayer-life was by no means haphazard or shallow. 'Always', 'all prayer and supplication', 'all perseverance', 'all saints'. So often we pray in a general way for 'all on the mission field', 'all in special need', without bothering ourselves to find out what are the special needs of our brethren and sisters, whether on the mission field or in their home and family life. When we read Paul's greetings at the end of so many of his letters, we are conscious of his personal knowledge of all these people, who to us are but names. Today we are highly favoured with so many sources of information about the wide field of Christian service. It is good to see a map in the room where "prayer is wont to be made", with photographs of missionaries and their families. How often in their letters our missionary friends tell us how conscious they were of the prayers of those on the home front. May we continue to bear them *all* up before the throne of grace.

While the expression 'all the saints' comes in many other epistles, I should like to draw attention to just one more. This is in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In every chapter of this epistle we read

something about the glorious future for the believer, but in chapter 3, verse 13, he uses the expression 'all the saints' in connection with the *appearing* of the Lord Jesus. This verse is part of another of the apostle's prayers. While he sought guidance as to visiting them, he also desired that they in the meantime should increase and abound in love one toward another, in order that they might have their hearts firmly established in practical holiness. As always, when the subject is Christian behaviour, he links this, not with the rapture, as we call it, when the Lord comes to take His own to be with Himself, but with His appearing in glory. This is the day that Paul always had before him. It will be the time of recognition of faithfulness for some, sadly even of shame for others, whose works will be seen to have been no more than fleshly exercise. But even so, this appearing in glory of our blessed Lord, as Paul reminds the Thessalonians, will be "with all His saints". In His prayer to His Father on the eve of the cross, our blessed Lord gave thanks that He had kept all that the Father had given Him. While the thought of the "day of Christ" should sober us and cause us to examine our hearts and our service, it is good to be reminded that, when He appears in glory "all the saints" will appear with Him. "Safe in Christ the weakest child stands in all God's favour." None can pluck them out of His hand. Daniel and Zechariah were privileged to anticipate that day of glory. Daniel saw visions of the myriads of those that followed "One like the Son of man", while Zechariah, in the last chapter of his prophecy, speaks of the day when "His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives," and in verse 5 he tells us "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee".

"What a day will that be, when the Saviour appears!  
 How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!  
 A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,  
 A rich compensation for suffering and loss."

---

## QUESTIONS

(answers on p. 64)

*"How should man be just with God?"* (Job 9:2)

*"Where shall wisdom be found?"* (Job 28:12)

*"How can we know the Way?"* (John 14:5)

# The Christian's Attitude to the Scriptures (3)

E. BROWN

## (ii) Value, Uses and Benefits of Scripture (continued)

*Several matters, indicated in Scripture, falling under the immediate heading, are being drawn to our attention in the papers immediately in hand.*

### (e) The Scriptures for **Stability**

Stability cannot be found in this world, or in the things of the world. This essential quality is found in the Word of God. God Himself is stable, essentially consistent with what He has declared Himself to be. He is "without variableness, or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

His Word, because it is His, is stable, essentially reliable, and inculcates the same qualities in those who imbibe it, and are prepared to have their thoughts and actions regulated by it.

"For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is *settled* in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

### (f) The Scriptures for **Cleansing**

In the absolute sense, we (believers) are clean in God's eyes.

"Ye *are* clean, by the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

In a most fundamental way, the Word of the Lord is the agent of that once-for-all cleansing by which we are made right with God.

In addition, we need to be cleansed from the defilement that inevitably accrues as we live and journey through a dirty world on our way home. The agent for this daily cleansing is the Word of God — the "washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26).

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word" (Psalm 119:9).

Clean living is dependent for its continuance and character on the regular application of the Word of God.

### (g) The Scriptures for **Light and Guidance**

In all dispensations those who have sought to be faithful to God have longed instinctively for His guidance through life, and for His light upon their pathway.

"I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to *seek of Him a right way*, for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." (Ezra 8:21):

*"Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path"* (Psalm 27:11).

*"O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:5).

*"Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments"* (Psalm 119:35).

*"Lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:24).

*"Let us go up into the mountain of the Lord . . . and He will teach us His ways"* (Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:2).

*"How can we know the way?"* (John 14:15).

But God has indeed provided His Word for the express purpose of giving such guidance.

*"I will teach you the good and the right way"* (1 Samuel 12:23).

*"The meek shall He guide in judgment: and the meek shall He teach His way"* (Psalm 25:9).

*"The entrance of Thy Words giveth light"* (Psalm 119:130).

*"Thy Word is as a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105).

(Other references are: Isaiah 30:31; Isaiah 45:13.)

The Christian today certainly needs this regular, systematic, personal exposure to the Word of God. It will regulate the general pattern of his life, and also equip him for proper responses in an emergency. The apt example of the Bereans, who "searched the Scriptures daily" is well to follow (Acts 17:11).

#### (h) The Scriptures for **Comfort** and **Hope**

As the Lord's coming draws nearer, the world becomes increasingly hostile to Him, and to His own. The Lord Jesus warned that this would happen.

*"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the Word that I said unto you; the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also"* (John 15:18-21).

Timothy was warned, "in the last days perilous times shall come . . . all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution . . . evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:1, 12, 13).

Increasingly, we need encouragement, comfort and hope. We find them in the Scriptures. Consider a few of the many grand examples:

*"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"* (Job 34:29).

*"Fret not thyself because of evildoers"* (Psalm 37:1).

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear . . . Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:1, 2, 10).

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22).

“My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen Thou me according unto Thy Word” (Psalm 119:28).

“Remember the Word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me” (Psalm 119:49, 50).

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusted in Thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord your God” (Isaiah 43:1-3).

“The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum 1:7).

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1).

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

In the light of these and many other readily-available examples, surely we cannot fail to gain a deep and lasting impression:

“that we through patience and *comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4).

## ANSWERS

(questions on p. 61)

“*He (God) . . . is just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*” (Romans 3:26).

“*Christ Jesus . . . is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

“*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*” (John 14:6).

# The Sufferings of Christ

MICHAEL JOHNSON

## Matthew 26:30-54 — SUFFERINGS IN THE CLOSING STAGES

*A series of five Bible Readings on 'The Sufferings of Christ' took place at the Swansea Conference in 1985. Here is the substance of the third of these readings. The focus was on His sufferings, not on the Cross, but near the end, when that dread hour was close at hand. Other passages were alluded to, and several contributions to the discussion were made. The reading was steered in a humble and unrushed way, which imposed a certain respect upon the proceedings. It awakened, with all present, high, restrained, yet worshipful thoughts of the Lord Jesus. These surely are the proper outcome of meditation on such themes — and also are the marks of the Holy Spirit in control of such a discussion.*

In the earlier readings *four* distinct characters of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus have been mentioned. These were, His sufferings in *putting away sin* (Hebrews 9:26). *These* sufferings will be no more understood by us in eternity than we can do now. Later readings will dwell on Scriptures referring to *these* sufferings. Next, sufferings He endured which are *common to men*, felt with far more sensitivity than we could, of course — but of the same kind as we know, though known especially in His holy, perfect Manhood. Thirdly, Hebrews 2:18 has been mentioned. When tempted, He *suffered*. This applies in a unique, special way to Him. Also, it has been indicated that He entered with feeling into the sufferings of the godly in Israel, and in a future time there will be support for such people, much needed, found in the awareness that *He* knew those experiences.

It may be thought by some, in deep affection for the Lord Jesus, that "All His sufferings were for *me*". There can be no quarrel with the

affection behind that feeling, and it is to be fostered — but we need to approach carefully what the Scriptures say, and distinguish different ways in which He suffered, *not* to systematise, but to gather as much as we can of the deep fountain of suffering from which our Lord drank. These truths must not only occupy our minds to increase our understanding, but they must *govern* us. Only as we sense a little of the deeps of our Lord's sufferings can we know better His *love*, and so respond to Him suitably. It will soon be apparent that, if we wish to find help on the *feelings* of the Lord Jesus, we are largely dependent on the Psalms for this.

We are to dwell particularly on the *concentrated* suffering which was His, as He drew near to the Cross. These burdens were felt throughout His life, but towards the end the pressures mounted — and it is important to see that, when tried to the utmost under those pressures, *nothing* was found wanting in Him. Only His inherent and absolute perfection was revealed in those sufferings.

As a framework, to preserve some order in our discussion, the following suggestions are made. Indications of each of these are found in the passage read.

- (i) sufferings *common to men*, of a kind you and I could know in the path of faith.
- (ii) sufferings in relation to His rejection by the *nation* of Israel.
- (iii) sufferings in *communicating blessing* to others.
- (iv) sufferings in relation to the godly *remnant* in Israel.
- (v) His sufferings in *Gethsemane*.

We should feel free, of course, to borrow from the other Gospel accounts.

### **Sufferings common to men**

First let us note how much the *betrayal* of the Lord Jesus by Judas was felt by Him. It is clear that the handing of the 'sop' to Judas was not intended to identify him before the others, but as a mark of esteem for him. Psalm 41:9, and Psalm 55:12-14 show how that treachery affected our Lord. "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted . . . hath lifted up his heel against Me", and "For it was not an enemy that reproached Me; then I could have borne it . . . but it was *thou*, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance . . .". John 13:21 speaks of His deep trouble *in spirit* at the prospect that "one of *you* (the twelve) shall betray Me". How hurtful was the *way* of His betrayal, too. The embrace (in the garden) uses a strong word — he *ardently* kissed Him. He was hated "without a cause", by *many* indeed, but the *causelessness* of that treatment is plain. These sufferings are 'common to man' in the sense that we could know something of them, but there is a difference in scale here. In His holy perfection, His sensitivities to such treatment were unblunted, and His feelings far more acute than ours could ever be.

His *forsaking*, by the rest of the disciples, too, must have been felt,

amongst so much else. At the end of John 16 He says "ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me". That cloudless communion, in life, and in these closing scenes, was always His support, and His *joy* too. "The joys of the Man of Sorrows" is a theme for consideration in itself.

Peter's *denial*, too, affected Him. Quite unlike Judas, Peter had a deep love for the Lord Jesus, and the Lord well knew it. But Peter, still self-confident, got into a situation that night which he had no strength to meet. Satan had acted urgently to sink him, but the Lord had prayed for him, earnestly and with effect, that his faith would survive. And indeed it *did* so, and deepened too. Peter was much the better man thereafter, even though he had great zeal beforehand. But think how the Lord Jesus felt about Peter's action that night! The look exchanged across the intervening space in the high priest's palace carried much that was unspoken between the two.

Of a less obvious kind, much in the way of weakness and misunderstanding on the part of His own must have tried His patience, and caused Him additional burdens. The sleepiness of the favoured three in Gethsemane seemed to disappoint Him. At times, He spoke about the slowness of some of the disciples (e.g. John 14:5-9). Dissuasions from the path leading to the Cross (Peter in Matthew 16) received a strong rebuke. Most of His ways with them, however, were unbelievably kind, understanding, and gracious. But we must pass on.

### Rejection by the Nation

From this very passage, notice verse 47, "Judas . . . came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, *from the chief priests and elders of the people*". We recall the verse:

*"The pride of careless greatness  
Could wash its hands of Thee:  
Priests, that should plead for weakness,  
Must Thine accusers be!"*

(From: 'The Man of Sorrows', J.N.D.)

Also, think of Him weeping, from the Mount of Olives, and His cry —

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

(Matthew 23:37)

There was not even a flicker of recognition of Himself as their Messiah on the part of His earthly people, though all His credentials were plain. Luke 23:28 may be quoted: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children". Under pressure, it is common with us to be preoccupied with our own problems, but it was not

so with *Him*. He felt for *them* and for Israel. Luke 19:41 shows His sadness and deep feeling for that people — it was His response to their coldness to Him. That spirit was in part shown by Jeremiah, in the Lamentations, as he wept over all that his beloved people had lost at the time of the Captivity. Paul knew a great sadness and concern for his “kinsmen according to the flesh” in their unbelief and obduracy, reflecting something of our Lord’s feelings on this matter (see Romans 9:1-5; 10:1).

### Sufferings in Blessing Others

It *may* be thought that, because the Lord Jesus was sinless He could not know the sufferings of sickness and disease which are common to men and women like ourselves. It would be a loss to think this of Him. Matthew 8:16,17 picks out Isaiah 53:4, a verse which we might otherwise relate to His sufferings at the Cross. It quotes that verse in another context altogether. “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” is seen fulfilled in the Lord Jesus when “He cast out the spirits by His Word, and healed *all* that were sick”. In this context, in the valuable booklet “The Sufferings of Christ”, J. N. Darby writes ‘He first bore in His own spirit what He later dismissed in His power’. At the tomb of Lazarus, He first “groaned in the spirit and was troubled” at the presence of death, before acting to break its power. Mark 7:34 tells how, with a deaf man, after drawing him aside, He put His fingers into his ears, and “looking up to heaven, He *sighed* and said unto him Eph-phatha, Be opened”.

Another relevant case is that of the young man in the grip of a demon, whom the disciples could not cure (Matthew 17:19-21). To the disciples He said “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting”. We cannot imagine that what the Lord Jesus looked for from His disciples was not practised perfectly by Himself. One of the things which must have occupied Him during those long nights of prayer, was the burden of the sorrows He would remove on the ensuing day. That He *cared* and suffered sympathetically with men is very clear everywhere in the Gospels. An indication of the physical toil upon Him, arising from feeling the weight of all these pains and sorrows, is found in the words of those who remarked “Thou art not yet fifty years old” (John 8:57) — unaware, it seems, that He was only a little over thirty.

In the current passage, the healing of Malchus's ear is an example. The Lord had to bear with the misguided loyalty shown by Peter, and correct it too. But He also felt the hurt to Malchus, and quickly repaired the damage. Notice how He *touched* the place, sharing Malchus's feeling in the very act of restoring his ear.

We must always bear in mind that these actions of his, dealing with many of the sad effects of sin, in a way which cost Him much *every time*, were in view of His removal of the very *root* of sin. *This* is what makes His deepest sufferings *for sin* on the Cross (alone in the darkness) so solemn and basic.

### Sufferings in Relation to the Godly Remnant in Israel

Verse 31 makes us consider this. "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." *Who* is He addressing here? We often consider those disciples as the nucleus of the church, and so they were: but we must bear in mind that often, before He died, He considered them as some of the few faithful ones in Israel, recognising Him and loyal to Him when the bulk of that nation was rejecting Him. When, at His baptism by John in Jordan, John demurred at first, His words were "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh *us* to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). *Who* was He bracketing with Himself in saying '*us*' here? Was He not identifying Himself strongly with that small remnant, the truly repentant in Israel? These, like Elisabeth and Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, John himself, the eleven, and of course several other unspecified persons — all who held Christ altogether precious. Isaiah 63:9 says "In all their affliction *He* was afflicted", and here our blessed Lord is seen sharing with the lowly, godly, unpopular few, devoted to Him amid the unwelcoming masses. The book of Revelation envisages such people, a pressed remnant, under 'the beast', when 'the false prophet' deceives the apostate many. These, with consciences alert, feeling the curse of the broken law, will have experiences then (well after present-day believers have all been taken to heaven) — experiences closely akin to the lot of this godly minority, found when He was here. That He identified Himself with sufferers of this kind while here, and will do so still in that day, will be a tremendous support and comfort for them then. He *loves* that nation, and passed through those pressures on their behalf.

### His Sufferings in Gethsemane

This, we may feel, is a theme more for meditation than for too much comment. There are verses here on which one feels quite lost for words in considering them.

We should look carefully at Luke 22:34-38 here. Up to that point His followers had wanted for nothing, their protection had been complete — but *now* the power so used would be withdrawn. There was henceforward *a distinct change* in our Lord's position. For Him too, no power would now be used to protect or shield Him, or to diminish the intensity of the suffering now to be entered by Him. After the temptation in the wilderness, it is said that Satan "left Him for a season". In the years that followed, he (Satan) was always in the background, showing his hand at times (e.g. behind a suggestion voiced by Peter in Matthew 16). But *now* he returned, to attack strongly. Earlier it was said that "no man laid hands on Him" because "*His hour had not yet come*". But at this stage, when they came to arrest him, He says, "but this is *your* hour, and *the power of darkness*". This is what He felt pressing in upon Him, in the agonies of Gethsemane (though still communing and speaking earnestly with His Father). A

phrase that defies comment, but can only be looked at in the spirit of worship, is "in an agony He prayed *more earnestly*". We are sure that there never was a want of earnestness with Him. But here, '*more earnestly*' is said. Little indeed do we know of the intensity of that attack, and of that battle! Hebrews 5:7 speaks of the "*strong crying and tears*" accompanying the intense prayer offered there. But in Him God had the perfect Man who prevailed against the Adversary at his strongest!

But notice how His spirit, soul, and body felt the awful toll of that period. Sorrowful, and very heavy, He went forward, with the words "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me". His desire for human comforters was not answered, because of their weakness. His holy and sensitive human spirit groaned and was deeply troubled, in a way which may have its counterpart when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. His body, His physical frame, showed the signs of the pressure He felt — in the great sweat, like great drops of blood falling to the ground. Note how He was withdrawn from even the most favoured disciples "about a stone's throw" (Luke). The hymn says "None could follow there, Lord Jesus", and how *right* we feel this to be.

Afterwards, the band arrives to arrest Him, and Peter acts with his sword. His word then is "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John). All is firmness in going forward into what had from the beginning been His purpose. We may recall John 12:27 "For this cause came I unto this hour."

The heaviest burdens of all were still to be carried. The *atonement* work, and sufferings, were still ahead. We must yet come to this in these meditations. Here we have considered the *anticipation*, in Gethsemane, of all that was yet to be for Him in *reality*. What tremendous, yet sobering and deeply moving considerations these are!

As was said at the start, these are not subjects to study, so much as for meditation. The subject "The Sufferings of Christ" embraces many things. Some of these were felt day by day (as He healed people and multitudes, for example). Others are totally separate and unique. There was only one Calvary, "*one sacrifice* for sins" (Hebrews 10:12), which stands for ever, and has such infinite positive value too! But none of these ways in which our Lord suffered are unimportant. There is nothing lightweight here, nor *any* burden that He carried with ease. It is *right* to think of those sufferings which are fundamentally important, but *wrong* to pass over other burdens which also cost Him much.

In this week's theme we are touching on a vast field of meditation. But His sufferings are the real expression and channel of His *love*. These meditations tie us more deeply to Himself, and promote our realisation of His preciousness to us. They bow us at His feet, and will do eternally. Also, they underline for us the *moral glory* of His person, not exhibited in might and magnificence alone, but in personal excellence, shown in lowliness and submission here, and still attaching to Him *there*!

# Five Orphans

ALLAN McCANN

*This paper picks out a detail of the O.T. story of Israel's occupation of the land of Canaan, and shows plainly that no detail is unimportant. Indeed a vital lesson for ourselves is pressed upon us by our brother as he refers to the verses mentioning the daughters of Zelophehad.*

The book of Numbers possesses a charm all its own. It is true that, in common with other Mosaic writings, it contains legal ordinances, and that the story of Israel's desert wanderings is — as far as the people are concerned — mainly a sad one. Yet also — blessed be God — it brings out His faithfulness to His promises and His justifying grace at the end. Also, the faith and purpose of heart shown by individuals, mentioned by name, shines out against the dark background of the nation's unbelief and rebellion.

These include Caleb the son of Jephunneh, a man already in the prime of life at the Exodus: he had grown to maturity in Egypt and known bondage there. He had also explored the land flowing with milk and honey, brought of its fruit as evidence, and given an entirely favourable report. At the beginning of the forty days exploration he had seen the hill country of Hebron, with its ancient foundation and sacred patriarchal associations; and his heart was set, in spite of the three giants who dwelt there, on having it for his inheritance (and this was fully confirmed by Moses' oath). His spirit was not broken by the long years of desert wanderings; and now (Joshua 14) in the land, after seven years of hard campaigning, as the tribes are being given their allotted portions, he can come to his old companion Joshua and assure him that at 85 he is still as strong as he was at 40: and he asks for Hebron, giants or no giants: if so be that Jehovah shall be with him, he will dispossess them. And his faith and courage are amply rewarded.

But there are also some from the wilderness generation who show a like steadfastness: and the Holy Spirit has been pleased to give us all their names four times over (Numbers 26, 27, 36; Joshua 17; they are also referred to in 1 Chronicles 7). The five daughters of Zelophehad, all through their young lives, had known nothing but the desert. Their father could tell them about Egypt; he had doubtless seen the goodly fruits of Canaan; but the mission of the spies had probably taken place over twenty years before their time. Still they had heard a report, and it sufficed them. Faith is by a report, and the report is by God's word; and the good news was mixed with faith in the hearts of these five sisters. Year after year, their daily life had meant gathering manna, drawing water, tramping for

hours in the hot sand, pitching their tent only to take it down again as the march was resumed. But the end of the journey saw a series of important events: the death of Miriam and that of Aaron; the brazen serpent; the kingdoms of Arad, Sihon and Og conquered; Balaam's four-fold prophetic blessing; his Satanic advice to Balak and the tragedy of Baal-Peor; the second census, this time with the names of the families mentioned; and theirs appear now for the first time (they are presumably by now in their late teens).

The people are now awaiting the signal to cross Jordan and begin the conquest (but this in fact will not take place until the "king in Jeshurun" is replaced by Joshua). In the last chapter of Numbers the names of the five sisters are in a slightly different order: could this mean that they were quintuplets? If so, it might partly explain — on the line of nature — their remarkable unity; but be that as it may, their purpose of heart is evident: they will have their portion in

". . . the land, the glory of all lands,  
beyond the Jordan's wave!"

So they come before the Tent of meeting, and bring their cause to Moses, Eleazar, the princes and the whole assembly. Moses takes it to Jehovah, and Jehovah fully upholds the sisters' plea: daughters, equally with sons, are to have an inheritance in Immanuel's land; and this becomes an ordinance in Israel.

But in Numbers 32 a new situation arises: the Reubenites and Gadites have very large herds and flocks; and the newly-conquered countries east of Jordan have much pasture land — exactly what suits them. So they come to Moses, Eleazar and the leaders, and beg permission to settle where they are, and not be made to cross the Jordan. Moses, whose heart longs after the promised land, though barred from entering it, is grieved by their request; but upon their promise to help in the conquest of Canaan, he gives his consent. Half the tribe of Manasseh seems already (without consulting him?) to have occupied the kingdom of Og in Bashan, with its 60 giant cities (and they were also given half of Gilead). But the other half-tribe wishes to have its portion in Canaan; and when they ultimately settle there Manasseh is in the unique position of occupying land on both sides of the Jordan.

Which are the sisters going to choose? The pleasant border-lands? No: their hearts are set on having their portion in ". . . the land which Jehovah careth for — His eyes constantly upon it from the beginning of the year to its end". But now (Numbers 36) a fresh problem arises: supposing they marry outside their tribe, their portion will be lost to Manasseh. So the tribal heads bring the matter before Moses and the princes; Jehovah entirely confirms their exercise: every daughter is to find a husband within her tribe. And all five sisters marry their own cousins: thus their inheritance remains within the territory of Manasseh.

Then Moses dies, and Joshua leads the people across Jordan to conquer the land. After about seven years (Joshua 14) the tribes begin to receive their inheritance; and sturdy old Caleb, as we have already noticed, is given the hill-country of Hebron he had desired so long, and courageously takes possession of it.

We are not told whether the five sisters knew him (and were encouraged by his example) but in chapter 17 they come forward (most likely mothers by now) and ask for their promised inheritance, according to Jehovah's command to Moses, and their steadfast faith is recompensed.

God's care for the fatherless is underlined over and over in the O.T., and the story of these sisters is a beautiful instance of it. But it does have a voice to us. Surely their purpose of heart is a challenge to the Lord's people living in this privileged N.T. dispensation, with higher hopes. *They* looked for an inheritance on earth; we have one which is incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, and it is reserved in heaven for us — the portion of the saints in light. We have obtained it in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the earnest of it. Christ is glorified in the very highest place, and we are already viewed as, not merely quickened with Him, but raised up with Him and seated in Him in the heavenlies. God is going to display to created intelligences, in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus; and He would have us be in the present enjoyment of these glorious realities. Just as the land of Canaan was His, but He would inherit it in His earthly people: so, when He enters into full possession of His universe, He will inherit it in His heavenly people (the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints).

What of the things of this life? They have their place; they are real. The part chosen by the two-and-a-half tribes was no doubt very attractive; but between them and the other tribes flowed the swift waters of Jordan, the Descender, the river of death (and we may now say, in view of Romans and Colossians, death with Christ), which would tend to divide them — so much so that they felt compelled to erect the altar of Ed (Joshua 22) to preserve unity. Not only so, but their situation was very vulnerable: they had no barrier to protect them from marauding Bedaween, or later from the great empires of the East.

So with us: our characteristic blessings are in the heavenlies in Christ; but God gives us all things richly to enjoy. We may in His mercy experience many of His bounties this side of death; but by their very nature they are temporary. It is not a question here, any more than it was with the two-and-a-half tribes, of lusting after evil things, as Israel had done in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10); but rather of the enormous pull of the things of everyday life, and their tendency to displace the unseen things, which can only be realised by faith.

Judah means 'praise': and do we not see in Caleb's triumphant close something to the praise of the glory of God's grace which had been

with him (a prince of Judah) and enabled him to overcome?

Manasseh means "causing to forget": and if in the part of the tribe that stayed east of Jordan, we may see the spirit that forgets God's revealed purpose concerning His people; in the other half-tribe, and particularly in the five sisters, is there not a vivid parallel to Philippians 3? Paul had seen a man in the glory; and now he counted all his natural advantages a total loss for the excellency of the glory of Christ Jesus his Lord: "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching out to the things before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus".

This did not make him fanatical or monastic: he could write a touching personal letter on behalf of a runaway slave; he could be concerned about Timothy's physical health; in the letters which contain his highest teaching (Ephesians and Colossians) he comes down to exhortations in connection with natural and social relationships.

In Philippians 2 he draws close to John's side of things and sets before us the transcendently glorious One coming down here and voluntarily submitting to all the outward limitations of the fallen creature, and glorifying God in the lowest place.

How good it is to have both John's ministry and Paul's! To know the One who has manifested eternal life, light and love, here below — the declarer of the Father's name — the declared object of His full delight — is the Man who has gone up in righteousness and, while hid in God, is now the object and prize of the believer in his upward course.

If we look back to the days of His flesh, we can see His perfect appreciation of all that was commendable in the first creation — which He had Himself brought into being and pronounced "very good". He could welcome the small children and bless them abundantly; and look on the rich young ruler and love him (Mark 10).

If we look on to His coming kingdom, we may perhaps wonder at a dispensation partly "natural" succeeding a "spiritual" one: but will it not be the displayed vindication of God's wisdom and beneficence in creation? (yet at the same time the final and necessary test of the natural man, to show whether he can bear fruit for God under the best possible earthly conditions?).

May we in our day be enabled, through the Spirit's power, to partake thankfully, and to God's glory, of his temporal mercies — after the pattern of Gideon's 300 men — and be refreshed and fitted for the good warfare while He leaves us here below.

# Dial Park Talks

T. BALDERSTON

## COMING TO GOD (3)

*The third and last of the talks on this subject completes this sequence.*

### 3. We come to God by Faith: Hebrews 11

My third statement is illustrated from the Tabernacle system by the state of affairs obtaining for the brief moment on the day of Atonement when the high priest was inside, making atonement for the sanctuary. The Law said he was to be in there alone: "There shall be no man in the Tabernacle of the congregation . . . until he come out" (Leviticus 16:17). For that brief moment the people saw nothing: they had to wait, anxiously if their faith was weak, for the high priest's reappearance at the door as the proof that once more God had accepted the blood, and had consented to renew relations with His people.

The people's position at that moment represents ours. We recognise that there can be no coming to God at all except as he himself prescribes (Talk 1). We recognise that He has designated the *blood of Jesus* as the new, the living, and we may add, the only way into heaven (Talk 2), and we know that Jesus was last seen ascending to heaven. But no evidence yet reaches our senses of His acceptance there; only that assurance which faith in the written word of God can give us. We are outside; our high priest is inside "with the blood of His atonement". Our present link with Him is *faith*.

Faith, according to Hebrews, is not just a trustful relationship. It is to "endure, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27 — see the definition in 11:1). If an unseen reality, namely Christ in glory presenting His blood before God *for us*, governs our lives, others will be able to see the difference.

In Hebrews 4:2 we read of people who had the promise of an inheritance, but who didn't believe it. They lacked faith.

In Hebrews 11:8-19 we read about a man who had faith, *and it showed*.  
 (a) 11:8. Abraham went out. Do *we* stake our lives on the fact that Christ has destined us for "a better country", given us citizens' rights in the "well-founded city", and a standing in perfect righteousness before God, the Judge of all?

(b) 11:9. When Abraham reached "the land of promise", his apparent destination, he still insisted on "living in tents", though we may be sure that most people round about lived in houses. This was an explicit *choice* (remember Lot). Abraham became rich; still he wouldn't build a house.

By the thing he *wouldn't* do, his life bore witness to the unseen reality that drew him.

(c) He called himself a "resident alien" (11:13 — "stranger and pilgrim"). This was when he bought the burial ground for Sarah (Genesis 23:4). Did he mean by this phrase that he belonged to Ur or Haran? If he'd meant that, he would have demonstrated it eventually by returning there (Hebrews 11:15). He did not return, and by calling no place on earth "home", he declared plainly that his home was unearthly — "the better country". Do our "way of life" *and* our verbal statements show us to be "resident aliens" in Stockport — not because our roots are in Edinburgh or Newcastle, etc., but in heaven?

In 11:16 we also read, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (e.g. in Exodus 3:6). If we are prepared to commit ourselves entirely to God's testimony about His Son, about the blood, about heaven, we can be sure that He will commit Himself entirely to us, and to providing all our present needs.

Three more points about Abraham:

(i) Abraham was not unapproachable, even though he was entirely "heavenly minded". He was the one they came to for help at the sack of Sodom (Genesis 14:13). He was greatly respected (Genesis 23:6). John White says in the book *The Cost of Commitment* that he is sick of hearing the phrase "too heavenly minded to be any earthly use". The trouble, he says, is that most of the Christians he meets are far too earthly minded to be any heavenly use. Are you and I any use to heaven? What Abraham achieved on the earth, by his separation, is incalculable.

(ii) Abraham's life has a sense of *movement* about it. Do our lives? Have we the sense of making progress toward God, not mental progress, or progress in knowledge or doctrine, but progress in our inward relationship with Him, and in the knowledge of, and conformity to, His will? Are we "nearer heaven" than we were a year ago, and increasingly independent of good fortune and misfortune here?

(iii) Abraham's life was a life of waiting, of expectancy. Do our lives convey the sense of *eagerly* awaiting "His appearing" (Hebrews 9:28)?

### Faith and Fellowship

"Having therefore brethren boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . Let us draw near with a true heart *in full assurance of faith*" (Hebrews 10:19, 22).

How do we, as a group of believers, claim God's attention? By our good efforts? By the fact that we belong to a particular "church", by a specially ordained priesthood, or liturgy? We claim it by none of these things at all but wholly and solely by an unseen *fact*, far above us in heaven, that Christ's blood is accepted there by God for us. How do we express this fact? By the utter plainness of our worship here. It is not music, or ritual, spontaneity or even sincerity that will admit us to heaven.

Nothing of the flesh can do that. We are solely the beneficiaries of something being done for us in heaven, and we confess this by refusing the trappings of this-worldly religion. This was what the Hebrew believers had to do (Hebrews 13:9-14) and we have to do it too.

### Summary

“Let us run with patience. . . . Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *faith*” (Hebrews 12:2). Do you find the path of faith a hard one? Christ Himself followed it. He does not ask us to do something He did not do Himself in perfection.

---

### JOHN 16:16-22

*“A little while — and again, a little while . . .”*

“What is this that He saith, a little while? We know not what He saith.” We cannot wonder at their questions. The two little intervals of time — the being not seen and seen again — and this in view of what had been said before, “because I go to the Father” — these are such words as events only can explain. . . . The discrimination in the verbs employed affords sufficient guidance, and leads us to interpret as follows. A little while (it was but a few hours) and then “ye behold me no longer”: I shall have passed from the visible scene and from the observation of spectators (that is the kind of seeing which the verb intends). “Again a little while” (of but little longer duration), and ye shall see Me”, with another kind of seeing, one in which the natural sight becomes spiritual vision; and My presence shall be no part of the visible scene, yet assured by occasional discoveries to the end that it may be recognised for ever. The risen and living Lord showed himself to the eye of sense that He may remain before the eye of faith, not as a memory, but as a presence, once impressed in a few hours of partial disclosure, then perpetuated through all ages by the revelation of the Spirit.

“Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you”. . . . Well did He understand that sorrow of theirs which would be an attendant shadow of His own. He saw them in the desolation of bereavement, confounded by the horror and mystery of an inexplicable event, and feeling as if all faith and hope had gone from their souls, because He who had inspired them was dead. Yet shall it be but “a little while” before their sorrow

“shall be turned into joy” — shall pass into it in the way of natural consequence, the very cause of the sorrow proving to be the cause of the joy. . . . The sorrow is spoken of in the present tense — “ye have it now”; for its first sad amazement was already upon them. The joy is expressed in the future as lying beyond it. “I will see you — your hearts shall rejoice”. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the moment of the change. As the sorrow was felt under the shadow of death, so the joy was found in the light of resurrection. It broke upon them, when “Jesus stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you; and when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19, 20). . . . All turns on the Resurrection; and without the experiences of that time, there would have been no beholding of Christ in the Spirit. Then was the morning hour. The morning is part of the day, and if with a less perfect light, has a freshness that is all its own; but its joy consists in being the commencement of the day. So it was with the first fulfilment of the promises. “Ye shall see Me — I will see you again”. Its gladness was its own in freshness and surprise, but really as the earnest of permanent joy. It was a seeing that could never be lost or dimmed, but on the contrary grew clearer as it became more spiritual. Therefore it is not only said, “Your hearts shall rejoice”, but also “Your joy no one taketh away from you”. How could it be taken away? “Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more domain over Him. For the death that He died, He died unto sin once; but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (Romans 6:9, 10). The living Lord is the joy of His people; and because His life is eternal, their joy is permanent and secure. . . . These are the confidences of faith, belonging to the day that now is. Beyond it there is another day to break, with another kind of seeing, and another kind of joy; but that final prospect is only implicitly included in the language of the present promise.

(BERNARD — reprinted from *Scripture Truth*, 1922)

---

## BOOK REVIEWS

**John Nelson Darby — As I knew him: William Kelly.**

(Words of Truth. Belfast. 1986, pp. 22)

**John Nelson Darby — A Biography: W. G. Turner.**

(Hammond, later CBHT, 1926 and 1944, pp. 88)

The appearance of the first booklet is welcome in that the labours, and the manner of life, of this great servant of God *should* be recalled to us in a fair way. As time passes the memory of “our leaders who have shown

to us the Word of God" can fade, and the example of their faith be lost on us too.

In drawing attention to the booklet, it seems right to mention the older book too, which has been in mind for republication. A comparison of the two may well be in order, so that potential readers may have some guidance on their relative contents.

The second book is properly described as a biography. The 1926 edition was lost due to enemy action. The post-war edition is similar, but a little longer. Fuller access to reliable sources of information was available to the writer then, as he states in his preface.

The chapter headings of the 1944 edition indicate the content. These are:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Mainly Introductory.               | 6. Friends and Associates.               |
| 2. Ancestry, School,<br>University.   | 7. As Author.                            |
| 3. In Labours Abundant.               | 8. Some Pen Portraits and<br>Appraisals. |
| 4. A Curate and Two Arch-<br>bishops. | 9. The Last Phase.                       |
| 5. Character and Principles.          | 10. The Afterglow.                       |

As is evident the book *does* cover the whole of the life-span of this much respected servant of Christ. Though briefly, it traces the exercises of soul underlying all his actions, his inward life of godliness, as well as his outward service, with humble self-spending devotion to Christ, to the gospel, and to his brethren. The poor, as well as those simple and relatively uninstructed in the truth, but with a warm appreciation of the Lord, came under his special notice. Even the children received his attention. These matters, no less than his ability to act, and to stand firm for the truth (especially where the honour of Christ needed to be asserted) are all touched on in this biography. Though the writer has a clear high respect for Mr Darby, his judgments seem to be well-balanced, and the book as a whole presents many facets of the man as he was. Certainly it is right to think of him as an example, insofar as he followed Christ.

The *new* booklet is *not* a wide coverage of the life of J.N.D. from many angles — nor does it intend to be. Its title "J.N.D. as I knew him" is exactly correct — Mr Kelly's own recollections of Mr Darby, having been often in touch with him after a certain stage. Certainly he also reveals a high respect for him, gained at first hand, and by close friendship.

It is clear that the whole of this pamphlet (with only a rare sentence changed) is virtually a straight copy of a single chapter in the 1926 edition of W. G. Turner's biography. Doubtless Mr Kelly produced it in document or other form before that. The chapter entitled 'Reminiscences' is the

chapter reproduced.

Mr Turner's post-war edition replaces that chapter (entirely by W.K.) by 'Some Pen Portraits and Appraisals'. This has four contributors, the last being W.K.'s, with almost all of what is now in the separate booklet. To this extent the chapter is more comprehensive, giving several views of Mr Darby. The piece from Mr Kelly has his own stamp on it, as a person close in kind to J.N.D. (though younger), who both shared his own love and appreciation of the truth, and was quite incisive in entering into "earnest contention for the faith once delivered" — with a deep sense of what is due to Christ. There are echoes in these few pages of the great Scriptural principles, the discernments of errors and misleading trends, which Mr Darby exposed — with Mr Kelly also being to the fore in this field, for the honour of Christ and for the safeguarding of His people.

There are hints of other things too in these brief pages from Mr Kelly. J.N.D.'s frugal ways, his unpretentiousness, his unworldliness, his delight to "condescend to men of low estate", his indefatigable application of time and energy for Christ. As no doubt he *was*, Mr Darby is seen by Mr Kelly as one of whom Paul's word "For to me *to live* is Christ" was a proper description.

But perhaps the *biography* has more of *Darby the man* in it — as is inevitable in a longer book which covers the whole spectrum of a man's life. This short excerpt from the biography (while it has impressions gained from first-hand contact and first-hand fellowship, in common, vital things), has agreement on the truth and sturdy defence of the truth, as its principal ingredient.

---

### **Souvenez-vous de vos Conducteurs: par F. Cuendet.**

(Éditions Bibles et Traités Chrétiens, Vevey, Suisse. 1935. pp. 153)

This valuable book traces the way in which God used His servant, mainly in France and French-speaking Switzerland at first, to revive long-dormant Bible truths, thus ultimately drawing in and affecting many persons, on a wide scale, in those times. Would that the truths uncovered in those days still carried great weight with today's readers! The way in which the Bible translation work (itself a heavy and demanding task) began with the French version, and later spread into our own and other languages, is also shown.

This book shows a man at work in the hands of God, but it is a story of **God** at work principally. Any interested reader who can read French will not be disappointed if he obtains a copy. The CBHT *may* print it in English, but a deeper zeal for reading good material, would help us enormously in decisions on going ahead with such projects.

C.C.

# The Report

JAMES CHRISTIE

*"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"*  
(Isaiah 53:1)

*"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land . . . Howbeit I believed not . . . until I came, . . . and, behold, the half was not told me."*  
(1 Kings 10:6,7)

*The substance of this article will surely appeal to all.*

## Isaiah 53: The report of His Sufferings

It has been truly said that Isaiah 53 is engraved on the heart of every true Christian. It presents the Lord Jesus come down from glory into this world deriving nothing from the world about Him. He grew up before God as a tender sapling. How the Father delighted in each stage of His growth, a Babe, a Boy, a Youth (Zechariah 13:5, see New Trans), and a full-grown Man. All around Him was arid indeed. He derived nothing whatever from the soil of man's world.

He suffered from the hands of wicked men, and from the hands of a holy God. "He was smitten of God and afflicted". "The LORD laid on Him the iniquity of us all". The believer's sins were borne by Jesus on the cross. While the work of the Lord Jesus is available for *all*, He bore the sins of *many*, i.e. of all who trust in Him. He is never said to have borne the sins of all — for there will be those who, having rejected Christ, will bear their own sins in the lake of fire eternally. How wonderful it is to be among the many whose sins were borne by Jesus "in His own body on the tree".

He was silent before Pilate and silent before Herod. Pilate had never seen a prisoner like this before. "He marvelled" (Mark 15:5). Oh! how Jesus suffered. The soldiers did not break His legs, as with the malefactors, but a soldier pierced His side with a spear. They little realised that they

fulfilled the Old Testament verses which had foreseen that moment; they probably had no thought that such Scriptures existed.

Men "appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death". Overcoming his fears, how boldly Joseph of Arimathea came forward and, going to Pilate, claimed the body of Jesus. The appointment of man was overruled by God's predetermined intervention. "Because He had done no violence". What a violent world we live in! Terrorism, murder, child abuse, muggings, and other forms of violence fill this poor world. The world made its choice when it settled for the violent man Barabbas. "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him". There was no other way. The holy Sufferer said "not my will but thine be done"; but there is wonderful fruit from His sufferings. "He shall see His seed". Each of the *major suffering Psalms* (22, 69, and 102) closes with a seed. Each believer is a seed, fruit of the death of Christ, the spoil of His great victory. "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of His soul". Just think of Christ's travail, and every Christian is part of that ever-abiding fruit. He is satisfied with that fruit eternally — not ashamed to call His own His brethren, for every element of shame has been dealt with in His death.

Paul refers to this chapter in Romans 10:16,17. "But they have not all obeyed the glad tidings". Have *we* obeyed the gospel, not in part but in its fulness? "So faith then is by a report but the report by God's word". What a blessed report has come to us in God's wonderful gospel. The report of the holy suffering Son of God who was the Man of Sorrows here! He was despised and rejected of men, and unless God has worked in our souls we see no beauty in Him. How we need to thank God that we *have* seen beauty in Jesus!

We need to ponder the three hours of darkness, when the Lord Jesus was smitten of God. Think of the awful load of the sins of every saint from Adam to the moment when the last is gathered in! What an awful catalogue my own sins form, a single individual, but this is multiplied by the sins of each one of the *myriads of the redeemed*. This meant absolute forsaking for Jesus, for God could not look upon sin and must judge it even when borne by His own Son. What an appreciation this should give us of God's absolute holiness.

O that the wonder of these things should penetrate into our souls and draw out our hearts in devotion to the One who has done so much for us!

The Saviour has been assigned a portion with the great because He poured out His soul unto death and was reckoned with the transgressors. What an expression — "He poured out His soul unto death". He shrank from death at Gethsemane's garden, but on He went the whole way "to death, *even* the death of the cross". Think of Him, between two robbers, yet even there interceding for them.

### **1 Kings 10:1-9: The Report of His Glory**

The Queen of Sheba took a journey to where Solomon was. The believer

takes a journey through death, burial and resurrection, to where Christ is. She saw the house that he had built, constructed of cedar wood and stone. The cedars were felled in Lebanon. It is the gospel that fells the cedars (Psalm 29:5), "The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars, yea the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon". Saul of Tarsus was felled on the Damascus road by the glory of the light above the brightness of the noonday sun. After this, the cedars were conveyed by sea in rafts to the appointed place. Believers are bound together in companies whilst *en route* for glory. We do not select other trunks in our own particular raft, but we are bound together in our earthly journey until we are all received into the Father's house.

Then there were great stones, costly stones, hewn stones. The saints are only great in God's sight because they have been purchased, at immeasurable cost, and they are hewn in the discipline exercised by the Father in His love.

The queen saw the deportment of his servants, reminding us that our behaviour in God's house is most important. Timothy was instructed by the apostle as to behaviour in the house of God which is the pillar and base of the truth.

She also saw the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel. The disciples are spoken of as eye-witnesses, and attendants on the Word; and we too (as they) are clothed in all the righteousness of Christ before the Father. In *Him*, we are perfectly and completely clothed.

Then she saw his cup-bearers. Let us have something to bring to refresh the heart of Christ every day, and especially at the Lord's Supper. Finally, she saw His ascent. The Lord Jesus, on the resurrection morning, said "I ascend to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God". This is open for every Christian who is prepared for the journey to where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Are we ready for this journey?

It is necessary to notice, of course, that all these other things that she saw were no more than subsidiaries to the *person* around whom they centred, and whom they reflected. The Lord Jesus, greater by far than Solomon, is the One whose unique glory is at the focus of everything pictured here in this incident. Other features of what the queen saw were no more than witnesses to Solomon's glory, drawing out her responses to *him*. Let our responses to our blessed Lord bear this principally in mind.

The Queen says it was a true report that I heard in my own country — but she found *much, much more* when she arrived. "The half was not told me". To find Christ in glory for one's self is *much* more than the report that the Lord's servants bring. "Blessed be the LORD thy God which delighted in thee". How the Father delighted in Christ here, and how He delights in Him where He is! He is the only man truly qualified to rule. Notice that Solomon gave the queen whatever she asked, and more besides:

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more,  
 All thought of self is now for ever o'er,  
 Christ its unmingled object fills the heart  
 In blest adoring love its endless part.

Truly in the words of the Lord Jesus we can say "behold, a greater than Solomon is here".

# The Christian's Attitude to the Scriptures (4)

E. BROWN

## (ii) Value, Uses, and Benefits of Scripture (continued)

*The present paper continues the now-considerable coverage of matters falling under the heading (ii), and completes this section.*

### (j) The Scriptures for **Leisure, Relaxation, and Enjoyment**

It is a striking fact that only the gospel of Mark — which records the busy life of God's perfect, obedient Servant — includes a statement of our Lord which implies a need for LEISURE. That certainly is the Holy Spirit's comment upon His words.

"He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31).

How then are we to find that relaxation and enjoyment which will refresh our jaded spirits so that we may give ourselves afresh to that service to which God has called us? How can a Christian renew composure and serenity in his own soul, and vigour and sharpness in his Lord's service?

Scripture makes it plain that it is perfectly valid to regard the Word of God in this light. Listen again to Scriptures already quoted, noting the enthusiasm shown by these spokesmen.

"Thy words were found and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

"I did eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness" (Ezekiel 3:3).

Psalm 119, that great personal statement of the application and the blessing of the Word of God is packed with references to the joy and enjoyment found in diligent occupation with the Scriptures.

"Blessed (happy) are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD" (v. 1).

"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches" (v. 14).

"I will delight myself in Thy statutes" (v. 16).

"Thy testimonies are also my delight" (v. 24; also vs. 35, 47, 70, 77, 92).

"O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (v. 97).

"I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil" (v. 162). (Also verses 103, 111, 143, 174.)

The limited range of Scripture open to the Psalmist had these effects upon him. To us the whole canon of Scripture is freely accessible. Happy are we if the Psalmist's sentiments are mirrored in our own experience.

### (k) The Scriptures for **Devotion**

Assimilation of the Word of God produces and promotes devotion. The effect is progressive and cumulative. The Psalmist expresses it well:

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law" (Psalm 119:18).

"O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (v. 97).

"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation" (v. 99).

Psalm 119:18 is perhaps a key verse to govern our attitude, keeping us in prayerful waiting on the Lord, as we sit in His presence hearing His Word.

Right DOCTRINE is essential. Appropriate DEPORTMENT is equally essential. DEVOTION is the spring of both the apprehension of the one and the exhibition of the other.

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14:21).

DEVOTION built into our souls by proper appreciation of the Word enables us to keep a proper balance between doctrine and deportment.

### (l) The Scriptures for **Study and Learning**

We have a direct instruction to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

This means, principally, study of the Scriptures taking due account of what has been considered in (a) and (b); and applying the lessons firstly to our own lives, as before God, and then (with the Lord's help) in our service for Him.

The study and application of the Word of Truth is the true precursor to being fully fitted for the service of God.

"Continue thou in the things thou hast learned . . . all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:14-16).

Only thus can we rightly divide (literally, cut in a straight line) the Word of Truth; and so be able to distinguish things that differ and discern between right and wrong.

#### (m) The Scriptures for **Service**

Scripture is the only true tool, or weapon, in the service of God.

"Apollos . . . mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

". . . showing by the Scriptures" (Acts 18:28).

"The Word of God is quick, and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"the sword of the Spirit . . . is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

The Word itself, not proficiency in using it, is the most vital factor. The correct and incorrect use of Scripture is, however, to be noted.

"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20).

Any Scripture can only be understood and applied by taking account of first, the immediate context, then the context of the whole of Scripture. Incorrect use of Scripture leads to error.

"They that are unlearned and unstable wrest . . . the . . . Scriptures to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

This is seen in the extreme misuse of Scripture in tempting our Lord in the wilderness. Our Lord's answers to Satan show to perfection how Scripture can be used, in service to God and blessing to man, in the hands of One completely able to "rightly divide the Word of Truth".

(Read: Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13.)

# The Patience of Job and the End of the Lord (2)

**NORMAN GRIFFITHS**

*The second stage of this paper focuses on the book of Job itself. At the close of the introductory paper the actors and speakers in the book were introduced, and the four headings under which the comments now follow were indicated.*

### **Job's Cry (chapters 1-3)**

That Job was a true child of God is indisputable. God speaks of him as "My servant" (1:8 and 2:3). Job confesses his faith in God; in the midst of his sufferings he can say "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him" (13:15) and "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (19:25). In the prophecy of Ezekiel God links him with Noah and Daniel as righteous in His eyes, and here He speaks of him in glowing terms — none like him in all the earth, upright in his relations with men, marked by reverential fear in his relation with God and eschewing or avoiding evil (see Ezekiel 14:14,20; Job 2:3).

We are told of his prosperity, his possessions, his family and his greatness (1:2,3), and also of his piety for he sanctified his children, offering burnt offerings on their behalf in case they had sinned. He did this continuously, he was consistent.

There is one thing in this description of Job that is missing and is significant. We do not read that he brought any sacrifice for his own sins. This seems to be the key to the whole book, for throughout the second section where he faces his critics he maintains his righteousness. He says to God "Thou knowest that I am not wicked" (10:7). "I know I shall be justified" (13:18) and "My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go" (27:6).

In this wonderful passage of Scripture the veil over the unseen spirit world is, as it were, drawn aside, and we are given to see the mysterious way in which God deals with Job. He takes the initiative and draws the attention of Satan to Job, His servant.

There are certain important things we learn about Satan from these verses. It must be remembered that Satan does not possess Divine attributes such as omnipresence, or omniscience. Though he is the great dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and has great power yet he is a creature of God's creation and his power is limited. A well-taught sister in Christ seemed quite shocked when told that Satan was a created being with limitations, but this is clearly stated in Ezekiel 28 under the figure of the king of Tyrus — where the word of the Lord says "Thou has been in Eden the garden of God" and speaks of "the day that thou was created".

We see from this passage that Satan is accountable to God (1:6), that his power is limited as he admits (1:6; 2:6). He is behind all the evil in the world and God allows him to do his will up to a point. After his attacks on Job he goes off the scene and we see him no more. But how cruelly he dealt with Job, and God allowed it to happen.

I do not suppose that a case of such tragedy and suffering has ever been exceeded. Job was bereft of all his children; his seven sons and three daughters all killed at a stroke, his servants slain and his cattle and camels stolen, his flocks and shepherds destroyed by fire from heaven, and finally his health destroyed, his body covered from head to foot with boils and ulcers. We find him seated among the ashes, the place where refuse was burnt, where beggars and outcasts might be found.

His three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, hearing of his plight, come together to mourn with him and to comfort him, but face to face with his condition they sit down with him for seven days and nights without having a word of comfort to say to him. Having accepted his state and refusing to blame God (2:9,10), now, when his friends sit speechless gazing upon his sufferings, he cries out of the bitterness of his heart, curses the day he was born, and like so many of us, says "Why? Why? Why?" (3:11,12,20,23), and as yet there is no answer.

Is not this so often the experience of Christians, faced with tragedy and suffering and unable to understand why God allows it to happen to them? From this first section the lesson we may take is that God is over all, sovereign ruler of the universe, and He has His own wise purpose in all that He allows to come to pass. "He everywhere hath sway and all things serve His might".

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

### **Job's Critics (chapters 4-31)**

In this second section, the main part of the book, we have the opinions and arguments of Job's three friends, their judgment of his case and his replies to them. They came ostensibly to comfort him (2:11) but seeing his state they seek to convict and convince him of sin, so that he has to say "miserable comforters are ye all" (16:2).

Their judgment of Job's case was based upon a completely wrong idea of God; they did not know Him. Their sincerity and desire to help Job may not be doubted, but their view of the matter seems to be based on the thought that what had happened to him showed that he must have committed grievous sins in God's eyes and that therefore he was suffering God's retribution. In the end God's anger against them is seen as He says to them "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right" (42:7,8).

Eliphaz bases his views on what he has seen; it is just a superficial view — his observation, "I have seen" (4:8, 5:3), "that which I have seen I will declare" (15:17). The gist of it is that what has happened to Job is what happens to the wicked — therefore Job must be wicked. This argument is quite false for experience shows that often the wicked prosper; this is what puzzled the Psalmist in Psalm 73 as we noticed in Part 1.

Bildad has the same idea, though not based on observation but on tradition. He goes back to the fathers, "enquire I pray thee of the former age and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; shall not they teach thee and tell thee and utter words out of their heart?" (8:8, 10). If Job was pure and upright (v. 6) God would be for him. He does not cast away a perfect man, nor does He help evil-doers (v. 20).

Zophar's judgment is not based on what he has seen nor what he has

heard from former times, but arises from what his thoughts and the spirit of his understanding have given him (20:2,3): what has come into his mind and heart, as it were, his intuition. What has happened to Job, the loss of all his property, etc., is the portion of a wicked man from God (vs. 28,29).

Job's replies to these men refute all their charges against him. His eyes, ears and understanding are not inferior to theirs, he knows as much as they do (13:1,2), he is not inferior to them (12:3). He maintains his integrity, his righteousness. There is no daysman, no mediator to come between him and God, and he wants to reason with God, and knows that he will be justified (13:18). He is confident that when tried he will come forth as gold (23:10).

In three chapters, 29,30,31, there is set forth Job's Past, his Present, and his Pride. Nearly 200 times he uses the personal pronouns I, Me, My. One commentator says that he ringed around in red every time these pronouns occurred in these three chapters, and the pages seemed to him like a picture of a child with chicken-pox. Job appears somewhat like the Pharisee in the parable in Luke 18, "I thank Thee, that I am not as other men, etc.". His words are now ended.

His three friends have ceased to answer him because he was righteous in his own eyes; they have no answer to his problem and he has no more to say.

From this section the lesson we may learn is that the natural man cannot understand the ways of God. They are spiritually discerned. In appreciating the blessings which God has prepared for them that love Him, the end of the Lord, the eye hath not seen (Eliphaz), the ear hath not heard (Bildad), nor have they entered into the heart of man (Zophar), they are revealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain:  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

### **Job's Counsellor (chapters 32-37)**

The seventh actor in this wonderful story now comes on the scene — the young man Elihu. He has waited until the elder men have spoken and he seems to have heard all the arguments. He was angry with Job because he had justified himself, and angry with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar because they had found no answer and yet had condemned Job (32:2,3).

He reminds Job of some of the things he has said, his claim to be without sin yet God counts him for his enemy (33:9,10). Job has said "I am righteous and God has taken away my judgment" (34:5) and "My righteousness is more than God's" (35:2).

He reminds Job of the greatness of God, He is greater than man (33:12), and Job has spoken without knowledge: so let him stand still and consider the wondrous works of God (37:14).

Instead of speaking of God like Job's three friends did as the One who vents His wrath upon the wicked, Elihu shows how God acts to bless man — sending a messenger, one among a thousand, to show man how to get right with God. If any man says I have sinned then God is gracious and has found a ransom for him. He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit and his life shall see the light (33:23-30). He wants Job to come to the end of self (34:36).

In this section the lesson seems to be that the only answer to the problem is to bring God in, the God who is greater than man, the Almighty who is gracious to man if he humbles himself and confesses his sin.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

### **Job's Creator (chapters 38-42)**

In this final section Job's Creator, God Himself, now speaks directly to him. He speaks out of the whirlwind (38:1 and 40:6); men cannot now argue with *Him*, nor advise Him. Here is One whose voice out of the whirlwind, above all the clamour of men, is heard and *must* be attended to.

First God shows Job his *ignorance* in a series of questions (chapters 38,39). He brings before him the wonders of nature and asks him if he knows their secrets, and if he can control them. Again and again He says to Job “Do you know?” “Declare it if you know it all”. Job has to reply “Behold, I am nought. What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once I have spoken but I will not answer; yea twice but I will proceed no further”.

Then God speaks to him again out of the whirlwind to show him his *impotence* with another series of questions. Can he do the things that God does? Can he speak with thunder, tame the great beasts which God has made, or can he put down the proud and abase him (chapters 40,41)? Job was unable to help himself when his enemies slew his servants and stole his flocks and herds.

As God brings before Job something of His wisdom, power and majesty, he is made to feel not only his ignorance and impotence but also his insignificance, and to confess it. He says “I have uttered things that I understood not, things too wonderful for me which I knew not. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eye seeth Thee wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (42:3-6). Job has reached the end of himself, and God has reached *His* end, His purpose in the tests and trials has been realised. And so the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning (v. 12), and his experiences have taught him more about God than he could ever have known in the days of his former prosperity. He now knows God in His compassion and tender mercy.

God's end in view for His servant is "more than his beginning", more than anything known previously. Paul says in Romans 8:18 "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us".

Lastly the lesson we need to learn is to view our tests and trials as part of God's ways with us that we may prove that He is full of compassion and tender mercy. His purpose is to have His children conformed to the image of His Son, and all things are working to this end. "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it unto the day of Jesus Christ", when what God has wrought will be manifested to the praise of the glory of His grace (Philippians 1:6).

In his proverb Solomon says "Take away the dross from the silver and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner" (Proverbs 25:4). The fire is hotted up to remove the dross until the refiner can see His reflection in the precious metal. "The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10,11).

"His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower."

## Bible Study — Joshua

J. S. BLACKBURN

### 10. THE LAND AND NATIONS OF CANAAN: Chapter 9:1,2

*Arising from these particular verses, a survey is made of 'the land', and the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In looking at the physical features of that land, and of the foes that resisted the possession of the land, the spiritual meaning for believers today is important to gather. These matters are highlighted here.*

We now enter upon the account of the main campaigns, beginning with the verse 9:1 and culminating in the words "and the land had rest from war" — the last words of chapter 11. Chapter 12 is occupied with summaries of Israel's victories, so that the section on which we now enter extends from 9:1 to 12:24. It is divided into four sub-sections: these are the episode of the "wily" action of the Hivites of Gibeon, 9:3-27; the campaign in the south, 10:1-43; the campaign in the north, 11:1-22; and

the list of kings smitten, 12:1-24. Thus Israel possessed, as described in chapters 10 and 11, the central bulk of Canaan, the two main campaigns dealing with regions which afterwards became the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Verse one of chapter nine is evidently of great importance for the understanding of the inspired narrative. Statements of similar pattern occur, in addition to 9:1, in 10:40, 11:2, 11:16, and 12:8. Each of these verses contains a selection, different in each case, of phrases describing the configuration of the land; and three (that is 9:1, 11:2, and 12:8), contain a list of the nations encountered. These latter, the nations, we will consider later; let us first look at the details of *hills and valleys*. Why are they given so prominent a place in Joshua? It is because they are the details of the unique feature of the land of promise: the way in which Jehovah's treasure, "the rain of heaven" becomes available, so that Canaan was a land blest above all lands. The key verse is Deuteronomy 8:7, which we must have in full: "For Jehovah thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that *spring out of valleys and hills*". At a stroke this verse connects the hills and valleys of Canaan with fountains and wells and springs of water. The rain is "Jehovah's treasure", and is given directly by Him: springs and wells and fountains are open to man's neglect or hostility to destroy them, and to man's diligence to care for and use them.

The idea that hills and valleys (the word is 'shephelah'), the high and the low immediately beside each other, constitute a land configuration most conducive to the appearance of springs and fountains and brooks, is most elaborately confirmed by the study of the geology of Palestine.

There are two passages of Scripture to which the mind turns for the most precious light on fountains, springs and wells — John 4:6-14 and 7:37-39. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". And, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: — (this He spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Response to these pictures in Joshua, and to the Lord's words we have read, is, in the introductory stage an intensely individual matter. The reiterated 'he', 'him', 'if any man' underlines this. The spiritual exercises are prayer, meditation on Scripture as the Lord's own words to us, and self-judgment. The last-named is perhaps least thought-of, and at the same time the most necessary. The reasons are that unworthy behaviour "gives place to the devil", letting the enemy in; and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God, our only power for victory (Ephesians 4:25 to 5:5).

This is perhaps the place to widen our concept of the Christian's Canaan. Hitherto we have confined our thoughts to the "heavenly places" of the Ephesian epistle. In a sense this is right, but the expression in the original is

“heavenly things” or “the heavenlies”. In Ephesians the context justifies the insertion of “things” as in A.V. Exactly the same expression occurs once elsewhere, John 3:12: “I tell you of heavenly things”. Here the context justifies the additional word “things”, but the expression is the same. The “earthly things” of which the Lord speaks are clearly concerning the new birth. The “heavenly things” concern eternal life. This Scripture joins together with John 4:14 just quoted (“a well of water springing up into everlasting life”) to lead us to think of this theme of transcendent beauty, eternal life, as within the scope of the Christian’s warfare. This receives strong confirmation from 1 Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life”.

Needless to say, in such a context we must look to the final great end of all the Son reveals regarding eternal life; “this is life eternal, that they might know thee (the Father) the only true God, and Jesus whom thou hast sent”. From any conceivable point of view John’s finality of truth in John 17:3 must be put alongside Paul’s finality of truth in the Mystery, “that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”.

Some of the most memorable and cheering passages of Scripture regarding the land of Canaan deal with its springs and fountains and wells. We end these thoughts with some of these. What a power they possess to stir the heart!

“With joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed . . . a fountain of gardens, a well of living water, and streams from Lebanon” (Canticles 4:12,15). “My people have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters . . . what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the water of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?” (Jeremiah 2:13,18).

Who can forget David longing for a drink from the water of the well of Bethlehem? or Isaac, digging and re-digging the wells of Canaan? This latter episode speaks vividly of the Christian’s diligence in finding refreshment in the Word, so amply rewarded; and also of the need for battle, because the enemy is always active to stop the wells with earth. Isaac’s story also reminds us that every generation has to re-dig the wells for itself, a most challenging truth for each individual reader.

We have made use of 9:1 to explain the great importance of understanding why these repeated details giving the configuration of the land are so prominent. As this verse stands, however, its function is to provide an introduction to the whole war. It is a description of the entire land of Canaan from the mountains of Lebanon in the north, to the wilderness in the south. Between the Mediterranean and Jordan, three longitudinal belts are to be distinguished. Alongside the Jordan runs a line of mountains comprising the hill countries of both Samaria and Judah. Westward of these, runs a belt of lowlands named in ancient and modern times the Shephelah. Westward again is the coastal plain. These three

correspond to the words in 9:1, "hills", "valleys" (the Shephelah), and "all the coasts of the great sea" up to Lebanon. This verse does not distinguish the north from the south (the Negev), and is thus a background to the whole war.

We come now to the list of the nations of Canaan in the latter part of verse 1. Obviously its prime interest for the Christian reader of Joshua is that they represent our enemies in the conflict of Ephesians 6. In v. 11 of that chapter we meet the principal foe — the devil. But there is an hierarchy of hostile evil revealed in v. 12. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood — a fairly definite allusion to the war in Joshua. Our struggle is in the spiritual realm, heavenly places. The total list of other beings existing and acting at this level are: God, the devil, angels, demons, and man. Man, and man only, is open to the influence of beings at all three levels. And so there is ranged against the Christian, and active whether he is active or not, this hierarchy of purely spiritual powers. Perhaps they can use appeals at the level of soul ("I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear"), but act directly on the Christian's spirit.

Here is the list: — the devil/principalities/powers/the rulers of the darkness of this world/spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Probably we ought to bring in "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (2:2), and we certainly ought to take account of light cast by the book of Daniel on the existence and activity of spiritual powers relative to Israel in a hostile way. Especially to be noted is the conflict in the spiritual arena to be seen in Daniel 10:13 and 20. Michael is "the great prince which standeth for the children" of Judah (12:1). Gabriel is the one sent to help Daniel (9:21). And he says "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me" (10:13). These are spiritual conflicts concerned with the earthly Israel and Judah. All this is the scripture background to the Christian's warfare with evil powers arrayed against him and aiming to prevent him "standing", and "having done all to stand" in possession and enjoyment of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ — which are the substance of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

It must be important that we receive some help from the book of Joshua on this theme. The three elements Joshua presents as forming the hostile power are (1) the kings, (2) the city states, and (3) the nations. (1) and (3) are found here in 9:1, and all three appear, for example in 10:5. As the narrative develops we shall observe these distinctions, but at the moment we must concentrate on the nations; it is with them that the abominable religious practices are found.

Seven nations are named by Moses in Deuteronomy 7:1, "greater and mightier" than Israel, but to be "cast out" before them. These same seven names occur once in Joshua 24:11 — where it is stated that they were all met at Jericho. Apart from this last reference, only six nations are named

in Joshua; the missing name is Gergashite.

It seems clear that the meanings of the names is connected with nothing more than the kind of country in which they lived. High lexicographical authority (Gesenius-Davies) has given them as follows: Hittite — ‘sons of terror’; Amorite — ‘highlander’; Perizzite — ‘countryman’; Hivite — ‘villager’; Jebusite — ‘trodden down’, perhaps implying ‘city dweller’; and Canaanite — ‘lowlander’. The order of names in the lists varies bewilderingly, but is perhaps a reflection of varying importance in the localities due to frequent migrations.

The original authority for the nations of Canaan is, of course, Genesis 10, and Genesis 11:2 indicates we have to think of constant migrations. Chapter 10:15-19 deals with the way in which this part of the earth was peopled by the descendants of Noah after the flood (v. 32). It is not easy to distinguish names of individuals from those of countries. For example, Sidon in v. 15 is the name of Canaan’s firstborn, but in verse 19 has become the name of a location. Canaan, with whom v. 15 begins, was, according to 9:18, the grandson of Noah, but his place in v. 15 seems to indicate that he took rank as a son of Noah. The mysterious curse of Genesis 9:25 rests on Canaan personally of all the family of Noah, and this casts light on the divine edict for the extermination of the Canaanites in Joshua. If we compare Genesis 9:22 and 23 with Leviticus 18:3, 7, and 27 we see the close connection between Canaan’s offence and the edict of destruction against the Canaanites. These scriptures, taken together with the curses declaimed on Mount Ebal, show clearly that the main area of such mortal offences against God was that of perversions in Canaanite religious practices of God’s ordinances relative to men and women and marriage.

There are two points for special notice. The inclusive name for all the peoples named in vs. 15 to 18 is Canaanite, and in the same verse *migration* in a north-easterly direction is indicated. Note also that the migration results in the Canaanite occupying the exact territory afterwards throughout Scripture called ‘the land of Canaan’. Tracing these names through the story of Abraham, we arrive at the following summary:

(a) The whole of the land of Canaan was called in Scripture sometimes the land of the Canaanites and sometimes the land of the Amorites. These were especially the nations named for destruction.

(b) But within the land of Canaan the Canaanites specifically occupied certain areas of the lowlands. These were the coastal strip as far north as Apeh (Joshua 13:4), and the lowlands about Jordan (Arabah). Joshua 11:3 thus refers to “the Canaanite on the east and on the west”.

(c) Also within the land of Canaan, the Amorites’ territory was the hill country of Judah. I cannot find any indication that the hill country of Ephraim was reckoned Amorite. In transjordan, the two important kingdoms overthrown were specifically Amorite; Sihon in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan. These lands were both high mountains.

(d) Certain nations are joined with the Amorites as mountain peoples

in Joshua 11:3; "and the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains".

(e) In the verse just quoted the Hivites seem to be separated from the other peoples mentioned. The narrative in Chapter 9 shows the Hivites acting extremely independently.

For the present we cannot specify in more detail the distinguishing features of these nations, but as we proceed through the following chapters, we must keep these names in mind, in order to note what special features of hostile power are portrayed in them. In the case of the encounter immediately following in chapter 9 there can be no doubt: the Hivite episode highlights the peril in "the wiles of the devil".

---

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."*

*(Philippians 2:5)*

*"As the Father has commanded me, thus I do"* *(John 14:31)*

Jesus as God-man had omnipotence slumbering in His arms. He had only to speak and it was done. But His whole life on earth was one impressive act of subordination and dependence. In this He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. At Nazareth He was subject to His mother and Joseph. There He remained in studied obscurity, dwelling in a lowly hut, willing to continue in seclusion till the Father's summons called Him to His appointed work.

The same beautiful spirit of filial subjection shines conspicuously amid His acts of stupendous power. "Jesus lifted up His eyes on high and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; but I knew that thou always hearest me; but on account of the crowd who stand around I have said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41-42). Even among His own disciples His language is, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves" (Luke 22:27). With an act of submission He closed His pilgrimage and work of love: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

What an example to us in all this is our beloved Lord! He was God only wise — the self-existent One to whom all power was committed. He was the Sinless One, never liable to err, on whom the Spirit was poured without measure. Surely if He manifested such habitual dependence on His heavenly Father, how earnestly ought we — weak, erring, fallible creatures — to seek to live every hour, every moment, as fully dependent on God's grace and love, following in all things His directing hand!

**J. R. MacDuff**, from *'The Lord is Near'* Calendar.

# “Empty Lives” (1)

A. M. CHAMBERS

## A Talk to Women

*“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”.*

*“And of His fullness have all we received, and grace upon grace”.*  
(John 1:14,16)

*This recorded talk, first given to a group of women, has touched the hearts of many other hearers since, both men and women. It seems fitting to start 1987 with something of this kind.*

*Scripture Truth should expound the truths of Scripture, yet to some it may give the impression of dullness from time to time. Yet surely **nothing** can be less dull than the heart-filling experience of the ‘grace upon grace’ that is in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*In the printed reproduction of the talk, much is lost of the manner of the talk, and it is considerably curtailed. Nevertheless, though some will count it elementary, no apology is made — for there are **many**, amongst the unconverted, and many sad Christians too, who have great need of the ‘caring love’ of Christ, as it is pointed out here.*

### **Abundant Grace (Introduction)**

I am happy to be here amongst you, but also I feel the tremendous responsibility of speaking to you. I don’t know many of you, and many here do not know me. Very likely I shall see none of you again in this life. So I do pray that the message I have from the Word of God will really get home to someone. (Note: The speaker is an octogenarian, long resident in Australia, paying a visit to her home country.)

Now, here in England all are deeply concerned about the riots, and the

vandalism — in Birmingham, in Brixton, and other areas — the awful behaviour of people, the terrible lack of restraint, perhaps especially among young people. We are told that it's because their lives are 'empty'. They say it themselves sometimes. They say that life hasn't any meaning for them. I've heard that. *Empty* lives, that can lead to awful things.

But there *are* people whose lives are empty — but it *doesn't* emerge in violence. There are a lot of *women* whose lives are empty and really meaningless.

They live quiet lives — quiet empty lives. Now this raises two questions. First, does God care? *Who* cares about the empty, quiet lives of some people? The second question is, can those empty lives be filled? Because of course the opposite of emptiness is *full*-ness. In Scotland at a meeting like this, a woman said to me after: With all the mess that is in the world, how can I believe that there's a God? Or, if I believe there's a God, how can I believe that He *cares*, allowing such things that go on? Well, do you know, the Bible answers *both* those questions? John wrote a Gospel, and in it, in every chapter really, he answers those questions. That woman said: How can I believe? At the end of his Gospel John says he has written that you *might* believe. "That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". And then, he has shown us in his Gospel just what kind of a God we are to believe in, as we read in chapter 1:18. "No one has seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *He has declared Him.*" He has shown us what God is like! So, when we read the gospels, and we read particularly in the Gospel of John, we are shown what God is like.

Now the very first description that is given of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shows what God is like (because He Himself is God, and He became a Man), is He is "*full of grace and truth*". Remember that fullness is the opposite of emptiness, and see how verse 16 says "of His fullness have *all we received*". I wonder if we *have*? Because it is available, certainly. The rest of the verse says we have received it "and *grace upon grace*". What does 'grace' mean? To me, it means God's *caring love* to all of us. John's Gospel is full of it — *full* of this caring love of God shown in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the very first chapter he tells us what he must have heard as John the Baptist pointed out the Lord Jesus Christ — "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"! "*Grace upon grace*" which John says we have received, like the waves of the sea, one great wave after another, sweeping in! And the very first wave is John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus — the Lamb of God, here to deal with *sin*, the most acute problem here in the world, in my life, and in yours.

Now we have in this Gospel more and more waves of this abundant grace shown in Christ. We have *examples* (in persons, burdened with needs, receivers of His marvellous grace), and there are also *precepts*, and the examples always illustrate the precepts.

## The Emptiness of Sin

Now a beautiful example of these tremendous waves of grace is given in the life of a woman — a story some of you know so well. I leave it to you all to read the story, quietly and carefully, afterwards. That way, the last word is *God's* word, not mine. It is found in John chapter 4, this lovely story of the woman who came to the well of Sychar. Where does the grace, the *caring love* of God, come in there? It comes in, first of all, because the Lord Jesus, showing what God is like, Himself God manifested in a human being, *sat* (tired after His journey there) and *waited* for that woman. He *waited* at the well for *one* woman to come. The Son of God, the Creator of the universe, *waited* for her! Did He care for her? God's caring love, grace upon grace! I wonder if He's waited a long time for anyone here?

That woman's life was empty — it was empty on her own showing — she was *sick* of having to come to the well to draw water. When He *promised her a certain living water, she quickly said* "Well give it to me — then I won't have to come here every day". She was sick of the drudgery, the *sameness* of life. Oh! lots of women know it still. She had tried to *fill* her life — to fill her life emotionally — and, as you read the give and take of the conversation with Him you'll see a kind of cynicism with her, a kind of bitterness. She was thinking that God didn't care.

She knew very little, she had the vaguest ideas of God, and she didn't know that He cared. She had tried to fill her life. She'd had five husbands. What had happened to them we don't know. One after another she tired of them, or they had tired of her. And they'd not satisfied her — and she'd finally just 'moved in' with the sixth man. No marriage ceremony. Isn't that so very up-to-date? The *caring* Lord, in His grace, *sat* and *waited* for *that* woman! And, as He is the expert psychologist, He gradually drew out from her the acknowledgement of her emptiness. You'll find, that He doesn't give her any sermon. He doesn't give her any reproof. Read it, and you'll find that's true. Oh yes, He drew out the confession of what was wrong in her life, but gave no sermon, no reproof — but He just gave her a promise that He could fill her life, that the emptiness could be changed to a fullness that He would give her. He said, If you only knew what God is like; if you knew the *giving* God. Do you know this, that God is the giving God, and that He waits to bestow grace, His caring love, upon every single one of us, as women — each one separately?

*How does He do this? He said to her I'll fill your life, so that you'll never be thirsty again.* A lot of women are emotionally and spiritually thirsty. How was He going to fill this woman's life? He told her *Who* He was. He presented *Himself* to her, as the answer to *all* her emptiness. She had a vague idea that somehow, some time, a man, a wonderful person called the Messiah was coming, and in her vague way she thought "Things'll be better then". And sometimes, we *do* think things will be better later, perhaps when the children are grown up, perhaps when we retire, perhaps there will be a turn for the better. People are always hoping, expecting

— and she was doing that. She said, Messiah will come — and, amazingly, as she spoke so vaguely about One coming, to put things right, the Lord Jesus said to her — *I'm the One* you are looking for. He said “I that speak unto thee, am He”. He didn't say that to the religious man — Nicodemus — He said it to this half-heathen woman, who, we might say, was not better than she should be. The Son of God made this revelation of Himself to *her*! And, when she recognised Who He was, all her emptiness disappeared! We know that, because immediately she realised who He is — the One who puts everything right — she went off as a missionary. She said, I've found Him! I've found Him! I've found somebody who has told me all things that I ever did — Isn't this the Christ? And they all came out, at her word, to see the Lord Jesus, who had made such a change in her life, filling her empty life with His fullness.

Now you may say, Well yes, but *she* met Him and actually *saw* Him. How do *we* meet Him? We meet Him *in His Word*, as we read His word — as you read this Gospel of John, you will meet the Lord Jesus Christ. It was written that you *should* do so — and you'll find, as she found, that He is able to turn all your emptiness into fullness. He *said* so. He said “I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly”. Do you want to have a full life? — that's a phrase that's often used — then it is the Lord Jesus Christ who'll give you this life, the abundant life. Is that what you've been looking for? It's what many people are looking for, and sometimes they don't recognise that what they're looking for is close to them, right here in the Scriptures. I read about a farmer, who was never very satisfied (well farmers never are, it's what you call an occupational disease; for them it's always wrong, too wet or too dry, and so on). This man at the last decided that he would sell out. So, he got the estate agent in, and the details of his farm were set down, and the estate agent went off to do his job. When he'd got the details, the advertisements, the photographs, etc., all there, he brought them to show the farmer. As he read them out, the farmer was amazed! He said, “Well, that's exactly the sort of property I've been looking for all my life”! He found that what he was looking for was *right there*! Oh! what you need is right here under your very nose — *right here* in the Word of God, in *the Lord Jesus*. Just ask Him to show Himself to you from its page.

He said to that woman, looking for something she hadn't got — satisfaction, fullness — “I am He”, “I'm the One to satisfy you”. And He *waited* for her! Oh! The grace upon grace that is in *Him*. Plenteous grace, we sing, grace to cover *all* my sin. The waves of His grace swept over and covered totally all that woman's sin. Oh! may it affect us all.

*(Part 2: Christians, too, sometimes know empty periods in their lives. 'The emptiness of sorrow and bereavement' and 'The emptiness of idleness and unfruitfulness are the themes of the rest of the talk.)*

# Amram and Jochabed

GORDON SPRATT

*All parents should read this article carefully.*

*Family relationships can easily be undermined, and the responsibilities they entail can be neglected, in today's climate of life. The roles of husband and wife, their priorities too, particularly in relation to their children, will, with true believers, be markedly distinct from the norm amongst even the responsible parents of this world. These distinctions are clarified here.*

*The writer uses the term 'household baptism' (a Scriptural idea) here — but does not make a strong issue of it. Other Scriptural angles on baptism could well be pressed as mildly. But one welcomes the opportunity to include a little on the insights which lead parents to act in faith in the baptism of their families.*

*All, however, must agree on the lessons drawn here from the parents of Moses. We must feel their challenge too. Christians easily slip into 'the way of the world' in this realm, and only humble dependence on the Lord will give strength for fulfilling what is His will for us in our family obligations.*

There has probably never been a time when the family as the basic unit in human society was more in question and in greater danger.

Various contributory factors can be identified: the breakdown of sexual morals in a so-called permissive society; the feminist movement, which not only demands equality for women but also attacks the distinction between the male and female roles in the social structure; the emphasis on materialism and wealth which tends to make individuals independent of family support; the sophistication of leisure activities which erodes simple and traditional family relationships.

Not least, and undoubtedly underlying some of these other factors, is a departure from God and from the authority of Holy Scripture which makes man the referee of his own behaviour and the arbiter of his own destiny. Present-day preoccupation with the occult and the sinister rise of Satanism are clear manifestations of this, and it is significant that the family, and in particular the Christian family, is a declared object of Satanist attack.

At such a time it is surely right that Christians should turn to the Scriptures for guidance. It is noteworthy that two of Paul's most profound epistles, the letters to Ephesus and Colosse, contain simple and practical exhortations regarding family relationships. There are some notable households mentioned in the New Testament, and clearly enough the

Christian family was a great bulwark of the early Church, but we can turn also to the Old Testament to find families and households whose examples remain relevant for us today. Perhaps the most significant is the family of Amram and Jochabed portrayed in Exodus 2.

Many a distinguished servant of God could bear witness to the influence of godly parents, and Moses is a striking example of this, so that the story of Amram and Jochabed must be of great interest to all parents who are concerned to see their children grow up into Christian maturity and take their place in the service of the Lord.

The background of the story is Egypt, the definitive biblical type of this present evil world. How suggestive that is in the light of the difficulties facing young parents bringing up children in a world which is alien to the people of God. Against that dark background Amram and his wife made a bright start. No doubt they were naturally attracted to each other; no doubt they had a natural affinity which would help them to work together; and these aspects are important in any natural relationship. But there was more in their relationship than that. We read that "there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi". This may have been a fairly normal happening, but it is plainly stated in Scripture and it is a statement which must be understood spiritually as well as naturally.

Most young Christians would recognise the importance of marrying another Christian on the grounds of 2 Corinthians 6:14 — "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers", though even that clear scriptural injunction is sometimes ignored with disastrous results. But there is more in the teaching of our story than the "minimum requirement" of one Christian marrying another. Amram and Jochabed were not simply Israelites: they were of the same tribe. In other words they had a complete identity of interest in the things of God.

Moreover it was the tribe of Levi, the tribe which in a particular way represents faithfulness to the Lord and the care of what is due to God. It was the Levites who, in that sad time when Israel turned to idolatry and worshipped a golden calf, responded positively to the appeal of Moses: "Who is on the Lord's side?" And it was of the Levites that God said: "Thou shalt separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine". How pleasing to God when a young couple setting out in marriage make it a commitment to the interests of the Lord and the service of His people.

And what a challenge to every married couple, younger or older. The recognition of the Lordship of Christ in our lives is an individual and personal thing. But in marriage two individuals are made one, and the owning of Christ as Lord should be as important to the married pair as it was to the two individuals.

Many have found, as Amram and Jochabed did, that the tests of married life come when a family arrives. Perhaps that is why so many modern couples put off the beginning of a family until certain other

priorities — a nice home, a new car and a continental holiday or two — have been satisfied. Moses was not, of course, the first child of Amram and Jochabed, but he was born at a time of special testing. The enemy of God's people, personified in Pharaoh, was particularly active at that time in an effort to stifle the growth of Israel as a nation. And, transferring the idea to our times, that has never been more true than it is today. It is not now simply a matter of drowning male children, but rather of eliminating by every Satanic device all those features of spiritual growth and faithfulness which are pleasing to God in His Christian people.

For a while after the birth of Moses, Amram and Jochabed were able to hide the child. For so long, in the protection of a Christian family, children can grow up relatively immune from the corrupting influence of this world. But there must come a time when this is no longer possible. Every Christian parent must surely agree that, despite every effort to shield our children from worldly influences, there comes inevitably a sense of helplessness that can only be met by faith in God. The ark of bulrushes is a picture of this.

Perhaps, without entering into doctrinal controversy, this act of faith on the part of Jochabed may help towards an understanding of those believers who practise household baptism. No aspect of Christianity has been more divisive than baptism, not in its spiritual significance but in its ritual expression. Baptism is the public sign of identification with the Christian profession, and therefore an important and necessary step for anyone converted from Judaism or heathendom. So much is clear for those accepting Christ as a responsible personal decision. But what about families?

Are we to look upon our children as born into this world and a part of it until rescued by a personal experience of conversion? Pharaoh tried that one: he said, when he heard that the children were to leave Egypt with their parents, "Not so: go ye that are men, and serve the Lord". But that wouldn't do for Moses. He was well aware of the action of his parents in preserving him from the power of Pharaoh. In looking at the beautiful child born into their home, they had seen what was for God, not for this world. He was a Hebrew, not an Egyptian, from his birth. And so he says: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go".

So with many a Christian family. Parents of this world make suitable provision for their children — put down their names for a good school, open a building society account, and so on. All very good as far as it goes. But Christian parents, surely, as they look at their newborn child, will see what is potential for God in that little life. What is available to their faith? In Noah's case it was the ark, clearly validated as a type of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21. In the case of Amram and Jochabed it was that ark of bulrushes which was to be at the same time a refuge for their faith and a protection for their child.

So, in a baptised household, the priorities as children grow up are,

or should be, entirely different from those which motivate the responsible parents of this world.

It must be noted that the interest and activity of Moses' parents does not cease when the child is placed in the ark. The world, in the attractive figure of Pharaoh's daughter, makes its claim, and it is just at that time that the need for nursing emerges. How important that Jochabed was watchful and available. It is not without relevance that the story of Exodus 2 belongs to Jochabed rather than to Amram. Modern thinking would have encouraged her to start a job or resume her career, but the nurture of her child in the things of God was the most important activity possible at that time. Who can doubt the necessity, value and dignity of an activity that produced a Moses. We read in Hebrews 11:24 that "by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt". Surely these ideas were implanted during that time when Jochabed's main occupation was the nursing of a child which would otherwise have imbibed only the ideas, tastes and ambitions of Egypt. The parallel with the circumstances of the Christian family today could hardly be closer.

As time went along one can imagine Amram and Jochabed viewing apprehensively the progress of their child. How easily natural pride might have rejoiced at his progress in the hierarchy of Egypt. But what an answer to the faith which, so much earlier, they had exercised on his behalf, when the mature Moses rejects the opportunities and rewards of this world and throws in his lot with the people of God.

So those who in this day are married "in the Lord", and in particular those setting out together in that most happy relationship, should be encouraged to put first in their scale of priorities those things which are pleasing to the Lord. And, if there should be a little time left before the coming of the Lord, what can be more vital than the bringing up of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

---

**Commitment: Ittai (2 Samuel 15:19-23) (see also page 112)**

*"Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? . . . And Ittai answered the king, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.*

*And David said unto Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him."*

# New Tongues

JOHN BARNES

Mark 16:17

*This paper picks out practical consequences which should appear in our very manner of speaking, and which are pressed in Ephesians, in the important section which urges us to "walk worthy" of our high calling.*

Immediately prior to ascending to the right hand of God, the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples of those who should receive the testimony of the gospel, and some of the results of it in their lives. One of those was this: "They shall speak with new tongues". This is generally understood to refer to the Pentecostal gift of tongues, and since the text in Mark links this phenomenon with other miraculous gifts, such must be the case. There is no doubt that this and similar abilities were conferred on the brethren in the early days of the church, some receiving a certain gift, some another. However, the expression "new tongues" need not, perhaps, be limited to a facility in speaking alien languages; it may be understood in other ways. Certainly a Christian's old manner of speaking should no more mark him than his old manner of behaviour. The apostle Peter who, on one occasion, denied his Lord with oaths and curses, exhorts those who speak to do so as the oracles of God. The new life which the believer has received by the Holy Spirit should express itself in new ways, and since language forms an important part of how we express ourselves, we must expect sweeping changes there in the converted man. The three closing chapters of the epistle to the Ephesians make a number of references to these important changes.

## 1. Speaking the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15,25

The teachings of the heathen world are founded on falsehood. The outstanding defect of paganism is the absence of truth and of light. Its doctrines are untrue, its way of life is false and its vaunted systems empty of hope. The great doctrine of Ephesus, so much emphasised in the city, was that of the goddess Diana and of an image which *fell down* from Jupiter. That is man's falsehood; but this chapter of Ephesians sets before our minds God's truth concerning the risen Lord who *went up*: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things" (4:10). In the sphere of Christian teaching there is no need to resort to fictions to "bolster up the cause"; we need only to speak the truth. Man has to dramatise his fictions, but there is no need to dramatise Christian truth; it is astounding just as it is. What can be higher than all heavens? What is more extensive than all things? What is greater than all power? Prior to their conversion, the Ephesian brethren had

lived in a world of fantasy, but the apostle urges them to have done with those standards and to move wholly into the sphere of reality, and to communicate with one another in the new tongues of truth and love which mark the Christian company off from the world.

## **2. Speaking pure words. 4:29.**

In the pagan world "corrupt communications" were all too common, perhaps even accepted as normal. The Ephesian believers had been reared in that atmosphere and consequently were inured to it, but the instructed apostle warns them of the danger of tolerating such conversation among them. What had marked them as citizens of heathen Ephesus was no longer suitable to them as members of the body of Christ and His members. Corruption is the opposite of edification. Corruption breaks structures down; edification builds them up. There is a huge abundance of good things in the wealth of the Christian treasury to occupy us in our conversations. New tongues may speak of the new interests into which grace has brought us. These include every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ of which chapter 1 speaks. In the heavenlies the atmosphere is clear of the dust and smoke of the earthlies and none of man's corruptions rise to that level.

## **3. Speaking kindly. 4:31,32.**

It seems reasonable to apply this text to speaking since it is contrasted with bitterness which expresses itself in words. The angry clamour of the world is a spirit we should be glad to be rid of. The man of earth is not marked by divine features. Paul describes to Titus (3:3) the character of unsaved man as, "hateful and hating one another", and shows how, in sharp contrast to this, God has acted towards man in kindness and love. Man's history is black with avarice, viciousness and violence. Paul refers to God's philanthropy (Titus 3:4). This is a divine feature to be taken on by the believer in a practical way, and speech corresponding to this feature, considerate and kind, is to mark us rather than the quarrelsome bitterness of the world. Here is a new tongue which we do need to cultivate. To its shame the Christian church has too much been like the world in its language. Bitterness and sarcasm should have no place in Christian conversation.

## **4. Speaking gratefully. 5:4.**

Gratitude is a feature largely missing from man's attitude towards God. The Christian gladly recognises that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father. He bestows rich favours upon men but few care to acknowledge the fact. Men seem to feel that they somehow deserve any such favours. How exceptional it is to hear someone say, "God has been good to me".

All sorts of rubbish fills conversation in general, and even those

who are not foolish or even filthy are sometimes utterly banal. A businessman who had taken shorthand notes of drawing-room conversations in the boarding house in which he lived, over a number of years, on reading them over at a later date noted that no one had said anything that was worth saying. We believers have things to discuss which contribute genuine substance to a conversation. Paul mentions the "world to come whereof *we speak*". This is an altogether different subject of conversation. When we were absorbed in this world and its tawdry affairs, this is what we spoke about, but a wholly new outlook has given us new topics of conversation. We should note that our conversation is not unimportant; it matters. It was through hearing the pious conversation of some Christian women that John Bunyan was stirred to an exercise which led to his conversion.

### **5. Speaking harmoniously. 5: 18, 19.**

In verse 18, Paul refers to drunkenness. Alcohol is a well-known loosener of the tongue, but drunken talk is dangerous and discordant. The apostle urges the saints to be filled with the Spirit and to live in a region of spiritual harmony as suggested in verse 19. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are his proposed antidote to the raucous discord of the public house. Artificial stimulation can be produced by means other than alcohol, and our environment today has much of this to offer; but for the believer, the Holy Spirit would promote harmonious communications of the kind Paul mentions.

### **6. Speaking of Christ and the assembly. 5:32.**

God's great interest in heaven is Christ, His beloved Son, and He has set Him there in supreme glory; His great interest on earth at this time is the church, formed by the Holy Spirit, and He has set it here in testimony. The Ephesians had once engaged in conversation at least profitless, if not corrupt. At that time it was part of their way of life and its expressions were commonplace to them. We are painfully aware of a massive resurgence of evil in speech today in our society. Any part in this is to be carefully eschewed by the believer. Paul says, "I speak concerning Christ and the church". We are, of course, aware of what he means by this in the context of Ephesians 5, but it is certain that this is what Paul did continually speak about, write about and pray about. What subjects in which to engage our hearts! Here are new tongues, new topics such as angels desire to look into, new regions in which to launch our renewed minds. When we speak of Christ, the sphere of thought is so vast, so rich, so complex, that it is remarkable we are not even more astonished at its sheer infinitude. The most instructed Christians have felt that they have touched only the fringe of this. God has brought redeemed man into the closest relationship with Himself. The attendant blessings of this relationship are immeasurable, and lift Christian conversation to entirely new

levels of instruction and pleasure.

### **7. Speaking of the mystery of the Gospel. 6:20.**

When we first meet Saul of Tarsus in Scripture, he was bad news, and was already committed to a course of opposition to the Lord Jesus and to the saints. When we next read of him he was spitting venom and his bitter tongue was using vitriolic and threatening language against all who followed the Saviour in the way of life. In his hatred of the name of Jesus he joined others of similar outlook in a campaign of violence against the saints. However, in Ephesians 6 we find him speaking with a renewed tongue, and his desire was to be free, boldly to make known the name and fame of the Person whom he once relentlessly opposed. He sought the support of the brethren in his longing to announce the glad news of Christ openly and boldly. He had willingly used his energies and his tongue in an attempt to obliterate the name of Jesus; now, all he wished to do was to honour that name and make it known as widely as possible. For this he was now an ambassador in bonds. We hear no complaints about discomforts or ill treatment; only of his wish to speak of his Lord.

In our days there has been a revived interest in “tongues” and kindred subjects, and many believers ask, “Are we missing something we should be involved with? Should we commit ourselves to these movements?” Well, if we have ambitions to speak in new tongues, the scope for these activities in the ways suggested is great. There was a place for the gift of tongues, and in its proper sphere, used spiritually, it was of great value; but the need for new tongues in this Ephesian sense is great today in every walk of life.

# **The Calling of God in Peter’s Epistles**

**R. A. CREETH**

*Again, in this paper, important practical consequences in the lives of believers are picked out, as stressed in the first place by Peter in his epistles.*

Abraham furnishes us with an outstanding example of a man called of God. The “God of glory” appeared to him when he was in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2) where his family worshipped “other gods”, the idols of the Gentile nations (Joshua 24:2). It was out of this state of idolatry that God called Abram, when He said to him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee”

(Genesis 12:1). When Abram obeyed the call he was separated from all that had surrounded him previously. He went forth entirely dependent upon the God who had so remarkably made Himself known to him. Similarly, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today is called of God. The apostle Peter takes up this thought, and in his two epistles we can trace seven references to the believer's calling.

### **Called to holiness**

In chapter 1:15 we read, "As He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation". As "children of obedience" (in contrast to the "children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) we are not to be conformed to former lusts, but because the Holy One has called us, so we are to be holy in all our conduct and behaviour, for it is written "Be ye holy, as I am holy". What an incentive to practical holiness this is! The Holy One Himself has called us, and we are to manifest His holy character in all our ways.

A further incentive is given in verses 18-19. Not only are we called by the God of holiness, but we are redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ. How this should exercise us to walk here circumspectly, and to ensure that our manner of life bears the stamp of practical holiness consistent with our calling!

### **Called to show forth the excellencies of Christ**

In chapter 2 verse 9 Peter writes, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises fo Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". Abram was called out of idolatry to represent the true God in this world, so the believer is called out of the moral darkness of this world to manifest the virtues of the One who has thus called him. What a challenge this is to those who are the Lord's chosen race, a people for His own possession!

Notice that Peter speaks of a twofold priesthood. First there is the *holy priesthood* of believers to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (verse 5). Let us remember that the Father seeketh worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), and as holy priests we have the privilege of offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15).

But if we are holy priests Godward, we are also *royal priests* manward to show forth the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The whole world lies in moral darkness, as our Lord indicated to those who came to arrest Him in the garden, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness". But as believers we can give thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness,

and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:12-13). We were sometime darkness, but now are we light in the Lord (Ephesians 2:8). We therefore walk in the light, as He is in the light, and it is our privilege and responsibility to display in our lives the excellencies of the One who has called us into this wonderful light.

### **Called to suffering**

In chapter 2:20-21 we read, "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps".

The Lord Jesus had forewarned His disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you", and again, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:19-20). Separation from an evil world may well bring reproach and suffering. If so, let us remember that it is given unto us in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).

Peter speaks of suffering for conscience sake, for righteousness sake and for Christ's sake, but a Christian ought never to suffer for his own sin. Why is this? Because Christ has suffered for our sins, and He has given us a new nature which cannot sin (see 1 John 3:9).

Who suffered like the Lord Jesus at the hands of wicked men? Yet He put His case entirely into the hands of God, who judgeth righteously. We should do the same, and as good soldiers of Jesus Christ be ready to take our share in suffering (2 Timothy 2:3, J.N.D. translation). May we too remember earnestly in our prayers those of the Lord's people who for His sake are suffering persecution in other lands.

### **Called to blessing**

In chapter 3:9 the apostle writes, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrarywise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing".

When God called Abram He said to him, "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). We too are called to inherit a blessing and to dispense blessing. God has blessed us abundantly, and we are able to live in the realisation and enjoyment of this blessing, blessed as we are with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). As thus blessed we are called to minister blessing to others, to be channels of blessing wherever we go. Did not our Lord imply this when on the last day of the feast He cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38)? May we seek to answer to the Lord's desire that we should be channels

through whom the blessing of God might flow unhinderedly to those around us.

### **Called to God's eternal glory**

At the close of his first epistle, Peter writes, "But the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, Himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground: to Him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages" (1 Peter 5:10-11, J.N.D. translation). Called by God Himself, the Holy One, to practical holiness, into His marvellous light, to suffering and to blessing — all this in the present time. What of the future? We are called to His eternal glory. "For our light affliction", says Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". The "God of glory" who called Abraham has called us to His eternal glory, and meanwhile as the "God of all grace", the illimitable resources of His grace, are available to us in our pilgrim path down here.

### **Called by glory and virtue**

There remain two further references to the believer's calling in Peter's second epistle. In chapter 1:3 he writes, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called to (or by) glory and virtue".

We are the subjects of a divine operation working in us and providing us with all things necessary to a life suited to God, characterised by moral likeness to Him. We become assured of this by a deepening acquaintance with the One who sets His own glory and excellence before us, thus calling us to pursue glory as our object. Our calling is therefore the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). Awakened to our lost estate by nature as coming short of the glory of God, and now redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Heeding the divine call we leave all for Him who died for us and now lives for us as the Glorified Man in the glory of God.

### **Making our calling and election sure**

The last reference to our calling occurs in verse 10 of the first chapter. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure". We need to be diligent to keep the reality of our calling ever present before our minds. It is God's calling, and therefore all is secure and unchanging on His side, but we need to make it sure to ourselves so that we have the assurance of it in our own souls, and to make it evident to those around us whose eyes are constantly upon us that we have indeed been called of God. We make our calling and election sure by the conscious knowledge that we have eternal life through faith in His Word, and by a life of practical godliness as outlined in the earlier verses. If we put into practice these things we shall not fall, but have an abundant

entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (verse 11).

I believe that this has a present application in that as we are walking in practical consistency with our high calling there is nothing to weigh upon the conscience, and nothing to dim the vision of the future glory, and we have the enjoyment of it as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We thus anticipate in rich measure the everlasting kingdom. The entrance is abundantly furnished to us.

---

**Ittai (see also page 104)**

“Wherefore goest thou with me?”  
 Said the king disowned —  
 Said the king despised, rejected,  
 Disenthroned.

Then unto the crownless king  
 On the Kedron’s shore,  
 All the wilderness before him,  
 Ittai swore.

“As the Lord lives and the king,  
 Ever lord to me,  
 Where in death or life he dwelleth  
 I will be.”

“Go — pass over;” spake the king;  
 Then passed Ittai o’er;  
 Passed into the place of exile  
 From the shore.

He and all his little ones,  
 Granted by that word,  
 Shame, rejection, homeless wandering  
 With their lord.

“Go — pass over;” words of grace,  
 Spoken, Lord, to me,  
 That, in death or life, where Thou art  
 I might be.

(quoted from **Hymns of Ter Steegen and Others**)

# To the Seven Churches (1)

TOM TYSON

*"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."*

*Addresses on Revelation 2 and 3, given in Otley in Autumn, 1986. These words from our Lord, came through His servant John in the first place. As we listened to our brother, they were found to be searching and humbling; and his comments are now revived in print so that their message may reach a wider circle. This first paper includes general words about all the messages to the churches; the remaining six should be shorter.*

## 1. EPHESUS

The book of Revelation is described as a prophecy (chapter 22:19). In the early chapters John records messages to seven churches, existent at the time, from the Lord Jesus, using His servant as the channel. Also, what is written to each church is to be conveyed to all the churches. Every message is "what the Spirit says to (all) *the churches*".

So, both these chapters (2 and 3) take a comprehensive view, and are directed to the church of all time, and all ages. To the current application (to the seven local churches in Asia Minor) must be added a view of the whole church. With hindsight, there is little difficulty in seeing the whole of church history in the sequence of developments appearing here. This is consistent with the prophetic nature of the whole book. But, all of it is for all in the Christian profession today. Furthermore, much is said, from the Lord, which addresses the individual here, and we must not lose sight of what is for ourselves personally (whether to commend or to correct) in all of these messages. Indeed, my main intention, in these talks, is to bring out what applies to *ourselves*, particularly, here and now.

The first three letters follow a kind of sequence, while the last four have some sequential pattern, but have also to be considered more as a unit, since they plainly envisage states of conduct, picked out by the Lord,

which will run on — side by side — to the very end of the Church period. All of those letters refer to the coming of the Lord, as the terminus of the opportunity to take note of His call. The letters to these churches will now be covered, one by one. We shall see how plain and direct are His words, for our help and obedient acceptance. May we receive their correction, and their support, when there is something of that kind for us.

## Ephesus

Of the seven churches, only references to Ephesus appear elsewhere in the N.T. (apart from very minor references to Thyatira and Laodicea).

At Ephesus the arrival of the Christian message, the first visit by Paul, was accompanied by prominence of the Holy Spirit in the work (Acts 19). Disciples there only knew of John's baptism, but needed to be instructed further. Soon Paul moved out from the synagogue, and the believers took a separated place. Miraculous gifts were in evidence, as often in the transition period. There was strong opposition too — the Diana-worshippers were upset, especially those that made a profit from it. A great uproar took place, and the multitude had to be called to order. Later, much is known about the church at Ephesus, well-founded as indeed it was. Paul's last words to the Ephesian elders are poignant words, with much to strengthen them, yet also with a touch of foreboding in his own spirit. His epistle to the Ephesians has little of correction, but touches some of the mountain-peaks of Christian truth and experience.

And yet, in *this* letter to Ephesus, long after Paul finished his course, all is not well, though the Lord Jesus has much to commend too. But first, the manner of the opening of these letters is to be noticed.

Each time, attention to the Lord Jesus is drawn in a particular way. Mostly, features of His splendour, seen by John in the view of Himself given to John in Chapter 1, are picked out — different features in each case. These are seen to be suited to the message which follows, and to the condition of that church exposed in that message. Each time, also, the message is conveyed through John, and is directed to the 'angel' of the church. The word 'angel' means 'messenger' — so that probably this intends the element within the church responsible enough to receive and transmit it, i.e. the bearer(s) of the message to the whole church.

These messages come from the Lord, and are addressed to assemblies on earth; messages which have to do with their testimony here, their proper function as light-bearers here. *He*, the Lord, walks amid the candlesticks, and holds the seven stars. Whatever goes on there, in the churches, He sees — and He is the One ultimately in control. He notices *all*. He discerns with absolute thoroughness — making our responsibilities perfectly clear.

Always, notice, He commends first what He sees as commendable, and follows it with His criticisms (where that is needed). Surely this is a good principle, an important model. Paul uses this principle too, we can trace it in many of his letters. How often the correcting, rebuking,

manner is first in the field in our ways with our brethren. But how important to bear in mind that *the Lord* scans all the details of our lives — our personal lives, *and* our assembly lives. There is no hiding from Him, nor any pretence either. But He is liberal with His approval too. Let us keep awake to the truth that we “walk before Him”, whose assessments are just and right.

So first, alluding to Ephesus now, He says “I know your works”. There are many commendable things here. “Your labour”, meaning *hard work*. They were spiritually labouring for Him. In Nehemiah’s day there were those who “had a *mind* to work”. In fact they “put their necks to the *work*”. Do we know *anything* of this? Brethren, as those who seek to live for the Lord, we are not on a rest cure, not at a Conference, on a fortnight’s holiday! Their *patience*, their *endurance*, He approves too. Then, their clear awareness of evil conduct, they *could not bear* it; He shares this too. We have to draw a firm line about what is dishonouring to Him. Our day is one of mediocrity, of compromise, alas.

Then, false teaching and error came in from the top. The leadership can mislead. People were saying they were apostles, and were not. The Ephesian church had had a good look at this claim, and saw its falsity. Many plausible claims were made then, as now, but the Lord entirely agreed with their accuracy of judgment. They had *gone on*, in labour and in patience, bearing things for His Name’s sake. What a testimony the Lord gives to this church at Ephesus! How it challenges us, and makes us feel how *far* short we come. But how sad to read what ensues. “*Nevertheless*”, He goes on, “I have *against* thee”, and how *He* felt it, “thou has left thy first love”. It was no small thing to Him (the word ‘somewhat’ in the A.V. is a misleading addition). Here the Lord picks out what is apparent to no one else. Something *inward* is going on at Ephesus, apart from all the outward correctness. This is at the *root* of all the rot that will have to be exposed in later stages.

In Jeremiah 2:2, Jehovah says to Israel “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown”. This is similar, the Lord Jesus is saying to us “I remember your early days” — soon after our early first responses to Him, and the assembly as it was at first, the kind of assembly life as it was then. And He is saying “Where is it now?” Thy ‘first’ love would be better put as ‘best’ love. It is the same word as used in Luke 15, “Bring forth the *best* robe”. There was only one ‘best’ robe. And here is a love for Christ that brooks of *no* comparison. In that early youthful stage, Jehovah recalls that they (Israel) were *wholly* unto Him. And so, the overwhelming sense of our Lord’s matchless love for us, brings out the *best* love for Him. Once it did so, but what now? Ephesus was once a port at the mouth of a river, but now its ruins are seven miles from the sea. So silted up has that harbour become! It was blocked up — the flow had ceased. What a picture of what underlies downward trends in personal lives, in assembly life.

Remember, He says. He takes them (and ourselves) back to the departure point. He does not introduce anything *new* as a cure. No new ideas. They had *left* their chief love, (not *lost* it). Go back and get it where you left it, He says. *Repent*, and do thy first works. What a needful word is the word 'repent', and how little we like it! *He* sees our motives, and sadly the work can go on without this motivation. Do the first works, He says — do them in the first way. Do them for my Name's sake; do works motivated by deep love for Himself. What a challenge for us!

If the warning is ignored, our Lord will remove the candlestick, and their possibility as light-bearers for Him will be withdrawn — a solemn consideration indeed. This removal of the testimony will only ensue after long patience on His part. It is, of course, not an eternal removal of truly converted persons, however unfaithful, here envisaged. That could never be. But it is very serious nonetheless. But He returns to commendation. "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate". He hates sin, and sinful deeds — not persons. We need to be like Him in this. We have to abhor sin, and sinful acts, but not sinners. These are strong words, but He is the example for us. The Nicolaitanes are not clearly specified. Perhaps the understanding that thinks of them as those who disgrace the Christian testimony by licentious behaviour — who in effect deny their confession in this way, may be intended.

But our Lord finishes with a promise, a reward to the individual believer. This is a common pattern in all these addresses. "*He that hath ears to hear*" picks out each one who hears, and acts accordingly. The Spirit through these words speaks to the churches — our part is to obey, judging and heeding our Lord's words. The overcomer is to partake of the tree of life, in the Paradise of God above. Man was cut off from the tree of life in Eden, but it is in God's purpose that there should be partakers of it. Of course, every true believer *will* eat of that tree, but the Lord wants us (as overcomers) to enter into this 'eating' now, with eternal life not only possessed, but *enjoyed* now.

---

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart:  
Prove me, and know my thoughts:  
And see if there be any grievous way in me;  
And lead me in the way everlasting."  
(Psalm 139:23,24 N.Tr.)*

A prayer for the Lord to speak to **me** as I approach Scripture, and as I meditate on any paper in *Scripture Truth*. Not least we should find that this prayerful habit of heart and mind will help us in reading the foregoing paper, and those in the sequence which will (DV) follow. The Editor found it searching indeed.

# “Empty Lives” (2)

A. M. CHAMBERS

## A Talk to Women (continued)

*“And of His fulness have all we received . . . and grace upon grace.”*  
*(John 1:16)*

*The remainder of the recorded talk begun in the previous issue.*

### The emptiness of sorrow and bereavement

Well, some of us may say; Yes we know that. We’ve found that the plenteous grace of the Lord Jesus does indeed cover all our sin. But sometimes even Christians find emptiness in their lives. Christians experience bereavement, disappointed hopes, loneliness. They know as much of this as non-Christians feel. We know that there is grace to cover all our *sin*; is there grace to cover all our *sorrow* too? Well, we find that in another chapter — in the eleventh chapter of John. Again, I ask you to read that chapter when you go home — you probably know it well. Read it again. And there you’ll find the grace upon grace, the waves of God’s caring love, shown in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those two sisters, Martha and Mary, had been bereaved. Their lives were emptied of the love and companionship of their brother. Evidently they were a very close family. They were not only bereaved — they were, I think, a bit disillusioned. You see, they had sent for the Lord Jesus, who was their friend. They had sent for Him as soon as their brother was sick. And He hadn’t come! They had expected Him to come because, wasn’t He going about healing the sick? And He loved them! Surely He would come — but He didn’t come, until it was *too late*. He came too late; the brother had died. And both those sisters said the same thing to Him. They said, each of them; *if you had been here, my brother would not have died, and what they really were saying was, “Why weren’t you here?”* Have you ever thought like that — when there has been something in your life you hadn’t expected, that you didn’t think you deserved? Something you think the Lord might have stopped happening in your life, and He didn’t. Have you said (as I have) *Why? Why? Why?* They were saying to Him *“Why weren’t you here? If you had been here, this wouldn’t have happened”*.

The Lord Jesus gave them a *tremendous* answer. *Again* He presents Himself. To that woman for whom He waited, He said *“I am the One you’re looking for”*, to fill your empty life. To these sisters, to whom it seemed it was *the end*, when their loved brother died, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life”*. What a *stupendous* statement for anyone to make — in the

face of death and sorrow! To these bereaved, sad, women He says "I am the Resurrection and the Life". And if we believe *that*, we know that His authority covers everything in this life, everything in this world, *and* in the world to come. Here in this chapter you find that He can speak to people on both sides of the grave. He speaks to Mary and Martha on this side of the grave. He speaks to Lazarus on the other side of the grave. *Both* can hear Him, and both can respond. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" — and what He is saying to these sisters, and so to you and to me, is this: There is no point in your life at which you have to say "This is *the end*". Oh! women often say that — when women lose their husbands, or lose a child, or are deeply disappointed in some way. How often we, as women, say "this is the end". *It never is*, if we know Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. *Never* do we have to say "this is the end" — because His grace, His grace upon grace, the caring love of the Lord Jesus, covers *this* life, *and* the life to come.

But in that story there is something almost more wonderful, I think, than His power. Of course He spoke, and He spoke Lazarus back from the grave; as one day He's going to speak, and *all* that are in the graves will hear His voice. But on this occasion He spoke to Lazarus, and Lazarus heard His voice and came forth. And He knew He was going to do that! But yet we read this. When He saw Mary — *one* woman, one individual woman (and He's the same yesterday, and today, and for ever)—one single woman, *weeping*, it says "Jesus wept". The One who *waited* for one woman, *wept* with another! *This* is what God is like. This is the caring God, who can fill *any* emptiness in our lives. There was His caring, and His sympathy, when this emptiness came into their lives. How can the world *fill* the emptiness of real sorrow? What comfort can this world give in sorrow? I remember reading about a very well-known film star, now dead, but his name was known worldwide. Various VIPs had been asked what they were most afraid of. You'd be surprised what some were afraid of. But this man said that what he feared most was the thought of *death*. And he added, especially when the thought comes to me in the middle of the night. But then, he said, I reach for that *unfailing consolation* — *a cigarette!* When I read that, I almost wept. I thought, poor man, poor man indeed — *that* consolation will fail you one day. Oh! how sad to be relying on the kind of comfort, the kind of consolation, that this world can give you, when there is waiting the sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who says "I am the Resurrection and the Life", and yet, because He knows we are weeping, is ready to weep with us.

Waiting for one woman, weeping with another. Oh! yes, this is grace upon grace; this is God's caring love for individuals. *Wonderful* that He knows every single woman here, and every circumstance in every woman's life. He knows it all!

### **The emptiness of idleness and unfruitfulness**

I am now thinking of another area, in which Christians sometimes find an

emptiness. There's a delightful incident, put on as a kind of post-script in John's Gospel—in the 21st chapter. It is as if the Holy Spirit said to John, when he'd finished writing — as it seems he had done at the end of chapter 20 — don't let them miss that other bit! And so we get the lovely story in chapter 21.

We find there were seven disciples, Peter and six others. And they were back at the lake of Galilee. Now, they'd had a *wonderful* time. They'd seen some amazing things. They had actually seen that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, for whom the whole Jewish nation was waiting. They knew that. Peter had said that — we know you're the Messiah, we know you're the Christ. They had actually seen that He *is* the Resurrection and the Life. And then, things came to a sudden lull — and nothing was happening. He had said, Go to Galilee, and I'll meet you there. Sometimes, you know, we have a wonderful time, at a Convention, or at some Bible Reading, or at some meetings of some kind. We go home, and we come down with a thud, because there's nothing happening. We like there to be some kind of excitement, don't we? We like some kind of stirring going on and, you know, it isn't always so.

So these disciples, after all their experiences, here they are — beside the Lake of Galilee — and nothing is happening! In all our lives there are times spiritually when nothing seems to be happening. These disciples, apparently, got rather disappointed, and I think perhaps rather *bored*. Because Peter suddenly says "I'm going fishing", and they said "Righto! we'll come along". Do you see what was happening to them? They were *back where they started*. That was where the Lord called them from. Fishing. Fishing on the lake of Galilee.

And they were back — because, don't suppose they were the only boat on the lake that night. There'd be all their old mates there, you know. Their old mates would say, Hello! You back again. You've been away for a while, haven't seen you for nearly three years. Didn't think it would last! Can't you imagine that that's what they were saying. Back where they'd *started*. Oh! how often we get like that. We've had a special time, and then it all gets very dull somehow. And sometimes we even wonder whether we're Christians at all! They were disappointed. And then — suddenly — in all that dullness and gloom, there's Someone on the shore. Someone who calls out to them. Have you caught anything? Have you had a catch? And, you know, you can almost hear *all* the disappointment in that *one* monosyllable. No! They just say, No. And the Person on the shore says "Put down your nets, on the right side, and you'll get a catch". Do you see that He was doing? He was *repeating* the miracle that He did at the first. You read about that in Luke 5. It is exactly the miracle that He did when He called them. And now, in His resurrection life, He's doing the same thing — He's saying, I'm the same person, I'm the same One, Jesus Christ the Same. And when the nets are *full*, after their disappointing night, John says "It is *the Lord*". Only *one* Person, when we are at the lowest

ebb in life — when we are at the lowest ebb in our *Christian* life — only the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we ourselves find Him in His word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, only *He* can lift us out of the gloom. It is *the Lord*. Only the Lord can do that.

I'm thinking of some missionaries, disappointed missionaries, and there are plenty of them. I think of some preachers, that go on preaching, and perhaps see very little result — disappointed missionaries, disappointed preachers, Sunday-school teachers, not seeing much result — thinking perhaps, Is my service for the Lord empty? Nothing seems to be happening. I'm thinking of some parents, and some grandparents, who have prayed for many years — for children, for grandchildren, and they haven't seen any results. It seems as if prayer is empty, because they're not seeing any outcome. You know, a *wonderful* day is coming when *the Lord* will stand on the shore; and with *amazed joy* we shall look up and say "It is the Lord", "It is the Lord". I think He will show us then how *full* are the nets that we thought were empty. I'm looking forward to that day!

Empty hearts, empty lives, empty nets. He can fill them *all!* The One who *waited* for one woman, who *wept* with another, and who *worked* with these disillusioned, disappointed disciples (because we read in Mark 16 of the Lord working with them), *He* is the One — He presents *Himself* to us, so that all emptiness in life, in whatever area it lies, can be filled. In His own person is the answer. *They* saw Him, and we, one day, shall see Him actually; and then we shall know how true are the words "I am He", "I am the Resurrection and the Life", "It is the Lord"; and there won't be any empty hearts then!

Back in the late 1800s a well-known and eminent politician, John Morley (later Viscount Morley), was given a Parliamentary Dinner in his honour. General Booth (of the Salvation Army) began his work in those times, and in some circles he was much despised. At the dinner, one of the guests, thinking to raise a laugh, made a sneering remark about General Booth, which was heard by all. Lord Morley said "If I believed what that man believes — that the *Son of God* came down from heaven, to die on a cross so that I could go to heaven — if I believed *that*, then I would never write, or think, about *anything* else". That was what an unbeliever thought believers should be. I wonder if we think that way. Does this *fill* our hearts? If so, there'll be no empty hearts, no empty lives, and (praise God!) no empty nets, when we say "It is the Lord".

---

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

(Proverbs 25:11)

"The Preacher' sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth."

(Ecclesiastes 12:10)

# Created, Formed, Made (1)

COLIN CURRY

*"I have created him for my glory, I have formed him: yea, I have made him."*  
(Isaiah 43:7)

*The above-quoted verse sends our thoughts back to Genesis, and onwards too into the NT. We cover these matters in three papers. Readers of the first paper may well divide into two classes. Younger persons with a serious interest may want more on Genesis 1 and 2 than we have covered. At least what has been said is factual, attending to the different meanings carried by each of the three words. We have not gone beyond straight Scriptural statements here. The basic things centring on the three words are critical things, firmly to be maintained. But, while the whole saga related in the two chapters is true, and conveys deep impressions of the majesty of God, much of the detail is less open to sure comment on what it intends. Persons of spiritual judgment do not all say the same things. Wild statements, too, can be made by well-intentioned people.*

*Other persons may have little patience with all this. They are so sure of God, as One far more than Creator, that any close considerations seem hardly worth pursuing. Schemes of understanding of the chapters are commonly accepted without much close examination. We suggest that such persons may be better suited with later papers; the writer is keen on the later material too! But he feels that this first paper highlights a few vital points which could be helpful to some, and perhaps awaken interest on all sides, bringing some spiritual profit with it.*

The words in the title are close in meaning. In ordinary usage they might seem to be interchangeable. For instance, we could overlook their separate appearances in the opening chapters of Genesis. That they *must* carry some distinctions, however, is clear from the above-quoted verse from Isaiah. The same phrase is repeated, each time making a slightly different point by use of the three different verbs. The whole is a grand sovereign statement from God, in three parts, spoken in an impressive way that cannot be controverted. What He wills to do, is as good as done!

To move quickly to what is believed to underlie these verbs, we quote the same passage, including the previous verse, from another translation. The book *Studies in Isaiah*, by F. C. Jennings (much to be recommended), attempts to preserve the poetry of the Hebrew, and translates it thus:

“Bring back my sons from afar off,  
 From the ends of the earth my daughters,  
 Yea, leave none behind who are called by My name  
 Whom I, for My glory, *created*,  
 Have *fashioned*, yea *finished* completely.”

Here is a better indication of what is involved in the choice between these words. Though *creation* may be used as a blanket word covering all God’s activity, primarily its emphasis is on the start of something entirely new. It did not exist beforehand; *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) is the Latin term often used. To *make* is often broadly used, but the thought of bringing to perfection, of completing what is in mind, is frequently prominent. The emphasis is more on the finishing of the matter than on the start (though the whole may be in mind from the beginning). Genesis 2:3 is interesting — on the seventh day God rested from all His work “which He had created and made”. Literally the words are “which He had created *to make*” (see footnote to New Tr.). This seems in keeping with the above-mentioned understanding of the words.

The word *formed* is different again. Not the start, nor the end-point, is in mind here; but rather the process leading from start to finish. A vessel which a potter produces exists first in his mind; but with material to shape, and skilful hands to do it, it passes over into a perfect real object, a tribute to his skill. Forming a thing is the biblical word for a potter moulding the clay — and this progressive *process* is usually in mind wherever the Bible employs the word.

We shall refer first to the use of these words in Genesis 1 and 2, pointing out a few obvious things for consideration, some of which tend to be overlooked. In Paper 2 we shall dwell on the grandeur of the statement in Isaiah; on Jehovah’s great intentions for Israel in the purest of sovereign grace — so sure this is that none could ever gainsay or resist what He will do. Later still (in Paper 3) we must see that the same verbs, the same ideas, and the same grace which (if possible) is more astounding still, are found in the NT too! We Christian believers know about this grace. It had us in plan for the highest of blessings in Christ. God has set this work afoot, in purpose and in sovereignty, through Christ alone. We know about it now to some degree, and will be involved in its climax and fulness soon.

## **Genesis 1 and 2**

The word *create* is used sparingly in these opening chapters. It appears in 1:1, 21, 27. Elsewhere in the two chapters it occurs in 2:3, 4, though these only recapitulate from chapter 1. We rightly take issue with many views about origins, but the non-eternal nature of *matter* is held by almost all. Whatever else, with *this* Scripture agrees, that there was a beginning, a start, a creation (verse 1). Of created things, nothing existed before zero time. “The worlds were framed by the word of God”, is the unequivocal

Scriptural statement on what happened at the very start, something which faith understands (Hebrews 11:3). There is no alternative understanding. Speculations abound in this realm, but do not deserve the status of knowledge. Faith believes that God *is*, and it is a small step further to *understand* how contingent things came into being. Ignoring Him, abstruse theorisings about origins may engage the minds of some; but a change from nothing into something, a complete *discontinuity* so radical as *this*, is something science should recognise as beyond its province, confessing its ignorance. All things, by their very existence, testify to their Creator: how sad it is that in discussing these things the challenge of their very existence is often ignored.

In two more contexts in these chapters the word *create* is used. Among many special things narrated here, these look like major turning-points — beginnings of something outstandingly new. These are: *living* creatures (1:21); and *man* (1:27). The origins of *life* have also in fairly recent times been the subject of much speculation. There was a time when 'spontaneous generation' was, in ignorance, believed to happen. But careful experimentation (Pasteur principally) showed how unfounded such a belief was. Today, with the amazing complexities of biochemical molecules, and biological replication processes — marvellous in themselves — the thought is still entertained of possible earlier changes and developments within these structures; the imagined first steps in a transition from what is non-living to what is living. Theorising is an important ingredient in all this advanced thinking. But inevitably it has to remain unproven. On-the-spot experimentation on these matters is not feasible, as it had been in Pasteur's experiments. On the *creation of life* we can have every confidence in what the Bible says. We believe it because God says it, and because it is such a marvellous thing, worthy of God to initiate and to sustain.

That *man* is a separate creation of God is clearly stated. Up to a point, similarities exist between the physical life-processes of men and some animals. But the distinctions between a man and even a so-called 'higher' animal are many, though not often drawn attention to. There is good reason for saying that, even from the standpoint of observation, a great gulf separates the two categories. The Bible says the distinction is fundamental — man is a freshly-created and distinctively-created part of God's handiwork. Particularly, according to the Bible, man is a *spiritual* being, capable of awareness of God, of recognition of God, and of response to God. Fallen man, of course, often behaves in ways which ignore God, with his spiritual capacities well submerged and inactive: but God can act to stir even the hardest towards Himself. This kind of response is, at the very least, *latent* in a human being. At its highest, when a man is fully awake to God, think of David's words in Psalm 139 as just one example. Conscious of God's all-seeing eye, yet also of the wonder of His interest in him for good; thinking too of the fact that he himself is "fearfully and wonderfully made", how this elevates in his estimation the greatness of

God, and his thankfulness and strong desire to be entirely in His hands. Just imagine such thoughts passing through the mind of *any* animal!

Man is also a being with moral standards — with a sense of right and wrong, of what suits God, and what He abhors. That sense may be deadened, and almost obliterated, but it *is* part of the human make-up. Some say morals are only relative, that there are no blacks and whites, no basics in the matter of righteousness. They quickly abandon this when they personally feel to be wronged. *Real* right is felt to be violated when a person is hurt by another's action! Quick to judge when another acts wrongly, but slow to apply the same standards to oneself (see Romans 2:1): these are ways that man adopts since the fall, of course, to evade God's own high standards. Man alone moves in this area of experience.

There are other ways, also fairly self-evident, in which men are distinctive beings. The speech faculty, the thoughtful, cognitive, and reasoning abilities are some of these. If we start from man as we know him, all is in agreement with the Genesis statement that man is distinct, and *created*.

In these same chapters the only places where the word *formed* is used are in chapter 2:7,8 and 19. Significantly the creation (out of nothing) idea is not to the forefront in these verses. *Material* is used, and formed — 'the dust of the ground' when man is formed by the LORD God, while the beasts and fowls are formed 'out of the ground'. This is an area where it is too easy to make our favourite (and dogmatic) interpretations. We have seen that man at the start was created freshly and uniquely as a spiritual being. But perhaps this indication that he was *also* the product of a *process* entirely in the hands of God has been underplayed. It *is* there in Genesis, and we merely draw attention to it. The same is said of animals and birds. Of course an important additional statement comes in verse 7: it is *not* said in verse 19. A special kind of life is in human persons, in-breathed by special act of God.

In chapter 1, too, time-processes are being described. Progress is indicated, day by day, until a final stage is reached — until all has been *made*, i.e. finished. Step by step *making* of things is the general language employed. Perhaps this is no more than relating happenings in simple sequence, but if *making* carries the idea of 'completing' we may have to think of stages *completed* one by one. The evening-and-morning refrain, and the comment that all was good so far, seems to confirm this. Whatever these problems may be, it is absolutely plain that the whole project was planned, initiated, carried through, and finally finished to perfection. *God* did it all, He took counsel with none. He rested and was satisfied in His handiwork. Created things not only began, but were entirely *finished*. He *made* the worlds!

But soon, as it appears, a dark personage showed his hand, as in chapter 3, and the repercussions have gone very far. But God is in control still. He works all things according to His will, and to the praise of His

glory. These early chapters, before man's disobedience darkens the picture, do however set the scene for later things, and are needed as background for the marvellous considerations which will follow as we look at Isaiah and the New Testament.

# The Christian's Attitude to the Scriptures (5)

**E. BROWN**

*In the Introduction we said that, after considering the value and uses of the Scriptures, there would be a brief summary of the main resources available so that we may receive the maximum benefit from them. This now follows, along with a few practical suggestions.*

## **(iii) The Christian's main resources**

In any account of the resources available for our blessing, the Scriptures themselves must rank of prime importance. However, since this is the specific burden of these papers, no detailed further mention of them is now necessary.

### **(a) *The Holy Spirit***

We are not left to our own devices in determining what help and blessing the Scriptures bring to us. The only power by which, and by Whom, the Scriptures can be made good to us is the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us make no mistake. However much progress we are permitted to make in the field of Scripture, we shall never, of ourselves, have the capacity to search out the depths of God. Whatever level of spiritual maturity we may be enabled to gain, however much our senses are sharpened by reason of use (Hebrews 5:14), we shall never arrive at a point where we are established independent of the resources which God provides.

Let us remind ourselves of the words of the Lord Jesus to His own, emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit, as the One who can bring us into the power of the blessings the Scriptures contain:

“He (the Holy Spirit) . . . shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”. (John 14:26)

All this has been preserved to us in the gospels.

“*He shall testify of Me*”, “*Ye also shall bear witness*”. (John 15:26, 27)

How well this is seen to be fulfilled in the Acts of the Apostles, often called the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

“He will guide you into all truth”. (John 16:13)

He does this as we study the subject matter of *all* the NT epistles.

“He will show you things to come”. (John 16:13)

Prophetic elements in many of the Scriptures (in both the OT and the NT) are clear. These culminate especially in the book of Revelation in the heading up of all things there envisaged. Apprehension and appreciation is only by the Spirit.

Before leaving our Lord’s own words on the Holy Spirit, we may refer again last of all to John 15:26 and John 16:14 —

“He shall testify of *Me*”, “He shall glorify *Me*”.

These words focus for us the central intention of the Holy Spirit of God within us, wherever we may be meditating or studying within the Scriptural pages. He points us to *Christ* there, attaching us to *Him*, lifting *Him* up high in our estimation and loyalty. Any study that does no more than amass biblical information, systematising it (well, no doubt) in our minds and memories, is perhaps dubious as a product of the Spirit’s work in us.

We see then that we need *all* the Scriptures, and that the work of the Holy Spirit is vital in applying each and all of them to our hearts and lives.

Read again 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 to be reminded that by the Holy Spirit, and by Him alone, has the revelation of God been revealed, communicated, received and apprehended. The Scriptures He has inspired are His agent to that end. This solemn and necessary lesson we cannot afford to neglect.

#### (b) *Prayer*

If, in the Scriptures, *God* speaks to *us* (and He does),  
so, in prayer, *we* speak to *Him*.

*Prayer* is the vital counterpart and essential complement to *study*. Read your Bible — pray every day! Let us ask the Lord for His help in the study of the Scriptures. Surely the only spirit in which we can honestly expect to receive help in the understanding of the Scriptures is that of utter dependence. This dependence is expressed in prayer. We must pray for general help, and for particular help too to understand concepts, portions, verses, phrases, and even individual words, obscure to us at the moment.

Also, GIVE THANKS for help received, when we get it.

#### (iv) A few practical hints. (Do’s and Don’ts)

##### **DON’T**

II(i) expect to know all the answers straight away. As long as we are

in this life we shall, at best, "know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

- (ii) worry if the Bible is attacked. It is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.

(See Matthew 5:18 and 1 Peter 1:23).

## DO

- (i) read all the Scriptures (not just your favourite bits).
- (ii) study them regularly and consistently to a plan.
- (iii) saturate your mind in the Scriptures.
- (iv) always be willing to learn.
- (v) avail yourself of every possible opportunity to gather together with the Lord's people where there is the joy and privilege of seeking to *continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers* (Acts 2:42). These are the occasions and the environment in which the Scriptures are lived out and applied, in common with like-minded believers, and help us to apply our Christian principles in the outside world.
- (vi) *Use a notebook.* If you do not, you will forget many choice things you hear, read, or think about. We have finite minds, we must allow for our feebleness, so that we may return later, and enjoy in greater depth and detail something we have noticed but not pursued. Scripture itself tells us to "roast that which we have taken in hunting" (Proverbs 12:27).
- (vii) *A well-proven formula.* The identity of the person who first laid down these well-known criteria may be lost. But they are abidingly true. May we prove their worth for ourselves.

*Dig it up/Write it down/Pray it in/Live it out/Tell it forth*

"Ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them". (John 13:17)

## SHORT EXTRACTS

*“When therefore he (Judas) was gone out Jesus says, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately.”*  
(John 13:31-32 N.Tr.)

In the future, as Son of Man, He will receive dominion and an everlasting kingdom, and in that bright day the whole earth will be filled with His glory (Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 72:19). Even so, the excellent glories of the coming kingdom will not exceed, and cannot equal, His far deeper glories as the Son of Man upon the cross. The kingdom will display His **official** glories; the cross witnesses to His **moral** glories.

Truly every step of His path witnessed to His moral glories, for they could not be hid; but at the cross these glories shone in their full lustre. The One who learned obedience in every step of the way was at last tested by death and found “obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”. The perfect subjection to His Father’s will that marked His path has its brightest display amid the approaching shadows of the cross when He could say “Not my will, but thine be done”.

Every step bore testimony to His perfect love to the Father, but the supreme witness of His love is seen when in view of the cross He can say, “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do”. His holy nature is seen in its perfection when in anticipation of the agony of being made sin, He could say, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me”.

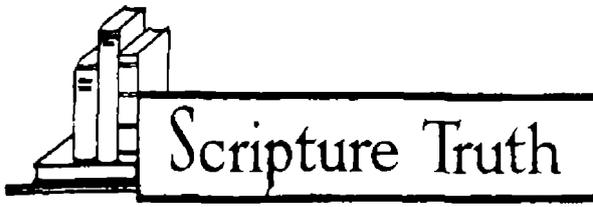
Truly at the cross His moral glories — His obedience, His subjection, His love, His holiness, and every other perfection — have their brightest display. There the Lord’s words were made good, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.”

(H. Smith, from *The Lord is Near* Calendar)

*“On this account my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment of my Father.”*  
(John 10:17,18 N.Tr.)

He **laid down** His life; no man took it from Him. It was a willing act of measureless love and complete self-giving. He did it Himself; His Father’s will was commandment to Him, such was the manner of His love. Love was **in command** there, and love was **obedient** too. Though it was true at all times, how perfectly the Father and the Son were at one in that hour of all hours. But the **mastery** of love was also shown there. He laid down His life, that He might take it again. Nothing could stand in the way of such supreme love; all adverse powers are outmatched by it.

(*Scripture Truth*, Vol. 47, p. 184, 1981: C.C.)



Incorporating *Words of Help*

MAY, 1987

## Peter at the Gate

*It is apparent that this is somewhat different from our usual papers. It is a thoughtful meditation on Peter's release from prison as described in Acts 12; linking that story with earlier happenings in Peter's experience. Its writer, a sister, seeks no prominence. Since this is pure and careful thinking around the Scriptural narrative itself, I feel it right to honour this expression of a private personal appreciation of this passage.*

The idea of St Peter sitting at the gate of Heaven with a bunch of keys, "vetting" the arrivals who apply for admission, still persists among the scrappy religious illusions of this post-Christian world. It was, of course, in the house of Cornelius that Peter faithfully used the Keys of the Kingdom committed to him by the Lord Jesus. We Gentile believers will always give thanks for that, and for the salvation that has reached us in consequence. It is striking, however, how often gates and doors do feature in Peter's story, with Peter not as doorkeeper, but on one side or the other, for good or ill.

The crucial events of Acts 10 begin with two men — the devout Cornelius and Peter — each separately in close communion with God. Obedient to the divine command, Cornelius sends men to Joppa. The three Gentiles stand at the gate of Simon the tanner's house. It is the threshold of an epoch in the unfolding of God's ways. How vital it is that the man they seek — a stranger to them — should be in direct touch with his Master! But the startling vision had been given, and its message absorbed, while Peter communed with God; only thus was he ready to obey when the "still small voice" commanded him to act. "Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them" (N.I.V.). He went down, and admitted them. The promise Jesus had made in Caesarea Philippi was about to be fulfilled: the keys of the Kingdom were being placed in Peter's hand. Two days later he would confidently use them in the house of Cornelius to give the Gentiles access to all the blessings of the Gospel of Christ.

True, Peter was a chosen vessel, his mission apostolic. But in our more obscure lives we surely come to experience, often when in prayer, that same still small voice of guidance or command, and the great peace and confidence it brings. And just as Peter's descent to open Simon the

tanner's door was in itself a mundane thing, so in our lives a simple act in obedience to the Lord can lead to great things, whether we realise it or not.

Peter's story in Acts 12 is full of interest. It holds all the touching human detail we might expect in Luke's inspired writings. From the miracle of his deliverance to the homeliness of its sequel, we can feel with Peter at every turn.

In verse 13 the popular image is, in fact, reversed. Peter himself stands knocking, at the "door of the gate" of Mary's house in Jerusalem. At night the main gates would be locked, barring the arched entrance leading to an inner court round which the house would be built. The "door of the gate" would be a small hinged opening in the larger gate, for admitting night visitors. Peter's blows would echo in the quiet, dark street, for this was in the middle of the night.

As he waited his mind must have been full of the events of the last hour. Flanked by two soldiers, he had been peacefully sleeping in the prison. He had learned to trust his Master. He would recall a previous imprisonment with the other apostles — recorded in Acts 3 — when the angel of the Lord had come and opened the doors of the prison and brought them out. Nor had he forgotten the words of the Lord during that lakeside walk in John 21: "Follow thou Me". Whatever happened, he would follow Him now, even to death, and no longer in his own imagined strength.

When the minister of God came like a flame of fire lightening the cell, Peter obeyed his brief commands like one in a dream. Roused, freed, shod and girded, he followed his unearthly deliverer past the guards and up to the iron outer gate of the prison. No challenge came — no doorkeeper appeared. Before the power of God the gate opened of itself, and a few moments later Peter found himself alone and free in the sleeping city. Only then did he realise that his deliverance was fact and not visionary. How often we, too, even when consciously cast upon the Lord in a difficulty, recognise only slowly His ways of deliverance! Some dreaded cloud is fast disappearing over the horizon, in a totally unexpected way — and thus we learn to leave the "how" to God.

Was it the same delivering angel on both occasions? Scripture is silent; only very rarely are these great, unfallen creatures named. It is all the more touching, therefore, that when Peter's knocking was answered, the Holy Spirit names the young girl who came to the door that night. It was Rhoda — a "damsel". The damsel raised by the Lord Jesus, whom He addressed as "little lamb", was about 12 years old. The daughter of Herodias, Salome, is described as a damsel. So Rhoda was probably in her early teens. Her reaction to the sound of Peter's voice is endearingly natural. Overcome with joy, she spins round and races back into the house with the news, forgetting to open the door.

Why should God allow such a detail as this to be recorded in His imperishable Word? It has been rightly pointed out that such details

are proof of the authenticity of the record, for no forger would concoct them! But they also give an insight into that great Heart whose delights are with the children of man, as individuals, and not merely humanity *en masse*. Furthermore, they make us stop and meditate, and find new treasure for our souls. So here, in verse 14, the words "she knew Peter's voice" have a familiar ring which attracts attention.

She knew his voice! Again we are taken back to Galilee in John 21, and the serious conversation as Peter and his Master slowly paced the shore. There Peter received his life's commission: "Feed My sheep; feed My lambs". He was to shepherd Christ's flock, both young and old. At Mary's door, with Peter on one side and the happy Rhoda on the other, we have some evidence that he had fulfilled his mission. He was now a notable man in Jerusalem. He had wrought miracles; people even sought to have his shadow falling on them as he passed. He had preached to the Gentiles at Caesarea, and raised Tabitha from the dead at Joppa. But to Rhoda — a lamb of the flock — he was no mere "grey eminence". She knew her earthly shepherd's voice, and was overjoyed, for she loved him. And who better than Peter, who knew what it was to stray and fall, and be tenderly restored by the Great Shepherd, to guide these young ones and nourish them in the faith? — Peter, who could write in his Epistle, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and bishop of your souls"?

And now, inside the house, Rhoda strives to convince her elders of the truth. She is met first with scorn, then with rationalisation. We are not much different from those early saints; and rather than condemning them, let us first ask ourselves when, if ever, we held an all-night prayer-meeting at a time of special need. We should rather, perhaps, be coveting their devotion.

Outside, Peter patiently, and one dares to say good-humouredly, carries on with his knocking. The contrast between the ease with which iron gates gave way before God's angel, and the problem of getting through this door at the hands of an impetuous young mortal, may have diverted his mind for a moment. Perhaps, however, a darker memory was stirred, of another door — the one to the courtyard of the High Priest's house on the night when Jesus was led away to trial and death. The servant girl had opened it readily at a word from Peter's more privileged friend John. Drawn by the warmth of the fire in the courtyard, Peter found himself standing with sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful, far from his Master, and surrounded by His enemies. No friendly faces there, no happy welcome — only searching looks by the firelight. No recognition of a loved voice — only glances exchanged as his Northern accent betrayed him. The fear of man gradually deflated Peter's self-confidence. It drove him out through the door into the porch again, after his first denial. As a nearby rooster crowed at dawn, he was confronted with the truth about himself, and shed bitter tears. In similar fashion believers down the years have learned the

hard way about the dangers of confidence in the flesh, and of friendship with the world.

The inconsistency of Peter's behaviour that night must have bewildered one person particularly: the High Priest's servant, Malchus. He had suffered from Peter's impetuous lunge with the sword during the arrest in Gethsemane. But their prisoner, disowning such defence, had restored his wounded ear immediately. Malchus must have ruminated deeply on that healing touch, and the quiet rebuke to his assailant. Such incredible mercy! — who was this Man? And now, here was his very attacker among them, vehemently disclaiming all knowledge of the Galilean — even to himself! Malchus must surely have been profoundly affected by his own encounter with Jesus; but Peter's false position in the courtyard, and his cowardice, sadly marred his own witness to Malchus. How vulnerable we all are in this way; Peter's story warns us to be on the alert. May it be that the grace of the Saviour prevailed over the failure of Peter, in the case of Malchus.

Was Peter for ever haunted by remorse over his fall? No! Now, as he waited at Mary's door, any recollection would surely be swiftly eclipsed by a healing thankfulness for the steadfast love of the Shepherd. The words of Psalm 23, "He restoreth my soul", had been proved by Peter. The prayer of the Lord that his faith would not fail; the look of sorrowing love at his moment of failure; the special mention of his name in the angel's resurrection message; the secret encounter with the risen Lord; the challenge and commissioning by Galilee; these were all steps in Peter's restoration, and had made him love his Master more than ever. If tears came to his eyes now, they were tears of gratitude for such grace.

At Pentecost the power of the Holy Spirit had transformed Peter as he boldly witnessed to the Jerusalem crowds. But the final seal on his restoration was surely in what immediately followed, banishing for ever the shadows of the gate of the High Priest's house. In Acts 3 Peter was with John, who had been a true friend, attentive and loyal through all Peter's troubles. Together they went up to the temple to pray. It was the Beautiful Gate they were approaching, where the crippled beggar lay; and it was there that Peter commanded the cripple to look on John and himself — he who had fearfully avoided the glances of the company in the courtyard. There he confidently spoke the Name he had denied with oaths. There, in the healing of the cripple, the first apostolic miracle took place. Imagine the exultation of Peter as he and John entered the Beautiful Gate with the healed man "walking, leaping and praising God" at their side! Surely he was given "beauty for ashes" that day. And what believer has not felt that same relief and joy when in His perfect ways the Lord has restored our fellowship after failure and despair!

So he stands at Mary's gate and waits, strengthened by these former gateway experiences. Rhoda prevails on the others at last. He hears voices and footsteps, the bolts are drawn, and he is revealed before the astonished eyes of the praying saints. The iron gate of Christ's persecutors had

opened of its own accord — not so this one. For God deals amongst His own more closely. They were His husbandry, and He would use this event to challenge and strengthen their faith as well as Peter's. We are all members one of another, and in one shared experience He will promote the fruits of the Spirit in each, according to his or her stage of growth.

So a hubbub of near-incredulous joy broke out among the believers at Mary's house in the night, and one of shock and dread among the Roman garrison at dawn — well-founded, for Peter's guards were executed.

When the gates of Death yielded before the triumphant Saviour, He entrusted the news of His victory to a woman — Mary Magdalene. Now, in this era of the early Church, the "gates of Hell" had, true to His promise, "not prevailed". And the joy of carrying the news to James and the brethren was given to those faithful praying ones to whom another Mary, John Mark's mother, had opened her house. It encourages us all, brothers and sisters alike, to continue in prayer, that spiritual weapon "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds".

# Fellowship

**GORDON HUGHES**

*The substance of an address given in London in May 1985. It is vital to back up and read Scriptural references as they occur.*

*One aspect of Christian fellowship is beautifully illustrated in this O.T. picture of the band of loyal men, indebted yet also deeply attached to David, and active too in exploits for Him.*

**Read 1 Samuel 22:1-4; 2 Samuel 23:8-39**

The Old Testament is frequently likened to a picture book in which many of the truths that find their full expression only in the New Testament are set forth in picture form. Thus we are helped in our understanding of some of the abstract terms of the N.T. by looking at their picture form in the O.T.

The purpose of the present paper is to explore the term fellowship as it occurs in the N.T. by drawing lessons from the O.T. picture of David and his mighty men at the cave of Adullam. It will be helpful to look first at the picture, and then to draw lessons that may be helpful for us today. In this picture we note:

1. **The cave.** The cave of Adullam was presumably just outside the town of Adullam, one of the towns of Judah, at the eastern end of the valley of Elah. That valley is, of course, famous as the scene of David's defeat of Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The picture is then of the victory of the Lord

Jesus at Calvary, whereby our great enemy was defeated that we might be set free from the bondage of sin and brought thereby into fellowship with Christ (Hebrews 2:14,15).

2. **The family.** First among those who come to David are “his brethren and all his father’s house” (1 Samuel 22:1). Undoubtedly among these was Eliab who earlier had chided David for his pride and naughtiness of heart in coming to the battle (1 Samuel 17:28). Perhaps it was the victory David won that wrought the transformation in Eliab which brings him now to Adullam. Similarly in the N.T., the brothers of the Lord Jesus did not recognise His true worth (Mark 3:21; John 7:5) until after the victory of Calvary, when they are found at a prayer meeting of the early disciples (Acts 1:14). Then we find David’s mother and father, though David brings his parents to the king of Moab and gently entrusts them to the king’s care so that they might not know the rigours of the wilderness experience and wilderness rejection (1 Samuel 22:3,4). On the cross, the Lord Jesus lovingly commended His mother, Mary, to the care of the disciple, John. “Behold thy son . . . Behold thy mother” (John 19:26,27). Thus the cave of Adullam is a scene redolent of Calvary.

3. **The people.** Finally we note the others who came: everyone that was in distress . . . in debt . . . discontented (1 Samuel 22:2). That distress was in part occasioned by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:6). It also arose from the foolish prohibition of Saul, the king of the people’s choice (1 Samuel 14:24). Yet those who came in distress found in David one whose heart could beat in sympathy with their needs (2 Samuel 1:26). There were those too who were in debt. We are reminded of those 50 and 500 pence debtors who “when they had nothing to pay” found their debt freely forgiven by their master (Luke 7:41-43). As those who have come to our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can deal with the great debt of our sins, we can perhaps readily identify with those who came to David “in debt”.

Thirdly, there were those who were discontented (literally, bitter of soul). How much discontent, how much bitterness of soul is abroad in the world today! Much of it stems from those things offered by Satan which have a spurious attraction for a time, but ultimately lead to bitterness of soul. It was from such bitterness that Augustine found deliverance after years of tasting the worst excesses of sin, when he turned to the Lord and confessed: “Thou has made us for thyself and our souls find rest only in thee”. Happy indeed are those who in their discontent find their way to the Saviour (John 10:10).

4. **The captain.** “He became a captain over them” (1 Samuel 22:2). As their captain, David received those who came to him, and commanded them, assigning to each their particular role in his army. It is not difficult to recognise here a picture of great David’s greater Son, the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). Made perfect through suffering, He has indeed entered into the weakness and bitterness of our human experiences — sin apart — so that He might better identify with us as our great High

Priest (Hebrews 4:15). The root meaning of the word "captain" is "head". How appropriately this answers to the description of the Lord Jesus as the Head of the body, the Church (Colossians 1:18; 2:19). As their head, David stationed his men as he saw fit. They were certainly not all equal, and were not all given the same job to do. Thus as his three chiefs we find Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah; immediately below them are Abishai, Benaiah, and another. Likewise within the Church, the fellowship of God's people, God has set each member in the body as it has pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Here then is a picture of fellowship presented in the O.T. Before drawing lessons from the picture it may be helpful to observe that the dictionary definition of fellowship is "a community of interest" ("sharing" is a simple word which also expresses something of the warmth of love in the term). The fellowship into which we, as Christians, are called — fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3) transcends the most prestigious of earthly fellowships. That community of interest, John declares, began with the historic experience the apostles had of the Lord Jesus Christ: His virgin birth; His historical life as a Man yet Son of God; His death and His literal resurrection. The apostolic experience has been shared with us through their word that we might have fellowship together (1 John 1:1-4). Happy indeed are those who are able to declare their participation in this fellowship, and their allegiance to its Head as readily as Amasai could declare his allegiance to David: "Thine we are, David, and on thy side" (1 Chronicles 12:18). Let us note then the characteristics of this fellowship.

1. **A fellowship of transformation.** Who were the men whose exploits are recorded in 2 Samuel 23? They were those who had been "in distress . . . in debt, and . . . discontented", but in coming to their captain they had found their lives transformed in that allegiance to him. The fiery temperament of James and John was no doubt the cause of their being called Boanerges, "sons of thunder", and showed itself in their readiness to call down judgment on that Samaritan village which refused to receive them and their Master (Luke 9:51-54). Only the transforming power of Christ could change John into the disciple who had such a sense of the Lord's love that he described himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", choosing to take that place of nearness to Christ, leaning on His bosom (John 13:23). How marvellously that love shines out in his first epistle. May we know something of the transforming effect of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

But in that transformation their distress, debt and discontent were left behind. Having come to the Lord Jesus, the One who

alone can deal with the burden of our sin (Matthew 11:28-30), how sad it is when we gather up that burden of distress and discontent to bring it again into the fellowship. Let us ask the Lord to help us to leave it firmly behind at Calvary.

**2. A fellowship of rejection.** Psalms 57 and 142, written by David in the cave, show us his deep sense of rejection. "No man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4). Into that hurtful experience, God moved and brought those who were in distress to share David's rejection. In "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10) we are identified with a Saviour who has been rejected by this world, and who has told us that His servant can not expect better treatment than his Master (John 15:18; 13:16). In Hebrews 13 it is encouraging to see that the place of rejection (v. 13) leads to the place of praise (v. 15). As Christians, we have the precious privilege of being able together to exalt the name of the One whom the world cast out and crucified.

In 1 Samuel 25 we find Abigail, consequent on the death of her churlish husband, Nabal, ready to leave the wealth and comfort of her home to share rejection with David at Adullam. We have, by grace, been delivered from a world that said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). The world has not changed its verdict on Christ. The Lord Jesus is still rejected by the world. For our part as Christians, may we not deny Him His rightful place in our hearts and lives. Sadly, it was from just such an outside place that the Lord had to stand and appeal for an entrance to the Church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22).

**3. A fellowship of exploits.** All of the names of David's mighty men and some of their impressive exploits are recorded for us in 2 Samuel 23 (and 1 Chronicles 11). Notable among these are Eleazar who defended a field of barley against the Philistines until his sword stuck to his hand. Similarly Shammah defended his field of lentils. What persistence characterised these men who were ready to defend against the enemy that inheritance, given to them by God, which they in their turn would pass on to a succeeding generation. Beyond the outwardly small value of barley and lentils, these men had a vision of what had been entrusted to them by God. May we, in our turn, have such a sense of belonging to the Captain of our salvation that we may be able to stand in and to defend the spiritual inheritance entrusted to us.

Sometimes, like Benaiah who slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day, these exploits were accomplished alone. At other times they were carried out in fellowship together, as when the three broke through the garrison of the Philistines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem. That was an act whose true worth David appreciated when he poured it out on the ground before God. Sadly, David failed to appreciate the worth of Uriah the Hittite, whom he sent to his death so that he might have Uriah's wife,

Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Uriah's heart had been for David and for the men of Israel, and God sees to it that Uriah's name appears in this list of mighty men. Happily we belong to One who rightly evaluates all that is done for Him, even to a cup of cold water given in His name (Mark 9:41).

But there are some sad omissions from this list. Absent is the name of Jonathan who, in the valley of Elah, had plainly declared his grateful allegiance to David but who, later on, had not felt able to leave the palace to share David's rejection (1 Samuel 23:18). Absent too is Joab, the captain of David's host, whose life had been characterised by self-seeking. *Where will our names be when all is declared at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:13)?*

David's men were plainly not prepared simply to knuckle under and allow the Philistines to gain the victory. Are we to serve our Captain any less well? Wherein lies the secret of victory? "The people that do know their God shall . . . do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). Note that this promise is not given at a time of great spiritual prosperity, but rather for a time of great need, to contrast with the exploits of the king of the north (Daniel 11:28). Is Satan always to have the victory? God has declared "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). But that ability to do exploits can only flow out of a knowledge of God (Philippians 3:10). May we be encouraged by the example of these mighty men of David!

**4. A fellowship of growth.** 400 men (1 Samuel 22:2) rapidly became 600 (1 Samuel 23:13)! That fellowship of David's mighty men was a fellowship of growth. Was it that the quality of their relationship with their captain had such a transforming influence on them that others were naturally drawn to that same captain? In a day of declining church attendance we cannot escape the challenge of this. *Increase, not decrease, is God's norm.* When each one fills that function in the body allocated by its Head (without worrying about the fact that he might have chosen a different role, or that his place seems inferior to that given to another) the "increase of God" is the natural consequence (Colossians 2:19). May God give us to know something of this!

Finally, we note that Adullam has a two-fold meaning: "a resting place" or "a testimony to them". Certainly, in his rejection, David found a resting-place in the loyalty and love of those who went out to him in the cave. In anticipation of the day of eternal rest when the Lord will have His people forever with Him, may He be able to experience something of that now in our present love and loyalty.

What a testimony to their captain were these devoted followers to David. Possibly the greatest testimony that we can render to the Lord Jesus Christ is to love one another (John 13:35). May that love that He showed in going to Calvary for us so rub off on each one of us in our relations the one with the other in the fellowship to which God has called us that we might bear testimony to the world.

# High Points in Romans (1)

DONALD DAVISON

*Three “therefores” are found in the book of Romans. This address given at Bradford on 12th April 1986, looks at these stages in its message.*

*The groundwork of Christian faith, and the basis on which it stands (and acts), needs to be recalled repeatedly. This article is exceptionally clear in picking out essentials.*

*Part 2 will pass to practice based upon this teaching, dwelling on the third ‘therefore’.*

First, we indicate the substance to be drawn attention to:

Romans 5:1 The ‘therefore’ of Peace.

Romans 8:1 The ‘therefore’ of the New Position.

Romans 12:1,2 The ‘therefore’ of Presentation.

These three Scriptures are in their correct moral order from the standpoint of our Christian experience.

1. We need Peace with God first as sinners.
2. Eventually, as taught by God, we come to realise the truth as to the new Position into which we have been brought by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers have a new and unchallengeable status. They are ‘in Christ’.
3. The result is that we are urged to respond to the firm truths already before us in the epistle, by the Presentation of our bodies as a *living sacrifice* to Him, etc.

## Chapter 5:1 – “Peace with God”

In the first 3½ chapters of the book the guilt of all persons is established. From 3:20 “righteousness of God” by faith in Jesus Christ is the subject which is developed. Chapter 4 shows both David and Abraham as examples of how “faith is reckoned (counted, or accredited)” by God to us as trusting in the “God of resurrection”. Both Abraham’s faith and ours is in the same God. The contrast between his faith and ours is that he believed God about an event yet future, i.e. the birth of Isaac. We are called upon to believe the same God, but in relation to an event which is past, i.e. the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In both cases ‘faith’ is counted by God for righteousness. Faith is confidence in God based upon His word. Everything for God and for our blessing is established in and by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead. God has been so glorified by the death of His Son that He was righteously able to raise

Him from among the dead, and present Him as an object in heaven for our faith. Nothing less than resurrection was the just answer due to Christ on account of the work He accomplished.

We note in passing the expression "Jesus our Lord who has been delivered". We ask, By whom was He delivered up to death? Chapter 8:32 gives the answer. "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." We next ask, What was it that took the Lord Jesus into death? It was "our offences". If our sins and our iniquities took our Lord into death, then, praise be to Him, He is risen without them! They are buried in the grave of Christ, never to be laid to our charge again. He has been raised for "our justification". The price has been paid! His resurrection is the proof. The penalty of our sins was borne by Him. God has placed in our hands a plain receipt, affirming that Christ's work is done, once and for ever, to His total satisfaction, and for our blessing.

We reach then this grand conclusion "Therefore being justified by faith we (do) have peace with God". To be 'justified' is to be cleared of even the charge of sin, and pronounced righteous by our God. It is confirmed in 8:33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth". Not only are we forgiven, but accounted righteous before God. Even the devil himself cannot lay any charge against a believer. An erstwhile guilty sinner can face a holy God without a twinge of conscience.

The entrance into this is by (on the principle of) faith. Faith is the window of the soul, bringing the light and love of God streaming in. In 3:24 we are justified "by His grace". Grace is the channel used by God to bring it to us through the outpouring of His love. In 5:1 entrance into the blessedness of justification is "by faith". In 5:9, we are justified "by His blood". It is the solid basis and eternal foundation of it. The outcome is summarised in one word — peace. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. A deep settled peace of conscience that nothing can take away or destroy; all hostility between our souls and God is at an end. Having peace with God the believer is able to "joy in God" (5:11). In Christian experience 'joy' may ebb and flow, but calm, deep peace with God remains. The blessing of justification is by faith, not in a creed or code of rules, but faith in a person — the blessed and living man, our Lord Jesus Christ, now alive out of death.

Following upon this, other wonderful results flow to us, in verses 2ff. We have 'access' by faith into this grace wherein we stand. 'Access' — freedom to enter through the assistance and favour of another, our Lord Jesus Christ. It admits us into this 'grace' (favour), a place of nearness, acceptance, and welcome before our God — so that in the person of the Son "we are as near as He". This provides a solid foundation under our feet, so that we 'stand', in this present position of blessing before God.

As to our past, we have been justified by faith, resulting in peace with God. As to our present we have 'access' into this favour in which we stand. As to the future, we now 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God'. In

chapter 3, we and all others were seen to come short of the glory of God. Here we rejoice 'in hope' of it. In chapter 8, we are seen by God (in His purpose) already 'glorified' (verse 30). In Revelation 21, as forming part of the heavenly city, we are seen (in John's vision) as 'having the glory of God'.

## 2. Chapter 8:1 — "In Christ"

The conclusion reached in this verse, and expressed in our second 'therefore', is based upon the intervening teaching after 5:12 as far as this point. It involves our transfer (as believers) from under the headship of Adam (5:12 ff.) to the headship of Christ. Adam's one act of disobedience introduced condemnation and death. But Christ's one act of obedience has brought in righteousness, justification and eternal life. If the one act of disobedience has brought about so much sin and suffering, the one act of obedience has brought about a surpassing amount of righteousness and blessing. This by reason of the fact that the one act of obedience is greater than the one act of disobedience, by just so much as our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Adam. Once we stood "in Adam" in all our condemnation. Now we are before God "in Christ", in all the value and worth of His person and work. As sinners we started off as "condemned already" (John 3:18), but as saints we start off in this wonderful position beyond condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus". It is an absolute statement. Romans 8:1 is as true of us *now* as John 3:18 was when we were unsaved. Like Noah and his family, who were safe from the waters of judgment "in the Ark", we are "safe" — eternally safe — "in Christ Jesus". The expression "in Christ Jesus" speaks of a realm where there is no possibility of breakdown or failure. Being "in Christ Jesus", for us to be condemned along with the world would require that our God condemn His Son.

It should be said again that this statement is true of *all* believers. The newest babe in Christ is in the same wondrous position before God as the oldest saint. Nothing can touch or alter this our eternal standing before God. Our enjoyment of our blessings in Christ may ebb and flow with our circumstances, but this "new position" remains unalterable. It *cannot* be undermined.

This grand status "in Christ" before God, is found in One who, as to the abiding nature of His blessed person and the eternal value of His work, has so glorified God regarding the matter of sin, that He has righteously raised Him from among the dead and placed Him aloft at His own right hand in His presence forever. His place of acceptance before the Father's face, and in the presence of our God forever, is our place of acceptance too. So, it is perfectly right for us to sing, with joy and triumph, "beyond dark death for ever we share thy Son's blest place".

# To the Seven Churches

## (2) Smyrna

TOM TYSON

*“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.”*

*Of the seven messages from the Lord to the churches this one (and one other) makes no adverse comment, but it passes on His strong support. Let us remember that there are situations today where fellow-believers need this kind of support and sympathy. We too may have to prove Him in severe testing.*

Looking ahead now to the following messages (to Smyrna and Pergamos), the interchanges between “the church” and “the world” come to the fore. In neither case is the world helpful to the true people of God. Satan opposes the testimony to Christ by two extreme means. First, by deliberate confrontation and strong opposition. Persecution, in some cases even to death, is the background against which the Lord encourages the faithful in Smyrna. But, if this fails, Satan has other tactics. He can lure the people of God into liaison with the world. That approach, the subtle one, can be more successful. The beginnings of this are clear in the way the Lord addresses Pergamos. We have said already that, as those wishing to be faithful to Christ, we are exposed to all the enemy’s forms of attack at all times, and need the words of our Lord here to support and guide us.

But, thinking now of the prophetic nature of these letters — the first-century period, before the apostles had gone, when the love of many began to fade, was followed by outright persecution of Christians, under the persecuting pagan Emperors of Rome. Indeed it is not quite fair to say this came later, for Nero’s spell as emperor was well within the first century A.D., and the atrocities, and merciless treatment of true believers under Nero are too horrifying to spell out. Two such emperors had come and gone at the close of the first century, and there was to be a whole sequence of ten of them (from the later first century until about 300 A.D.). The last of these (before Constantine) was Diocletian. The widespread nature of the persecution of Christians in those times, coming in great waves, and with horrors more than equal to those of Nero’s reign, is indeed a dark period in Church history. Our Lord does not belittle this at all, but fortifies His beloved people for it, in His message to Smyrna. The martyr period, as it is often called, was the period of the *witnesses* (which is what ‘martyrs’ means). It was the period of faithful witness to Christ, at total cost. What a dignity this puts upon costly witness to Christ!

The Lord Jesus addresses them as the One who is “the first and

the last". For people who never knew what might befall them tomorrow, whose very lives were in jeopardy, He is the *first*. There is nothing that happens except *He* allows it. And He is the *last*, after and beyond it all. There are unbelieving Jews, under Satan's control, but our Lord says: *I am* the One who is basically in control. *I am* the One who was dead (and our deliverance in every way stems from that!). But now He is *alive*, for ever beyond *that* point, in glory with all power in His hands! He is the great Rock-like One, imparting stability in all scenes of uncertainty and transience. He it is who says, "Lo, I am *with* you always" (Matthew 28:20). He is absolutely alongside them in it all, knows all about the worst of brutal martyr-sufferings from the inside (and has carried many another burden Himself alone). Here is something sweet and precious indeed. The name Smyrna is closely related to 'myrrh', an aromatic substance with a fragrance arising from crushing and bruising; it is referred to in the Gospels (e.g. Matthew 2:12 and John 19:39). Ephesians 5:2 connects the suffering love of Christ, and His faithfulness in self-giving obedience, with "the odour of a sweet smell" rising to God.

"I know," He assures them here, "thy tribulation, and poverty." Out of the depths of His own experience of suffering and loss, He is well able to sympathise and support His tried ones. Out of the fires of persecution, revival in the testimony sprang — it was His way of rekindling it. During those centuries an estimated five million Christians were put to death. But "gold, tried in the fire" comes out brighter and purer (1 Peter 1:7). These experiences were to be known (and the support of this letter found) in later times too, when religious persecution had to be faced. They "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods" in N.T. times (Hebrews 10:33,34). Loss of possessions and property came with the hounding of Christians, and they were indeed poor, as stated here. But our Lord adds, "but thou art rich". He estimates their possessions differently — they were *truly* rich! They rightly valued Himself, and what He had done for them. This is in stark contrast with 3:17 — the Laodicean church imagined it was rich, yet was blind to its extreme poverty.

The Lord *knew* their situation. He knew their enemies too. These claimed to be Jews and were not. He traced this enmity to its source, the chief cause of the opposition at Smyrna — these so-called Jews were "a synagogue of *Satan*". But He knows He can sustain them. Fear none of those things thou shalt suffer, He says. Some would be cast into prison, by Satan, but *He* knew that He Himself was in charge. Such things were, and are, allowed in order to draw out the Lord's people from the world — so that they might learn what the world is, and what *He* is too.

The tribulation was to last ten days, a *limited* period. There were ten Emperors, persecuting Christian believers, in those centuries. "Be thou faithful unto death," He asks of them. He Himself had been utterly faithful, to *that* utmost end. Facing death they were, as more than a possibility. But He has a reward to offer, He will crown such faithfulness with *life*.

He will *give* something far better! As often in the letters to the Churches the reward to the overcomer is something that applies to all believers. But what He offers is “life” received and enjoyed *now* by the faithful, and to be known in all its fulness in His presence in glory.

Last comes the urgent call to hear what the Spirit says, to treasure it and to act upon it. Then the final encouragement. Living where death is well-known, the overcomer will “not be hurt of the second death”. Our Lord went through death, faithfully and triumphantly. The second death could no more touch the true believer than it could touch *Him!*

---

### ON HOSEA 6:1-3 — A comment, and a plea

*“Come, and let us return to the LORD, for He has torn, and He will heal us . . .”*

The very last chapter of Hosea has long seemed to me to be one of the choicest chapters in the Bible. In recent times I have come to be aware of the whole of Hosea. How magnificent a view it gives of the great God who is not only Israel’s God, but our God too (who are His people today). The sight of His unbelievable love, undeserved, but in action in an overwhelming way, must indeed move us. Despite persistent and increasing unfaithfulness on their side, He out-persists this in His gracious intention for their recovery and reinstatement, and in this love and persistence He *will* finally achieve His end.

Recently a few home sessions on the book have taken us to the verses indicated above. Those verses too are wonderfully expressed. Readers will know of some attractive renderings by the solo voice, and some in choral form. Be that as it may, and accepting my own “favourite passage” admiration for chapter 14 to be similar in kind, it is plain that such reactions to these passages are *not* the primary way to treat them. They need to be more, far more, than words of beauty — they need to be words *from the heart*.

The words that follow (6:4 ff.) show what God really thought about Israel at the time. Supposing the first three verses represent words used by the bulk of Israel, then they were shallow and evanescent words, though not to be faulted in their form. The people themselves, and their words, God saw to be “like a morning mist, like dew that early passes away”. More likely, the three opening verses came from Hosea, and a few godly persons with him — words that reflect an attitude that God longed for from all His people. But sadly, along with a superficial acknowledgement of their own true God, in parallel with this they were closely involved with other gods — hurting and despising Him in that way.

Has this picture any parallels with ourselves? Are we in some degree unfaithful and untrue to God? Do we claim (not in words, but in manner) to be more than we are? Have we false allegiances — existing alongside our routines, all of which are impeccable outwardly, maybe with a dash of spiritual pride mixed in? Do we reckon with what may well be our Lord's diagnosis of our inward selves, as having "left our first love"? Are we so familiar with our Bibles (our NTs particularly) as to be able to say 'the right thing' about almost any passage, using the same humdrum terms too, each time? I confess that this is a trap and an attitude I myself can easily slip into. The need for freshness in each approach is something the Lord makes me aware of, and prayerful about.

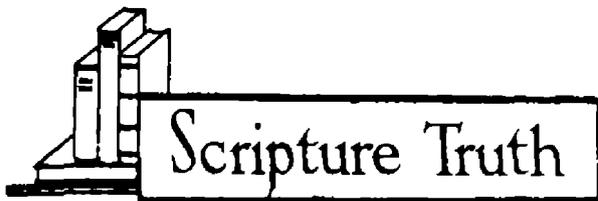
One more point. We *must* value our hymn-book. The most recent compilation is to me better still. But familiarity with hymns becomes easy in time. *How* do we sing hymns? Do we repeat the lines easily, because we know them by heart? Too easily, perhaps? Many hymns I could sing through effortlessly (with limited tunefulness) entirely without the book. At times it not only *can* be done but *is* done (by myself and perhaps others). Where is my mind, my heart, when this goes on? Do I *meditate* on the words, am I in spirit in tune with them, is my *heart* in it? I have found that some phrase in some highly-familiar hymn, dwelt upon, can stir my spirit towards the Lord as never before. Indeed, some hymns have such weighty things within them — things which, digested anew, can move my heart in such a way that the singing part of the response has to be muted.

I trust readers will show their patience in accepting these points which *do* spring from a heart exercised before the Lord.

---

**'The Message of HOSEA', by Derek Kidner (IVF 1981, 142 pp. £3.25).**

This is an excellent book. I can recommend it wholeheartedly. Help in understanding the text is given clearly. Its historical context is made plain — its relevance to Israel primarily, at that time and for the future. Yet the lessons for ourselves are pressed. Above all, the reader is caused to bow in wonder before the great and sovereign God, whose character and all-persistent love displays itself so signally in this prophecy.



Incorporating *Words of Help*

JULY, 1987

# The Forward-Looking Mind (1)

GORDON SPRATT

## PHILIPPIANS 3

*The substance of a Bible Reading at the St Andrews Conference in August 1986. It is divided into 'Outline' and 'Discussion'. The outline was quite short, the discussion longer, and this is reflected in the printed version. Only the total length indicates that I should divide it, but the two parts are closely dependent. On such a chapter an outline is a great help, and free discussion also was valuable. In result, a sight of our Lord in glory was given, and its command upon us was felt. As with Paul, it imparted a strong impulse to press forward towards 'the prize', even a place with our Lord in His glory, the target towards which our calling on high draws us.*

### Outline

In reading chapter 2 of Philippians, verses 5 to 11, it is common to give more attention to the *downward* steps taken by our Lord, than to the upward ones which follow. This of course is entirely consistent with the subject-matter of that whole chapter, which is 'the lowly mind'. Nevertheless those verses end with the exaltation and glory of the Lord Jesus. And when we come to chapter 3 it is *this* aspect of that Person that is occupying the mind and heart of the apostle Paul. When our minds dwell upon the Lord Jesus, our hearts then respond in affection to Him, because of the glory of His person. It is to be noted that what chapter 2:9-11 presents is not simply a divine person gone back to His own place. It is a *man* in the glory of God — something entirely and completely unprecedented. There had never before been 'a man in the glory of God'; and the whole bent of chapter 3 is that the heart of Paul, and his walk as a Christian here, was directed towards that man, Christ Jesus, now exalted and glorified.

Often we have to distinguish between what is present in application,

and what lies in the future, calling us onward and directing our steps. The general bent of our chapter is in fact the latter. Paul, while he has a deep sense of relationship to the Lord Jesus, and while he uses language like “that I might win Christ”, nevertheless makes it perfectly clear that in his own heart he knows that he will never entirely reach that objective until he is with Christ and like Christ in glory. We need to keep this in mind — since we might at times think he is speaking about present experience. In a sense this is true, for in going on toward the attainment of certain objectives we are always attracted on by the relationship we have with the Lord Jesus Christ now.

Before we go into the detail of the chapter, let us break it up into parts.

(i) It seems that the first sentence should be regarded entirely on its own: “Finally, my brethren ‘Rejoice in the Lord’ ”; I suspect the next section should begin with “To write the same things . . .”. ‘Finally’ may often mean ‘coming to a close’, but we ought not to suppose that is intended here. “For the rest, my brethren” comes closer to the meaning. Paul is saying: *Everything* else I want to say to you can be encapsulated, can be summarised, in this word “Rejoice in the Lord”. And therefore it becomes a kind of ‘motif’ running through the whole of the epistle. Causes for rejoicing have been referred to already — see 1:18, 1:26, 2:28,29. Also, remarkably, in 2:17 Paul thinks of the possibility of his own martyrdom as a matter for rejoicing. *That* way of reaching Christ in glory — to die, gain — is a subject of joy! But now, in 3:1, all those other matters, separate causes for joy, must give place to rejoicing in *the Lord*. *That* was Paul’s rejoicing (not in his Christianity, not in his fellowship, not in ‘the meetings’ exactly) but in his personal relationships with the Lord Jesus alone. This challenges my heart, and surely we must all feel it. Are we *really* rejoicing in the Lord? Such a joy has nothing to do with circumstances, good or difficult. Over and above *all that*, the Christian who rightly understands that there is a man in the glory of God, is to rejoice in *Him*!

(ii) Verses 2,3 — The Lord, Himself the great cause for all rejoicing, having been singled out, Paul is immediately aware that the enemy could spoil that joy. Adopting Judaising principles, under the influence of those who would mislead, was a possibility against which he warns them. No confidence in the flesh, no seeking to please God in the flesh, is one of the marks of those who are the Lord’s, and rejoice in Christ Jesus. This leads him to speak out about what he himself *might* have relied on, in his own natural life and attainments.

(iii) Verses 4-14 — Having dealt with the matter of Judaism, this longer passage ensues. Verse 7 seems to be a central verse here. Within this part a helpful division is:

(a) Paul lists his *Assets*. As a businessman takes stock of things, so does Paul here (verses 4-6).

(b) Paul makes his *Assessments*. Evaluation of assets must be made,

and Paul proceeds to do this (verses 7, 8). What he once valued, he counts as entirely worthless.

(c) Paul states his *Aspirations*. One thing, of true and supreme worth, fills his vision now, drawing him onwards and upwards — commanding his energies and his devotion, and reducing all those former attainments of his to zero, and less than zero (verses 8-14).

(iv) Verses 14-19 — Here Paul again reverts to the possibility of attack from the enemy. The danger of worldliness and earthliness invading the Philippian assembly, and the need for a walk consistent with the knowledge of Christ is seriously pressed here. This, if not guarded against, could destroy the happy well-being amongst them. The *believers* at Philippi may not be principally in mind here, but it is by no means uncommon that, alongside those whose minds and hearts are full of Christ, there can be people whose targets are elsewhere, centred on *earthly* things. These, Paul does not hesitate to call “enemies of the cross of Christ.”

(v) Verses 20, 21 — These closing verses link on with verse 14. Three things Paul now draws attention to:

(a) Our *citizenship*. ‘Conversation’ is the word in the A.V., but this word has changed its meaning and, as understood today, is misleading here. ‘Commonwealth’ or ‘citizenship’ are better. We prefer ‘citizenship’ which fits the context (at Philippi) better. *Our* citizenship is in heaven, says Paul.

(b) Our *expectancy*. We look for the Saviour. Here is the very next event in sight. Perhaps today!

(c) Our *prospect*. Our lowly body (‘vile’ is another word which has now changed — or valueless, humble, body is the real meaning) is to be changed, by His power. It is to be formed and fashioned into likeness to His own body of glory! This is the end towards which ‘the forward-looking mind’ of the Christian is continually directed.

What matters to Paul is that he is *driving on* in the Christian life, because his mind is possessed by this great objective, that he shall at length win Christ and be made like Him in the place where Christ is.

There is much in this chapter, and in our discussion we should perhaps move quickly to verse 7, and spend our time *mostly* on verses 7-14, and 20, 21. This will give us the main bent of the chapter.

# Love and Obedience

W. KERR

*The book of Deuteronomy is perhaps a neglected book. The present editor cannot recall any article based on that book that has appeared in the magazine for decades. For that reason, as well as its intrinsic worth and importance, he strongly welcomes this paper.*

**Read: Deuteronomy 6:1-12, John 14:15-21, 23**

The history of God's people, Israel, is not only interesting but provides many lessons for the Christian. We are undoubtedly included among the 'us' of 1 Corinthians 10, where we read in verse 11 "these things happened to them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come". Certain divine principles are unalterable and unchanged by dispensational differences. What the Lord Jesus refers to as 'my commandments' and 'my word', in verses 21 and 23 of John 14, has a strong link with the statutes, ordinances, and commandments of Deuteronomy 6.

It has been well said that the book of Deuteronomy is to the first five books of the O.T. what the gospel of John is to the first five N.T. books. It is the presentation of a very strong appeal by Jehovah to the hearts of His own in order that in affection to Himself there should be a true response in love and obedience. The great deliverance from Egypt, coupled with God's favour and provision in the wilderness, should have produced this responsive love that expresses itself in obedience to His word. However, this kind of obedience was not forthcoming in Israel, nor could it be at that time because of their condition of heart. Scripture assures us that in a coming day the nation will respond to God, when in the language of Ezekiel 36:26, "a new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you", and in verse 27, "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes."

On the other hand, we who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and have exercised faith in Him have received the gift of the indwelling Spirit now. This gives us the capacity to respond in loving obedience to the Word of the Lord. The Word of the Lord, as in John 14:23 would refer to the body of truth taught by the Lord Himself. This relates to what has been established through His death on the cross (His resurrection and ascension to God's right hand) made good to us by the descent of the Spirit to indwell believers. In Colossians 3 we are exhorted to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom". This responsive love, producing obedience, would lead to what is instructive in divine

teaching. In Deuteronomy 6 we get a very definite idea that the instruction and teaching come into every area and every relationship in our lives.

This teaching has to be impressed upon our children (chapter 6, N.Tr.). The truth that we hold so dear in our hearts has to be communicated to them. When we sit in our houses the 'word' has to form the basis of our conversation. Also, as we walk by the way, in the coming and going of our daily lives, there ought to be that which is consistent with the truth "as it is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21). This 'truth', as we think of it embodied in the 'word' of John 14:23, is instructive to us and produces a practical response to the love that has reached us in blessing. In our evening leisure time, and in the energy of the morning, we are to be practically governed by keeping the 'word', and thus enjoying the presence of the Lord Jesus and the Father, by the Spirit (John 14:21).

Deuteronomy 6:8 enjoins that the 'word' be bound upon their hands and as frontlets between their eyes. This gave rise at a later date to the phylacteries which the Lord Himself spoke about in condemnation of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:5). These are still worn by orthodox Jews, from the age of thirteen and upwards. They consist of a leather box or case, *cubical in form, each side being 1·5 inches. To keep it in position on the forehead it is attached to a leather base by twelve strong stitches, one for each of the tribes of Israel; three on each of the four sides. To this is fastened a leather thong which passes round the head and is long enough to hang over the shoulders. The one on the arm has a similar attachment. In this cube are four slots, in each of which a strip of parchment is inserted. Written on these in minute Hebrew characters are four passages of Scripture. These, from left to right, are Exodus 13:1-10; Exodus 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-8; Deuteronomy 11:13-21. Although this is not enjoined here, history states that the ritual was probably introduced in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, after the Jews returned from Babylon. All this detail only goes to show the shallowness of their conception of what constituted true heart-obedience to God's appeal in love to them.*

We, in our day, having the Holy Spirit within our hearts, can appreciate the spiritual intention of this 'word' of instruction to us; and so what our hands do, and our eyes see, can come under the control of the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:5). Our walk and ways, our work, and our outlook, will thus be characterised by obedience to the 'word' in love to our Lord. As the 'word' becomes formative in our souls, so there will be a true appreciation of all the good things and all the blessings bestowed upon us in love and grace.

This in turn would lead to affection for the Lord, and obedience in worship and remembrance. Perhaps there is with us too the tendency to forget, hence the reminder that our God is a jealous God, 6:15, and will not brook any rival for our affections. How good to know that our God is also a God of restoration, and His grace would also make provision

for this. In the letters to the churches, in Revelation 2 and 3, the Ephesians had left their first love and were enjoined to remember from whence they had fallen, and to repent and do their first works, with a promised blessing to the overcomer. Also the message to the church at Sardis was, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent" (Revelation 3:3-5). Here again the overcomer has a sure promise; he will be confessed before the Father and His angels.

Following upon this call to obedience to the 'word', there is in Deuteronomy 7 a call to separation from the world. This also is necessary instruction for their conduct in "the good land", and consequently their enjoyment of it. In that land there were enemies to be cast out before they could enjoy it. These enemies are strong and present a formidable hindrance. Each of the seven nations represents, we believe, some subtle form of opposition which is identifiable today, and directed by Satan against God's people still today. These would in their totality constitute what in 1 John 2 is described as "the world". Its essential characteristics are covered by the short but comprehensive phrases "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". John's urgent exhortation is "love not the world, nor the things of the world". Regarding Israel, subsequent history was to record how they fell prey to these influences, failing badly. In consequence they were taken into captivity, in bondage, far off from that land (though not finally). Satan, still active against God and His people, would try to rob us of the 'good' of our 'land': but 1 John 4:4 reminds us that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world". The greater power is that of the Holy Spirit of God, and this power within would enable us to resist the enemy and his efforts to ensnare us. In Ephesians 6:12 we are made aware that the armour of God is available. It is provided for our protection, covering us from head to foot. It needs to be put on and used by us, because "we wrestle not against flesh and blood . . . but against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Deuteronomy 7:7 indicates that God's people are a special people, called out because God loved them. They are privileged and blessed only because of that love; and the increase in every part of their lives depended largely on their response to that love (compare, in chapter 7, verses 6 and 9). Our eternal salvation is assured entirely because of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, however, true that our liberty, and happiness, and our enjoyment of the blessings that accompany salvation, are dependent on our response in love and obedience. In addition to that, and perhaps of greater import, according to Romans 12:1, 2, this is acceptable to God. It is the expected spiritual and intelligent outcome of obedience to the 'word'. Verse 2 presses that we should not be conformed to the world but transformed, for this is the acceptable will of God.

The book of Deuteronomy goes on to show that love to the Lord and obedience to His 'word' brings separation from the world, and also

prosperity and plenty in vigour and health. Thus, in the enjoyment of the inheritance, there would come a time when, as stated in chapter 15, there would be an overflow and a release — a liberal, free spirit — when love to the brethren, the open hand and the open heart, would be in evidence.

Israel never really produced at that time the necessary conditions for the realisation of these blessings (though in some small areas some godly people, recognising Jehovah, were exceptions; think of Boaz, and his fellow-workers at Bethlehem showing loving-kindness to the needy). But, as stated earlier, Israel will, we believe, come to a point in a coming day when under the beneficent rule of the Lord Jesus they are given a new heart, and the Spirit of God is put within them (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Spiritually speaking we as believers have the means to produce those features required for the appreciation of our inheritance. In the measure in which we are controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, and love to the Lord and obedience to His 'word' become true of us, we are promised the presence of the Lord Jesus, and the Father, as in John 14:23. This, beginning with the individual believer, should affect his fellows, and be realised in the company, and is what God Himself finds acceptable.

May the admonition of Israel's history, as in 1 Corinthians 10, be used by the Holy Spirit to produce in us, and with us, those features which make for mutual blessing and are pleasurable to God.

## High Points in Romans (2)

**DONALD DAVISON**

*Part 1 of this paper presented doctrine, i.e. teaching — about things certainly true for all believers in Christ. What follows is practical. It is the frequent way in the N.T. to present teaching, first to be accepted, which must then carry its weight in a suitable practical outcome with those who receive it. The appropriate practice is also specified.*

*These two things cannot be divorced. The folly of an attitude that tires of 'doctrine', and says 'Give me something practical every time' is plain. Take away the teaching in Romans (and the weight it carries with it on careful consideration), how could one start to fulfil Romans chapter 12 ff.? There would be no motivation, nor any power for it! On the other hand it would be equally unbalanced to be an expert on Romans 1-11, and to have little care for what so urgently arises from it. In Christian things 'pure theorists' cannot command much respect. These two papers (read together) hold the balance admirably.*

## Chapter 12:1, 2 — “Present your Bodies”

The doctrine of the ruin of man, and ‘the redemption that is in Christ Jesus’ is fully set out in chapters 1-8. The dispensational ways of God regarding Israel, past, present, and future are dealt with in chapters 9-11, leading to a doxology of praise at the end of chapter 11. On account of the many blessings which are ours through faith in Christ, covered in these parts, Paul ‘therefore’ urges all believers ‘by the mercies (compassions) of God’ urgently to pursue the line of presenting their bodies a living sacrifice etc.

What he does is to cast our minds back to preceding chapters, to weigh and consider how much has been done for us — justifying, redeeming, reconciling us, giving eternal life to us, and imparting to us His Holy Spirit. In effect, he uses these wonderful things as a great lever, and says, this having been done by God for us, ought we not to respond in love and affection to Him? Can we refrain from presenting ourselves, our lives, to Him as a once-for-all completed act? Having entrusted to Him the salvation of our souls and our God having accepted us on the grounds of the death of His Son, the very least that is now expected of saints of God is a response in presentation of our bodies in His service. We should remember that our bodies are neither good nor bad in themselves — it is the use we put them to that is either good or bad. Whose service then are we going to continue in? Our own self-willed, self-centred service? Or, the service of God? This service is on the line of ‘sacrifice’. A ‘living sacrifice’, while we live here in our bodies, in contrast to (dead) animal sacrifices of the O.T. Inevitably it will cost us something, but no saint will ever say at the end “I am sorry I served the Lord.”

This presentation of our bodies is to be ‘holy’. Whatever is devoted to the service of God must be characteristically holy. It must be in moral correspondence with the nature of God, else God could not use it.

Presenting our bodies to Him is not only ‘holy’. It is, quite remarkably, ‘acceptable’ — well pleasing to God. The person willingly busy on such service, in the will of God, ‘proves’ it to be a good life, acceptable in his own experience. Further, this presentation of our bodies, made in the full light of the revealed mind and will of God in His word, is our ‘reasonable’ or ‘intelligent’ service. This ‘beseeching’, towards this kind of devotion, is based upon the assumption that we have thoughtfully grasped the teaching of the epistle (and indeed of all the Scriptures). Thus comes about faith’s response to Himself and His work for each one of us.

Verse 1 gives what we are to do outwardly. Verse 2 rather presents the inward spiritual motives that should govern and mark us, underlying the presentation of our bodies. If we are ever in doubt as to how we should conduct ourselves, here is a verse which gives clear and unmistakeable teaching on the matter. Here, clearly, the apostle says: “Be *not*” — “but *be*”.

What then must we **not** be? In answer, there are two prefixes, ‘con’ and ‘trans’ in this verse. Be not conformed to this world. ‘Con’ means ‘together with’, cast into a certain mould. To have a surface change only, or

a change of face. 'Trans' means 'apart from', a complete change from inward to outward, a radical change. We are therefore not to have the same outward shape or style as the world, or be cast in a like mould. The believer cannot be conformed to the world inwardly, only outwardly. But we are **not** to be so. Let us remember 'whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God' (James 4:4).

If then we are not to be 'conformed' to this world, we are to be 'transformed' by the renewing of our mind. The word for 'transformed' is used in Matthew 17 and Mark 9, where the Lord Jesus was 'transfigured' upon the holy mount. Then He became outwardly what He was inwardly. We *have* the inward change, we are to show it outwardly. With renewed minds we have an entirely new way of looking at things now. So that the transformation seen in our lives is not exterior only, but springs from our interior change. When this is taking place in us we prove daily what is that 'good and acceptable and perfect will of God'. It is 'good', because beneficial in its effect. 'The will of God' then is acceptable to us. We all have to accept the will of God in our lives, we have no option but to do this. But in yielding ourselves in His service, that will becomes agreeable to us. Blessed if we can account it so. When the will of God becomes acceptable to us, it means having no independent will of our own, and that we love the 'will of God' *whatever* may be the outcome, or its cost to ourselves. It is 'perfect' in the sense of having reached and achieved its end within us. Our 'will' becomes subject to 'the will of God'. There was One here who accomplished the will of God, perfectly and completely, in a body — our Lord Jesus Christ. This supreme example stands for every one of us — the will of God being absolutely acceptable to Him, even in death itself.

Verses 1 and 2 say what is right for us to do for God. The ensuing verses indicate what God Himself does in enabling each one to do His will in the world. Verse 6 assures us that every one of us has a gift from God fitting us to do His will here. One sure way to discover what is our particular gift, is to begin to serve the Lord just where we are. Soon it will become clear what we are specially able to do.

In order to be effective servants, we mention that Paul himself speaks in verse 3 of 'the grace given to me'. This is the condescension of God in allowing us to serve Him; His free favour. In such a service we must keep well away from the attitude that thinks of oneself 'more highly than one ought'. Nor are we to underestimate the ability given to us by God. We are to 'think soberly', in a disciplined and self-controlled way (indeed, with a renewed mind), about our ability to serve Him. For God has dealt to every man, i.e. distributed to each, 'the measure', an exact amount, 'of faith' — of confidence in God — so that we may do His will, and fulfil His purpose in our lives. To think and act in this way will bring about a balanced service for the Lord, from each one of us, keeping God and the Lord Jesus very much before us as the object of our service.

May the Lord enable us to do so.

*"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

---

## REPLY TO A YOUNG ENQUIRER

### On Gifts of the Spirit: Prophecy and Tongues (1 Corinthians 12-14)

*I was encouraged by an unexpected letter from a young friend recently. He asked for help on certain issues, one of which was the above passage. This young man is in an environment where all kinds of views are exchanged, but wants to get at the biblical teaching on these matters, and says so explicitly. A responsible reply cannot just repeat, parrot-like, what has been said before, so I have carefully and prayerfully taken a fresh look at the chapters. My reply (shorn of some of its personal parts) appears below. After sending the reply, it has been felt (not solely by myself) that it may be helpful to others, older as well as younger. I print it with this desire and prayer.*

In considering 'Gifts of the Spirit' it is well to think first about the Holy Spirit's principal objectives in His work on earth today. One primary point is important to stress. Because it picks this out succinctly, I quote from a review published over a year ago. The book reviewed is "Keep in step with the Spirit" by J. I. Packer. All Christian students should read this book, and all other persons too, if they will. It is a well-balanced book, and right on the mark on the principal function of the Holy Spirit. The relevant extract from the review is this:

*A first basic question, often never considered, is: "What is the essence, heart, and core of the Spirit's work today? What is the central, focal element in His many-sided ministry?" Two thorough and highly biblical chapters pursue the answer to this. These chapters alone would make the book worthwhile to me. All Spirit-oriented movements could well search themselves in the light of this. The following sentences show what answer the writer finds to that basic question. "A properly Christian account of the Holy Spirit is an account that builds consistently on the thoughts which Jesus Himself expresses in John 14:16-23 and John 16:14, 15, and will not be drawn*

*away from them". By this he means he is "highlighting the Christ-centredness of all these deeds of the Spirit . . . following the lead of the Bible itself." "Jesus spoke of the Spirit as One who would be self-effacing, directing all attention away from Himself to Christ and drawing folk into the faith, hope, love, obedience, adoration, and dedication, which constitute communion with Christ. This, be it said, remains the criterion by which the authenticity of supposedly 'spiritual' movements may be gauged." "Too often our concept of the Holy Spirit's ministry is related only to our lacks and needs, and not thought through in terms of the truth that the Spirit is here to glorify Christ . . . The result is a view that is Christian-centred instead of being Christ-centred".*

The underlining in this quotation is mine — pointing out this key consideration for a serious Christian. The piece above seems to say vital things in a better way than I could. I believe that many movements give over-strong emphasis and prominence to the Spirit Himself and therefore are suspect in view of our Lord's own words.

So, let me now try to face some of the questions you raised, expressing how I see some of these problems, in the light of the passages concerned.

The chapters 12 to 14 in 1 Corinthians are your main concern. I cannot claim to see everything plainly here. The problems mostly have to do with some lack of clarity on what *was* going on in the church-gatherings there (things that Paul seeks to correct).

**But certain things are patently clear.** These are:

(1) Spiritual gifts are *real* gifts amongst Christians, and every believer has a gift (or gifts) of the Spirit, large or small. They are not chosen by persons themselves, but allotted sovereignly by the Holy Spirit. They are (perhaps) not static — can change and progress within an individual. They are *not* for display, but equip a person to help and contribute to the joint-activity in the Christian community, in the gatherings of Christians centred on the Lord Jesus, subject to *Him* and seeking to honour *Him*. The Corinthians had many gifts — but were using them wrongly, showing off with them, getting the focus on *themselves* in an uncontrolled disorderly manner. Paul seeks to moderate these activities, reducing the chaos and disorder of their gatherings, which so dishonoured the Lord. The local church *in session* is the situation to which these chapters apply. The One Spirit, giver of the various gifts, will promote unity and harmony in what goes on. Disharmony and disorder does not arise from Him; but indicates insubjection to Him somewhere. I will take the line (not at all discounted in the chapters themselves) that *most things* in these chapters continue so long as church-life continues on earth, though a considerable amount can be said on the other side (see footnote 1\*).

\* Footnote 1 (added in this printed version). Readers should understand that I am concentrating here on what is *very clear* in these particular chapters. The only place where cessation of gifts is referred to at all is in chapter 13:8,9. A view is taken by some that a suggestion that tongues will cease first, and

(2) But there is no thought that all these gifts are on the same level. Paul rates some gifts highly, others less so. Tongues come in last, 12:28, and are underplayed in chapter 14 too. Without *love* underlying everything done, (chapter 13), no gift is worth *anything*. If love is the motive, edifying (i.e. constructive) gifts are 'the best gifts' (12:31 and 14:1,12). Profitable gifts, properly used, 'build up' the church locally (this is what edifying means). Prophecy comes at the top, but (with other kindred operations, like teaching, bible exposition) it has to be done in love, clearly, with understanding (on the part of both speaker and hearer), briefly, and to the point. Thus a word from God (which is basically what prophecy is) will be imparted and will be constructive too. These simple qualities about spoken messages (together with the basic test, that Christ may be seen to be exalted by what is said), will be the evidence that the Spirit is at work. Anything not meeting these criteria, especially of a complex or spectacular kind, but thin in positive content, will cast doubt on it being of the Spirit.

(3) Speaking in a tongue (without interpretation) is meaningless, and therefore ruled out as far as general benefit is concerned. A man must often show the control of the Spirit by kerbing his own impulses! (By the way, 'tongue' in these passages is *never* 'unknown tongue'). Always the tongues were known and therefore conveyed a message to someone. It is never 'gibberish'. The special miracle of Pentecost was that the hearers but not the speakers knew and understood what was being said. I found Packer informative on this — he quotes examples of present cases on record where one speaker was heard, yet different so-called interpreters passed on his message as meaning *remotely* different things. The whole subject is very dodgy, and makes me want to distance myself from it. I have read in the evangelical press some very 'creepy', but I believe unbiased accounts of goings-on in healing sessions, and in some house-church circles.

However, the passage does not rule 'tongues' out, but sets strict guards on it, and says *very definitely* that, if others cannot follow, such a person must remain silent, speaking inwardly to God alone. But, to me, that person seems remote from the general point of a mutually constructive gathering. But no one can fairly read chapters 12 and 14, and pursue the attitude that 'tongues' are the major matter — indeed a special hallmark of an advanced Christian — and say (as some do) that lack of this gift is a mark of an 'inferior' believer. The chapters discount that view absolutely.

---

*Footnote 1 continued*

the other things later (subsumed into greater things) is in these verses. But in fairness that is *not* the way a straightforward person would read it. While taking note of the different verbs, allowing for their differences, the 'perspicuity' of the Word, its self-evident way of presenting its meaning, must also be allowed for. Whatever else, that is not one of the plain points in these chapters.

A very clear word, in response to which many are evasive, is in 14:34. Its proximity to verse 37, which applies to all these words from Paul, is to be noted.

For ourselves, fulfilling the positive simple directions (spelt out above in the underlined words appearing in paragraph (2)), will go a long way towards obedience to this chapter. Mostly, it can happen in English, but if a speaker of a foreign language may be the spokesman, an accurate translation fits the requirements.

(4) Another passage is Ephesians 4:10-15. There the whole church is in view, covering the whole period of the Church. The ascended Christ is there the giver of the gifts. He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastor-teachers. And also, "to *every one of us* is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ". Here the whole Church is seen to be growing, as God is at work there, towards a completion time. It is all according to His intention, of His empowering, and through the mutual functioning of the gifts He has bestowed. This seems somewhat different from 1 Corinthians 12/14, which is in the local church setting. A phrase about the Church describing it as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (\* see later) is important (Ephesians 2:20-22).

I believe there is a lot of Scriptural support for the thought that apostles certainly, and prophets too in one sense, were God's gifts to the whole church in the sense of 'laying the foundation', setting down, for all time, the basis (in Scripture) on which the Church stands, from which it may draw, may be guided, may derive its spiritual sustenance. You can see plainly in the Gospels that Jesus selected His men with this in view, and in the Acts how they took up that responsibility, under the Spirit, with another apostle added (Paul) by miraculous intervention from heaven by the ascended Christ. Paul speaks about having 'seen the Lord' as a needed qualification for an apostle, and a direct commission from the Lord in a personal way. In another place he speaks about 'the signs of an apostle'. All this leaves no room for later claimants to apostleship. The foundation *has* been laid — there is no scope for broadening it today.

Foundational truth for the whole Church needs no revision or addition. In your N.T. you have it completed. But the inclusion of 'prophets' in the verse I quoted above (see \*), (*and* the order of gifts in Ephesians 4:11), confirms to my mind the view that it is not improper to include 'prophets' along with apostles as having importance at the start, involved in laying the foundation. 'Prophet' simply means 'speaker for God' in an oral or written way. Some of the N.T. writers were not apostles (they did not have the qualifications I mentioned). Mark, Luke, Jude, the writer to the Hebrews possibly, as a start. Does anyone who respects Scripture think these are of less value as spokesmen for God?

But, that having been said, I do *not* think that the same word 'prophet' in 1 Corinthians 12/14 can be thought of as suggesting quite the same thing as in Ephesians 4:11. In Ephesians, gifts for the whole Church, over the whole time of the Church on earth are covered. Some laid the foundation, others supported its growth-processes. Some had their part in the beginning, and some have a part in the continuing developments, under

the Holy Spirit. Paul seemed to be gifted for all the things listed in verse 11. But 1 Corinthians 12/14 applies to the local gathering, met together for ministry. A word of 'prophecy' is relevant *there*. Indeed it is treated as of first importance, without under-rating other valuable contributions. This can hardly be the same as initial prophetic ministry, gifted to the whole church and permanently enshrined in Scripture. And yet, I think, it seems plain that these chapters are in no sense inapplicable today in Christian gatherings. Sad to say, the Established church (and other Dissenting church) set-ups have their own differing systems of church-practice, embodying procedures of their own devising, having their own way of doing things, and ignoring (it would seem) the guidance of these chapters. It ignores the Spirit's will and directions for church conduct, and to my mind that is a serious matter.

On the other hand, 'the house church' people seem to have awakened from apathy to these chapters, and are great advocates of what is called 'body-life', having great joyful get-togethers, under the Spirit (as they claim). It is quite wrong to underplay the warmth of mutual love so manifestly right between believers, especially in their fellowship together. But it cannot rightly be done by disregarding the discipline that these very passages impose on conduct in such meetings. Anything of excessive excitement, or lack of control, bordering on hysteria, seems more than suspect. I have already listed the *necessary* things said about verbal contributions in chapter 14; and one *cannot* ignore the verse at the end which says "let all be done *decently* and in order". It seems that enthusiasm can take over, and obeying Scripture gets submerged under other things. The Spirit of God, if acting at all, produces harmony, self-restraint, and quiet order. Also the Christ-centredness of what goes on is a severe test of such activities. Though the Spirit may be mentioned freely, *does this glorify Christ?*

(5) Now I must explain what I (and others) judge to be the meaning of the prophet's function envisaged in 1 Corinthians 14. No one locally, in a relatively small gathering, can alter the foundational teaching already laid down, the basis of the Church. But in a limited gathering, in one place, we know very well that some persons have the gift of saying something, not comprehensive, but brief, and selected in wisdom from the Word of God, which applies very suitably to current needs and problems, or supplies food for the souls of hearers. This is *ministry of Christ* indeed, showing quite plainly the marks of the Spirit of God in action as indicated in this chapter. This is 'speaking for God' on a particular occasion, and confirms itself by the comfort, exhortation, or edification embodied in it. Perhaps we have to try to abandon the thought of some special sanctity attaching to the word 'prophet' here. We surely know the experience of receiving ministry by the very awareness that the message is building us up, feeding our souls, perhaps giving us a new sight of Christ. These experiences

come from the Lord in local gatherings of believers.

So, in short, a prophecy (in 1 Corinthians 14) seems to be an apposite and helpful (Scripture-based) word from the Lord in a local gathering of believers: but, in Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 prophets seem to be the conveyors of original basic truth from the ascended Christ — acting as spokesmen for God in a once-for-all way, the outcome being found in the N.T. They did it, and completed it, in early times, for the whole Church at the time, and to be of equal value later; (but see footnote 2).

---

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control"*

(Galatians 5:22, 23 N.Tr.)

Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians draws attention to *love* as indispensable for the effective operation of any of the Spirit's gifts. Taking a close look at that chapter, all the beautiful features of *love* spelt out there, are seen again in the two compact verses in Galatians. The essential, basic, thing here in Galatians is *love* which embraces all those other things listed. **Christian character is the primary requirement.** This, produced within, by occupation with Christ by the Spirit, underlies any effective operation of an outward ability conferred by the Holy Spirit.

Most of the features of *love* indicated, may be called 'love in time', or 'love showing its worth in adverse, difficult, situations'. Think of the Lord Jesus, His *patience, kindness, longsuffering etc.* They were absolute and flawless — in His life, and shone out marvellously in the deep, testing experiences of the cross. With us it can appear (much less perfectly) in our many tests. Believers must not be irked by enmity, but meet it in a calm and Christlike spirit (see Romans 12:17-21). Amongst themselves too they are to forbear with one another in *love*. So, we too are to survive, and overcome. It is the only way.

Love has been manifested, and is required, in the testing days of time. But love belongs to eternity! All tests will pass away, but love remains. Love has a home in eternity, our home-atmosphere already is *there!* Its quality is unfading, Love is to be *enjoyed*, unhindered, in the timeless realm. The Lord Jesus, who could say to His Father "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", could also say "Father I will that those also thou hast given me may be with me *where I am*". The firm basis for it is His *suffering love*, shown here on earth — and rightly remembered, with joyful response to Him, "for ever and ever".

---

Footnote 2 (added in the printed version).

A view often taken, based on many Scriptural indications elsewhere, is that certain manifestations of the Spirit were suited to the initial stages of the Church period. In this early period, sometimes referred to as 'the transition period', the so-called sign-gifts were in evidence. While that may be, and I concur with that view, it is clear that the termination point of that period is not well-defined in Scripture.

What I have said above about 'prophets' may not carry everyone's agreement (some will think that 'prophets' have passed off the scene). But guidance on 'prophecy' in 1 Corinthians 14 is hard to dismiss as of no present relevance. If you prefer it, use the broader term 'ministry' (i.e. service, under the Lord, by the Spirit) to cover profitable activities in Christian gatherings today (such as ministering Christ, instructing, teaching, comforting, exhorting, pastoring, the saints).

The distinction seems to be between the general characteristics of the earlier 'sign-gifts' and the 'edifying gifts', much to be encouraged and benefitted from today.

### A few more editorial remarks

Some comments in writing approving articles in 'Scripture Truth' are received at times. Strangely, these mostly come from remote places — Argentina, New York City, Nigeria, parts of Australia — and of course I am much encouraged by these. But the article on *Amram and Jochebed* in January 1987 evoked a different response. I suppose I might have been prepared for this, since the subject of baptism is an emotive one.

But the following points about that article need to be made clear:

(1) It was *not* principally about what is called 'household baptism'. The bulk of it (say 80%) was concerned with bringing up young families in a godly way, as pressed by Scripture.

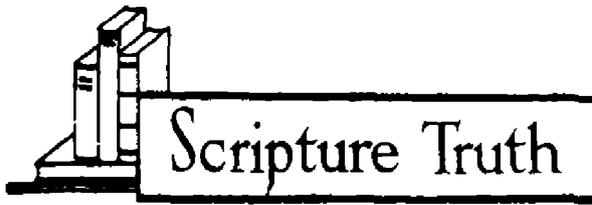
(2) The section referring to 'household baptism' expressed the view taken by those serious Christians who feel (in the light of certain indications in Scripture) that they should baptise their children. The paper did *not* 'teach' household baptism, as some correspondents allege.

(3) It was mildly expressed, pressing only the need for responsible upbringing of children, whatever may be done about baptising them.

On this issue each of us must be left free to be 'fully persuaded in his own mind'. Yet we must consciously abstain from intolerance with others on the matter. Certainly it is no part of an editor's business to come down strongly on one side. I wish to support my authors, and to give them my full backing in writing such carefully expressed material.

Men of considerable spiritual stature have (in the light of Scripture) judged this issue differently, and it is still so today. Respected names can be quoted on both sides. That proves nothing; but it *does* show that over-adamant people are unwise. Anyone who looks carefully at J.N.D.'s letters about this will find the mild spirit of Gordon Spratt's paper plainly there, but also a substantial backing from Scripture for the 'household' view. He will never again dismiss that view as not worth considering. Most of our guides from past times show this common feature of moderation in their writings about it.

(Correspondence on this matter ought to stop now. However, it would be wrong to promise its permanent removal from these pages. For acceptance of *any* material the editor aims to be unbiased, judging it on the basis of (i) its close reliance on Scripture, (ii) its gracious spirit, showing an even and mild temper, (iii) its short and crisp form.)



Incorporating *Words of Help*

SEPTEMBER, 1987

# The "better things" of Christianity

R. A. CREETH

*Our faith in Christ, as believers, has opened to us a new realm where all is 'good'. Indeed it is far 'better' than anything we knew before. This paper shows that a true appreciation of Christ is 'better' in the sense that it utterly outstrips all else that might draw us back, or draw us away from Him.*

It has often been pointed out that the word 'better' is a characteristic word in the epistle to the Hebrews. It occurs some twelve times, emphasising the superiority of Christianity compared with Judaism. The epistle was written to sustain the faith of Jewish believers who were about to see the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, when the whole system of the Jewish religion would come to an end. To prepare them for this the Spirit of God would direct their thoughts and hearts to what is eternally secure and unchanging, above all to the Person of Christ in all His risen glory in the heavens. Hence it is that the "better things" of Christianity, the blessings linked with a risen and glorified Christ, are prominent throughout the epistle.

In chapter 1 it is the deity of Christ that is brought before us. We have His sevenfold glory in verses 1-3: He is the appointed heir of all things, the Maker of the worlds, the effulgence of God's glory, the expression of God's substance, the upholder of all things by the word of His power, the One who has by Himself made purification of sins, and the One who has set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high (see J.N.D.'s translation). Then it is added "being made" or "taking a place by so much better than the angels, as He inherits a name more excellent than they". Being the Son He was ever superior to angels in the glory of His Person, but now, after making purification for sins and taking His place at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, He has become so much better than the angels, having obtained, or inherited, a more excellent name than they.

The second occurrence of the word 'better' is in chapter 6:9. "But,

beloved, we are persuaded *better things* of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." The writer had been warning the Hebrews about the danger of mere profession, and was seeking to stir up the conscience of those who seemed to be resting on outward privilege without the visible evidence of being truly born again. But he hastens to add, "We are persuaded *better things* of you, and things that accompany salvation". He looked for better things, better than mere profession, better than all outward privilege; he looked for things that accompany salvation, the fruit indeed of the divine nature in the lives of those who have received God's salvation.

The third occurrence is in chapter 7:19. "For there is a setting aside of the commandment going before for its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law perfected nothing), and the introduction of a *better hope* by which we draw nigh to God" (J.N.D. translation). Christianity is here described as a hope, only it is a *better* hope. As another has written, "When Israel entered the land of promise, they took it as a foretaste of better things to come with the advent of their Messiah. We Christians have entered into good things of a spiritual sort. We have the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the gift of the Spirit; yet they are but foretastes of the fulness of heavenly blessing which is to come" (F.B.H.). We have now a *better hope*, centred in Christ who as Forerunner has entered for us within the veil, and in virtue of this hope we draw near to God. This is a characteristic privilege of Christianity, for under the law the Israelite was kept at a distance, but now in Christ Jesus we who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

The Lord Jesus was instituted a Priest for ever by the oath of God, in contrast to the priests instituted under the law. Then it is added in chapter 7:22 "by so much Jesus became surety of a *better covenant*". It was better because He has become the Surety for it, taking full responsibility for it, and thereby ensuring its perfect fulfilment.

In chapter 8:6 it is stated, "But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a *better covenant*, which was established upon *better promises*". His priesthood is of a heavenly order, for He has taken His priestly office as risen and glorified. His ministry is therefore far superior to any that was entrusted to the priests of old. The new covenant is established upon *better promises*, for these promises are God's, and therefore will never fail.

The next occurrence of the word 'better' is in chapter 9:23. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with *better sacrifices* than these." The heavens, defiled as they have been by the presence of Satan and the fallen angels, will be purified through the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. The day is coming when

"All taint of sin shall be removed,  
 All evil done away;  
 And we shall dwell with God's Beloved  
 Through God's eternal day."

In chapter 10:32-34 the writer reminds the Hebrew believers that they had endured much conflict in suffering, and had shown great sympathy with those in bonds, and had accepted with joy the plundering of their goods, knowing that they had for themselves *a better substance* which would abide. They would be richly compensated in a future day for the loss of possessions here.

Let me quote the comments of another. "Perhaps that which was specially tempting them at this time was not so much outward persecution, the enduring of a great fight of afflictions, as it was that more subtle and deadly allurements, that lethargy of soul which makes possible declension from the Lord" (S.R.). Hence the exhortation, to which we all need to take heed, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense; for ye have need of endurance in order that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise".

In chapter 11:16 we read of a *better country*, that is, "an heavenly". The patriarchs all died in faith, or we may say "according to faith". Although they never possessed what God had promised them, they died according to that which their faith had laid hold of. They were seeking *a better country*, a heavenly inheritance, and for this reason it is stated God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city. Let us remember that we too have the precious promise of God as to our inheritance, for He has given us a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven (see 1 Peter 1:3-5).

"A *better resurrection*" is mentioned in Hebrews 11:35. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." There was no divine intervention to save them from the tortures of persecution; they would remain faithful to the God who had called them to a better resurrection into heavenly blessing which was ever before them in faith.

The 11th chapter is summed up in verses 39-40. "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided *some better thing* for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The *better thing* is Christianity with its fuller blessing — blessing not known under the Jewish economy — blessing connected with a risen Christ in glory, a heavenly inheritance in contrast to the earthly portion of the Jews. In a time to come these worthy saints of olden time, who were obliged to dwell in caves and dens on earth, and who were subjected to painful persecution and suffering down here, will enjoy the full glory

that awaits all the people of God. At present they are waiting in the Lord's presence for that glorious transformation that will take place when He descends into the air to claim His bride. Then they, with us, will be caught up together to meet Him in the air. We shall all be perfected then when we receive bodies of glory like His own.

The last mention of the word 'better' in the epistle is in chapter 12:24. The writer draws a striking contrast between what we believers have come to and what we have not come to (verses 18-24). Eight things (the number of new creation) are mentioned that we have come to. "But we have come to Mount Zion; and the city of the living God, a heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the first-born ones who are enregistered in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant; and to the *blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel*" (J.N.D. translation).

Another has written, "For us it is not Moses, the mediator of the law covenant, and the blood of bulls and goats, but Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and His precious blood of infinite value" (F.B.H.). Abel's blood cried from the ground for vengeance upon his guilty brother, but the blood of Jesus has value before the very throne of God, and speaks peace to our souls.

Let us then be occupied with *the better things of Christianity*, and above all with the Person and work of our blessed Lord who is supreme in His glory and grace. Let us seek the things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, having our mind on the things that are above, rather than on the things that are on the earth (Colossians 3:1-3).

## KNOWING THE TIME

*"How is it that you do not discern this time?"* (Luke 12:56)

*"And, . . . knowing the time, it is now high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."*

*"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts."* (Romans 13:11-14)

# Bible Studies in Joshua (11)

J. S. BLACKBURN

*The previous paper in this helpful series appeared in November 1986.*

## JOSHUA 9:3-27 — THE WILES OF THE GIBEONITES

In our comment on the defeat at Ai, and especially on the lessons there learned by Israel, the words occur: "from this moment, no more military defeats, no more battle casualties, but unbroken victory". This, in exact terms was true, and of immense import. Nevertheless we have before us in chapter 9 the story of a defeat of a different kind which contains lessons for the Christian's warfare.

The background is the general mobilisation of all the nations of Canaan to "fight with Joshua and with Israel". But a section of one nation, the Hivites, resorted to a different approach — "they did work wilily". Joshua admits this description of their approach: "wherefore have ye beguiled us?" In our quest to find the significance, if possible, of each of the nations so frequently listed in this book, here is the first answer: the Hivites represent the *wiles* of Satan (Ephesians 6:11), and the *beguiling* of the serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3).

On a superficial reading of this episode, we might be tempted to regard it as a kind of false start — an insignificant preliminary. Not so! It was the only action in the whole campaign which produced definite gain to the Canaanites and clear loss of territory for Israel. And its importance for us is underlined by the fact that the only battle act specifically named at first in Ephesians 6 is "the wiles of the devil"! Let us never take lightly the danger presented to us by the *wiles* of the devil.

It will be helpful at this point, to have the full passage referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:2,3; and very moving it is. "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent *beguiled* Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ". Remembering that the main text of our warfare — the Ephesian epistle — is the epistle of the Church as the Bride of Christ, how poignant is this appeal for single-hearted fidelity to Christ in the waiting period. The actions of the devil, given in the A.V. in 2 Corinthians happen to be, for our assistance, alliterative. Against our first coming to faith, *blinding* (4:4). Against our faithful continuance, *beguiling* (11:3). And the enemy still has in his armoury, *buffeting* (12:7).

Let us now pray most earnestly that the Lord may grant us a really

helpful reflection on the enemy's wiles, as illustrated in this chapter, so that we may find light on dealing with the wiles of the devil. We must seek answers to questions as follows: 1. What were the aims of the deceit? 2. What were the means employed? 3. What countermeasures are suggested?

First we must dispel any idea, which some commentators have suggested, that the Israelites were at fault in seeing in these strangers valuable allies in the coming hostilities. Nothing could look less warlike, nor less likely to be effective allies than the stream of bedraggled humanity which was seen entering the camp of Israel that day. The fault of the people and their leaders lay elsewhere, as we shall see. These newcomers were not representing themselves as fighting allies, but as suppliants.

### **1. The aims of the deceit**

The extent of the knowledge possessed by the Hivites is clear in vv. 9, 10 and 24; they came "because of the name of Jehovah thy God; for we have heard the fame of Him, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites". They knew that the coming of the Israelites meant extermination for all the Canaanite nations. Only by representing themselves as not Canaanites at all, but nationals of some land outside the confines of Canaan, could they escape death under the ban.

The application of this to ourselves and our warfare is deeply significant and solemn. The aim of the wiles of the devil is, in large part at least, to cause the Christian to slip, easily and painlessly, into the assumption that behaviour which in fact would rob him of the precious things of his Canaan is outside the ban, and not therefore to be put to death. At this point I ask the reader to turn back to section 7 and re-read the sections "In the church epistles . . . thy members should perish", and also "Achan represents something in the Christian . . . portrayed in the prophets". In this connection, note particularly the word 'covetousness'. (This refers to Vol. 48, page 181 ff.)

### **2. The means employed**

They disguised themselves, using the most meticulous care to change every detail of their appearance and baggage, so as to look like people who had travelled for weeks or months. By the spoken word they presented themselves as a delegation of harmless and foreign origin.

The effect of the Word of God on the believer is to make sin appear as "exceeding sinful". On the contrary the means whereby Satan achieved his end was to make the sin of eating of the forbidden tree look good, pleasant and desirable, and to deny its evil consequences. It is all one with his changing himself into an angel of light. If our consciences were awakened to this danger, it would not be long before we would observe exactly this thing taking place in our own hearts.

### 3. Countermeasures

The one great error stated here in the Word to have been the cause of the downfall (v. 14), was that the people, the princes and Joshua "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord". And the one great safeguard for the believer today is just this, to ask for counsel at the mouth of the Lord. For us, of course, the basis of such a safeguard is constant, regular, and diligent application to the written Word of God. For them, it was complete in that it contained all they needed to possess and enjoy Canaan. For us it means that in the most final sense the Scriptures we hold in our hands contain "all the truth" — the *ne plus ultra* of God's revelation ("nothing beyond").

First, application to this Word needs to be done for a continuous, day by day bringing of each mind and heart into its light, so that it may be in all circumstances "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). To work at this constantly, with our consciences alert, is no heavy burden, as the psalmist shows clearly. But in effect it means to be wearing the "whole armour of God" every day — and thus to be enabled to stand against the wiles of the devil, and to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (see Ephesians 6 again).

In addition, of course, there is the full privilege of coming at any time to the throne of grace, to find mercy and grace to help in time of need. For us, such uses of the Scriptures make available to us "counsel from the mouth of the Lord".

What of the future of these Hivites in Israel? There is a slight ambiguity occasioned by the reference in 2 Samuel 21:2. It is there stated by the author of the passage that "the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites". This, however, could refer not to the existing state of the Gibeonites, but, taking the statement simply, to their origin. They might be compared on this point with the case of Rahab, who was fully taken in to be reckoned an Israelite. Other references to these people tell that these four cities became part of the tribe of Benjamin, and that they were amongst the exiles returned from Babylon, still as part of the tribe of Benjamin. In vv. 23, 27 we learn that they became permanently hewers of wood and drawers of water "for the altar of the Lord", surely a privileged position. Hewers of wood and drawers of water were among the "strangers within thy gates", Deuteronomy 29:1-15. This latter is a class frequently mentioned in the O.T., and as such could have access to all the privileges of Israelites. It thus appears probable that these Hivite cities were rendered, by the wiles of the Gibeonites, permanently unavailable to Israel to possess and enjoy. It was a defeat for Israel unequalled at any other time.

Finally, let us note v. 17. "Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim". Happily, these names are among the easier names to interpret: in order, they mean, hill, village, wells, and city

of trees. If reference is made to the description, at the beginning of the previous chapter, of the physical features of Canaan which made it blest above all lands, it will be recognised immediately that these four place names describe a corner of Canaan in which its delights were concentrated. The names describe an area of peaceful habitations in a shaded, well-watered, and fertile location. In other words, the cities lost to Israel by the grave failure to keep in mind the word of the Lord, were among the choicest in the land. How urgent for us are the spiritual lessons drawn out in this chapter.

It is now more than time we had some direct meditation on the substance of the 'spiritual blessings in heavenly places' (Ephesians 1:3) which are the Christian's Canaan. It will be worthwhile to attempt to include some such thoughts, at this moment on 1 Corinthians 2:9, but in later papers too.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17 to 2:6 so much is said in deprecation of wisdom, that an observer might be imagined to comment: "is your message then foolishness?" To seize the emphasis in context, we might, perfectly permissibly, insert the emphatic 'do' in 2:7 so as to read: "we *do* speak wisdom", but a new and different wisdom, wisdom of God, hidden wisdom, ordained of God before the world. In v. 9 we have the only statement of the content of this wisdom, the mystery, that *this* epistle affords:

*"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."*

The negatives of this verse (not, nor, neither) seem to have two implications. The first is that man's means of knowing, the channels open to him by which ordinary knowledge reaches him, are all incapable of reaching this mystery. It must remain inaccessible to man, since he possesses no other channel for knowledge. "But God" begins the next verse. God has intervened "for them that love Him". "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, *the deep things of God*". Here are the wells (Beeroth) of the Christian's Canaan. "The Spirit . . . shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The second implication of the negatives is that the quality of the knowledge of this mystery is superlative; it exceeds infinitely, in beauty and in satisfying power, all that the mind and heart of man is capable of encompassing.

At this point it seems desirable to bring forward for repetition a quotation from the last paper: "The spiritual exercises are prayer, meditation on the Scriptures as the Lord's own words to us, and self-judgment". And so, at this moment it is our prayer that the Lord Himself may be heard saying to each, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved" (Canticles 5:1).

# Created, Formed, Made (2a)

COLIN CURRY

*"I have created him for my glory, I have formed Him; yea,  
I have made him."* (Isaiah 43:7)

*In paper 1 we have considered these three words as they occur in Genesis 1 and 2. Now we look at them as referred to in the late stages of Isaiah. God's plans for earth, and for His earthly people Israel, are in mind principally here. Though the paper is in two parts (a) and (b) it is a single paper and, in due course, should be read as a whole.*

## Preliminary Words

This first section is intended to make it clear how, in the rest of the paper, the 'created, formed, made' theme is latent; it underlies our comments, while we may not follow it closely step by step.

Our three words, created, formed, made, have been seen to emphasise *beginnings, progressive developments, and perfect achievement* of movements brought about by God. In the O.T. history these stages are apparent, though the completion stages belong to the prophetic future. The parts of the O.T. story which are central from the divine viewpoint are soon arrived at in Genesis (half the time-span of the O.T. being already covered within a dozen chapters). God's action, singling out Abraham, is a new start — in which much lies latent. Abraham's reliance on the bare word of God, the Seed of Abraham through whom all blessing was to come, the line of succession leading towards the fulfilment of God's promise, the chosen family through successive generations, the children of Israel, the beginnings of a nation soon to be redeemed from bondage, and to occupy a land sovereignly allotted to them — all these come into view before the close of the opening book of the Bible. Soon the people of God as a nation, with the power of Egypt broken, begins to take shape. We shall see how God Himself treasured recollections of the childhood stages of His redeemed people (Hosea 11).

The *beginnings* of Israel's story, then, are clear. But the *developments* are also, sadly, clear. They are extensive too, occupying much of the rest of the O.T., and overlapping into the N.T. There are few bright parts to this story. God's handling of His people required much gracious persistence, in view of their general failure and unfaithfulness. It is *this* part of the story we shall need to refer to mostly here. But, in it all, the prophetic voice asserting what God *will* do despite all this, threads through the otherwise dismal tale.

Ultimately His determined *end* (for the people of His sovereign choice) will emerge. There is much of his *forming* activity, His recreating ways, still to come for them before His end is achieved. the *trauma* ahead for them, separating out a godly people suitable to Himself, is part of the prophetic outlook — as also the *blessings* for them at the time of their reinstatement. This paper will briefly follow them through to their point of entry into millennial blessings, though the third paper will have more on the bright side of the *accomplishment* of God's objectives for them.

### **Isaiah 43: the context**

Some general words about the broad import of the late chapters in Isaiah will first be needed. But to limit the length of the paper we shall soon confine its scope to verses 1 to 7 of chapter 43.

At the close of Genesis 2, an unspoiled, perfect scene had been arrived at. God Himself placed His stamp of approval on it. But how different was the background picture when Isaiah wrote his prophecy! Years in thousands had passed. From Genesis 3, a rebel was active, undermining and opposing the work of God. Man had fallen, misled by Satan's wily approach. Man, the climax of God's creative work, had disobeyed and dishonoured God who made him. It did not stop there; it affected and infected the whole race. Wide indeed is the realm where sin reigns, and death is its close counterpart. Between Adam and Isaiah, how many and how widespread are the dark happenings occupying the bulk of the intervening parts of the Bible. Man everywhere had shown himself to be weak, beyond reform, incorrigible, at enmity with God. It is still so in all the basic senses.

God singled out a nation for special favour, Israel. He gave that people His closest attention, cultivating and encouraging them, despite many rebuffs. He revealed Himself to them in distinct ways, indeed they could be called a class apart. They were a chosen people, destined for a high place in His plans, and to transmit the knowledge of God to the other nations. Thus they were to be a light to the Gentiles. But their witness was hardly ever a true one; often they misrepresented Him in the full view of others. His love for them, which was marvellously real, was unappreciated and flouted. Other gods were preferred. How does God, as Isaiah presents Him, react when faced with so recalcitrant a people? This seems a bigger task for Him than that of creation, if we may so speak. We can take in the notion of bare power in action (though really quite out of our depth about it). But coping with sin, wilfulness, ignorance, obtuseness, rebellion, is something in a very different category. *Moral* problems — the handling of nations and individuals deeply and inextricably involved in the slavery resulting from abandoning God's high standards — are problems far beyond the range of bare omnipotence alone. The full resources of divine wisdom, sovereign and irresistible love, and grace, in flawless righteousness, are the only answers. In a word, God in Christ is the only answer. These great

resources *are* found in God! Strange if we were not stirred to admire and exult in a God like this! Isaiah certainly was! He reaches heights of magnificent yet unselfconscious appreciation of God, and response to God, in many of these chapters. Yet this stands alongside dark descriptions of unfaithfulness, of blindness and insensitivity to their wrong and shame, shown by the favoured nation that He had tended so patiently and long.

In Isaiah's time, the split-up of the united kingdom into northern and southern parts ('Israel' and 'Judah') was long in the past. It took place about two centuries earlier. Isaiah speaks principally to Judah: beginning his ministry in the reign of Uzziah. It continues, overlapping later reigns down to Hezekiah. Isaiah began his prophecy at a time when the final decimation and deportation of the northern kingdom (the ten tribes), under Assyria, was near. It would be complete within one or two decades. Assyria, a vicious foe, would have dealt similarly with Judah and Jerusalem. Hezekiah vacillated, but at a critical time he received help to depend entirely on God. His faith revived, and, though Sennacherib had his forces at the very gates of Jerusalem, that great enemy was foiled. Judah lived, to exist for more than a century further. A new power, Babylon, hardly in prominence at all before, was soon to develop, and dominate the whole area. *This great power actually took Judah into captivity later, devastating the whole region, and destroying the temple too. Hezekiah and Isaiah lived and died, but Isaiah's prophetic foresight saw that captivity ahead, and saw far beyond it too. The latter part of the prophecy (chapters 40 on) relates to Babylon as the great oppressor, anticipating her role a hundred or more years ahead, with more beyond. There is much that is supportive, and comforting, from God, amidst these dark prospects.*

The Assyrian enemy, current in Isaiah's lifetime, appears much in chapters 1-39. This is mostly outside the scope of this paper. But God's judgments on nations on a world-wide scale appear also. Amid the judgments from God appearing in the group of chapters 13 to 23 *one* is worth brief notice. The Oracle pronouncing the doom of Babylon, heads the sequence. What seems obvious from the chapter (13) is that it does *more* than forecast the downfall of the literal Babylon. Medes are actually mentioned in verse 17, and with them Persians are in mind; the literal downfall of the city, thoroughly destroyed and wasted, never again to be inhabited, is predicted. But who could think that this exhausts the passage? Babylon is the focal point of the chapter, yet it stands for something far *greater than itself*. It points to *world* upheaval, such as the New Testament depicts in the last days. It is a shadow of what is still overhanging the world. The word *earth* or *land* (often used in a local setting) seems to give place to *world*, verse 11, as more distant fulfilments engulf the nearer ones.

In our section in Isaiah 43, the point just indicated is important. Verses 3 and 4 indicate nations and places in the middle east — Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba. It is said that the reference may be to what followed after the fall of

Babylon and the release of the captive Jews. Cyrus the Persian, along with his son, was permitted to possess the territories particularly named here. The very name of Cyrus appears soon in the prophecy (44:28; 45:1), as the person God would use in this way. All this long before Cyrus was born! These relatively short-term foreseeings of the chapters are plain. But is this all? What about verses 5 to 7 in Isaiah 43? God's people *did* return to Jerusalem from many quarters, but these verses surpass considerably in their scale all that happened when the bondage of Judah to Babylon was broken. These three verses *will* be fulfilled, patently and signally, when God completes perfectly all that He intends for Israel — when the *creating, forming, making* sequence reaches its accomplishment.

In the book of Isaiah the voices of the prophets are, for the most part unheeded — and the captivity in Babylon is the *sure* outcome of Judah's unrepentant attitude towards God. His righteousness cannot be flouted, though His patience is long. But, amazingly, these later parts *see beyond* that captivity too. Liberation is in the air! A second Exodus from bondage is anticipated. Furthermore, deliverance and reinstatement of God's people in a more distant day, and out of a far greater tribulation, is also being envisaged and celebrated in advance. Guilt, both personal and national, and the basic means of release and freedom in *that* area are by no means unexplored here. Threads run through these chapters, which show how their inward bondage at the deepest level will be met. The One true Servant is alone able to break those bonds, to establish that deliverance in righteousness. We know where the principal passages are, and truly this is the absolute crux of Isaiah's message. "Isaiah saw His glory, and spoke of Him", is the N.T. comment (John 12:41). How right it is to rejoice in the God who acts in *these* situations, asserting and establishing the moral basis of everything, confounding every adversary, bringing in His abundant, sovereign, grace — and so manifesting His own bright and eternal glory.

While God's marvellous grace in handling His earthly people fills these pages, we Christians today are not a whit less dependent on such grace, and on the One who laid the firm basis for it, the Lord Jesus, the great Sufferer for sin, the great Deliverer from bondage, routing every foe. Important too, it is to see that no lightweight repentance is envisaged in these chapters. Chapter 53, well-remembered for other reasons, is first of all a statement of deepest heart-searching and repentance. Here Israel is brought to their 'moment of truth', when deep trouble under God will bring them to discover their gross wrong in rejecting their Messiah. The shame of their past will become shockingly clear, and deeply confessed. Nor should the shame of *our* past ever cease to be alive in our consciousness, who know our guilt and the shackles of sin for ever removed by that great action. Let us never find ourselves in the state of so enjoying our blessings that forgetfulness of the means through which they have come to us begins to show itself.

# To the Seven Churches

## (3) Pergamos

**TOM TYSON**

*To this church the One who discerns the state of all the churches exposes outward features as well as inward trends which He cannot approve, and seriously calls for repentance. Unawareness of what we are as He assesses us is a grave possibility; and we must treat this letter as a call to overhaul ourselves. How do we measure up under this kind of thorough scrutiny? At the same time, as always, all that is on the credit side is fairly said first. These letters are always encouraging and for our good if we heed them.*

Looking at this letter, and gathering from it the background of the believers addressed, it is plain that theirs was an easier situation (in the main) than at Smyrna, where faithfulness 'even to death' was called for. We seem to find a church entangled with the world. The word Pergamos means 'married', and a church with a close bond with the world seems indicated. As is well known, times of open pagan persecution, seeking to stamp on the testimony to Christ, became much less intense (having in fact failed in that attempt). What followed was a complete change. Under Constantine, Christianity became 'the state religion' and people submitting to Rome (or later, under the 'holy wars'), were obliged to adopt the 'Christian' name. Satan has his methods, and where rank opposition failed, the subtle way was more successful. 'The world' can intimidate and threaten believers, if true to their Lord. But the 'world' as a potential ally, can mislead Christians, and distort true Christianity radically. We need this kind of warning from our Lord in our day particularly, where the name 'Christian' is a common umbrella over many — even over nations — though the power of Christianity, i.e. the power and preciousness of the Name of Christ, is little appreciated.

After a recovery, a decline often follows. It is a repeated pattern through the Christian era. Smyrna with its faithfulness in the face of all that was mounted against it, moves over to Pergamos, open to worldly habits and ways of thinking. A worldly environment encroaches upon and destroys the distinctive, separate nature of assembly and personal life and vigour in true Christian witness to Christ. This only springs from close knowledge of Himself.

Declension followed by recovery is a pattern very clear in Judges, a book which has some features in common with these messages to the

churches. Repeatedly in Judges God's earthly people decline into a sad state, but then are recovered again by a deliverer, a man raised up by God to act, and to re-establish His truth. But once the relief comes, and the pressure is taken off, the downward slide continues. After the deliverer departs, the fire dies down, and other (perhaps worse) developments ensue. What was first a movement from God, becomes a monument. What a word is this for *us*, who live in the wake of great movements from God in recent centuries, with all the guidance and teaching from the Lord (from the Scriptures) recovered to us!

For the first time the Lord Jesus introduces Himself in His judging character. "He that has the sharp two-edged sword": Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the Word of God as sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning and separating things to their very roots. Our Lord judges His church according to His infallible word. He has the burning eyes too, and perceives everything!

This said, there is commendation again first. Verse 13 seems mostly of this kind. Do *we* go about things in a critical way? Do we ever think of praising (as far as is right) people whom we cannot agree with entirely? It is *His* way. He knows their works, and where they  *dwell* . That could be disapproval, of course, on the lines that dwelling there may mean having their hearts taken up with the world. Later in the book there is much about "earth-dwellers" who come in for severe judgment later. To Pergamos it could be a rebuke, or perhaps just a statement of fact. It may mean no more than "I know the hardness of your situation" with all the unhelpful influences around — or of course it could be saying you have forgotten your heavenly calling. Had they settled down — to  *dwell*  there? Perhaps, in view of the 'but' which starts verse 14, we may take the lighter, sympathetic, view of this phrase since it comes amongst His non-critical words.

The commendation proceeds. He knows that they "held fast His Name". It was a positive activity. They were not letting slide any vital truth concerning the Person of Christ — indeed they were holding to a bold confession of "my faith". Satan will belittle *that*! How clear a grasp of such great truths have we? A great respect is due to early Church leaders surely — Athanasius as a sample, for instance. We owe more to them than is often realised.

But faithfulness was still opposed. One faithful martyr is named by the Lord Jesus — one from amongst their own selves. The Lord Jesus names him. How would we react if one of our own company was taken away, in this fashion, to meet death in faithfulness to our Lord? How it would affect us! It happens elsewhere today; there are numbers having to meet it. It could so easily come our way too. We should never have known Antipas's name, but the Lord Jesus does not leave him in obscurity — He singles him out. Remember that all our names are there, in the indelible eternal records!

The turning point comes in verse 14. "*But I have a few things against thee*". He had *one thing* against them at Ephesus (though it was serious). He had *nothing* against them at Smyrna. But now He has "*a few things*" in Pergamos to speak about. When the "roaring lion" attack fails, Satan gets inside, like Balaam: Balaam was a false prophet, acting in subtlety, belittling the true testimony, seducing God's people into spiritual idolatry and fornication — a sad picture of what association with the world and its pursuits really is. How easily we fall for *this*, thinking how innocuous it is! *Is it not true that the whole church today is under this comment?* Many who once acted upon this warning are now moving away — sinking back, treating these things as 'excessive narrowness'. There *is* a narrowness to shrink far away from, of course (the narrow outlook of strong legalism, far removed from the spirit of Christ). But when the style of 'the world' is accepted, it quickly becomes the prominent feature in a lax church. The church must deal with it. The Lord calls urgently for *repentance* and He *means it*. If not, He says, He will judge decisively — He will come to them and fight against them with the sword of His mouth. He will set Himself against them. The word repent of course means judge the matter as *He* does — confess the failure, come round to view it as He does.

The word to the overcomer is closely related to the shortcomings He has exposed. They (in Pergamos) were involved with dishonourable associations, feeding on sacrifices to idols. But the overcomer feeds on the hidden manna (within the ark, in the very presence of God — Hebrews 9:4). It reminds us of the verse "Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). It is a hidden thing, a life "hidden with Christ in God" which sustains and purifies the one occupied with *Him*. "The hidden manna", the living bread who once came down from heaven, is a food which indeed satisfies, and preserves from all worldly preoccupations. The white stone, specially given to the individual by the Lord, could indicate something pure, and permanent — a token of approval, acquittal, of special intimacy and closeness to Him, given personally by our Lord 'on a one to one basis'.

John the writer learned it in loneliness and isolation, finding the preciousness of his Lord in *those* circumstances. A brother, after long years of privation and imprisonment, testified to a wish to return to those times: he *longed* to be back there, so he said, for he had found it was a time of learning wonderfully the matchless love and preciousness of his Lord.

---

*"In order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit."*  
*(Romans 8:4, N.Tr.)*

Our text does not say fulfilled by us, but *in* us. There is a great difference between the two. Suppose we are at a boarding school for boys and at 6.30 a.m. on a dreary December morning the school bell clangs incessantly. It says, "Get up, get up", and one hundred sleepy boys slip reluctantly from their beds. They hate the sound of the bell at that hour, and obey its command with great reluctance and only because they must. The law of the school is fulfilled *by them*, not because they love it, but from fear of the consequences of disobedience.

But at 12.30 on that same day the same bell rings again, and its ringing is just as much a command as it was in the early morning. But how different is the sound of it to those same boys! It is now as pleasant to them as before it was hateful. They have been longing to hear it for more than an hour, and everything is dropped with which they are engaged, as they rush to the dining room. The command of the dinner bell is fulfilled *in them*, for there is that in them that gives an instant response to it.

If the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled in us, there must be in us a nature that responds to it. When we were "in the flesh", that is, in our natural unregenerated state, we had no such nature and we did not, and could not, please God. Our very nature was enmity against Him.

But now, having believed the gospel, we are "in Christ Jesus". What a change! And the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can make us free from the law of sin and death, so that we may delight now in the law of God after the inward man, and find a power in the Spirit to fulfil it.

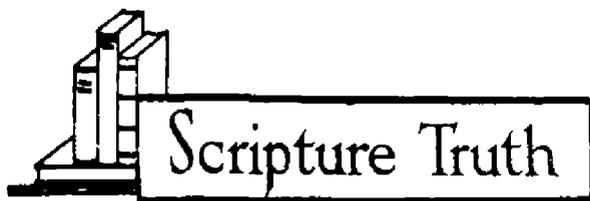
**J. T. Mawson** (from *The Lord is Near* Calendar)

## PRIORITIES

Matthew 6:33 — *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

A quotation — *"You can't get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first."*

(From a paper entitled 'First and Second Things': C. S. Lewis, 1942.)



Incorporating *Words of Help*

NOVEMBER, 1987

# Fear Thou Not!

ALLAN RETALLICK

*"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God."*  
(Isaiah 41:10)

*This paper is both encouraging and comforting. It draws our attention to the confidence in Himself that God looks for; supporting us with direct words from Himself. These words are exactly suited for us in many disturbing experiences that we, His people, have to meet.*

During the war years the only contact that we had with our friends in Holland was an occasional Red Cross message (limited to ten words). What a joy it was to receive an answer to one of these, to tell that our loved ones were still alive and well, with the cryptic ending "Isaiah 41:10". This counted as one word, apparently, but it meant much more to us. It had always been a favourite text, and it now had acquired a new depth. It reminded us of the many times in the Bible that the words "Fear not" or "Be not afraid" are found, about 140 times in all.

The first occasion when God spoke these words was when Abram (as he was called then) had delivered his nephew Lot from the power of the heathen kings, and had also told the king of Sodom that he would not receive anything, "from a thread to a shoelatchet", from him, lest he should say: "I have made Abram rich". It was then that God encouraged His servant with this beautiful message: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward". Not long before, fear had moved Abram to pretend that Sarai was his sister, and he nearly lost his wife to Pharaoh. Let us not be hard on Abram for this. God had promised him that he would be the father of a great nation, and also that the land was to be possessed by his posterity; but momentarily Abram had lost sight of God's promises (as his descendant David in a later day), and this led to his using fleshly means to save his life. Are we not often tempted to do the same thing?

We know that "our life is hid with Christ in God", and that nothing can separate us from His love; and yet we also lose sight of the great and precious promises, and stoop to worldly expedients. How graciously the Lord lifts us up and restores us! We hear Him saying to us, as in the text with which we began: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee". Has He not promised: "I will never leave thee"? Abram might have regretted his refusal of the treasures that the king of Sodom had offered, but, like Moses, he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Sodom, or any other of this world's powers. Of Moses we read that "he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27); while Abraham, as we read in the same chapter, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). God's answer to this faith was: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward". For the believer today a glimpse of the blessed Man in the glory puts all the tinsel and glitter of this world into true perspective — they are worthless.

When faced by apparently insurmountable difficulties, we may well say, as the servant of Elisha did when they were surrounded by hostile soldiers: "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15). The prophet did not fear the mighty enemies, for his eyes were opened to the spiritual world, and he said to his trembling servant: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them", and when the young man's eyes were opened, he saw the hosts of God encamped round about them that fear Him. So can we also exclaim: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Earlier on, when the children of Israel had been delivered out of Egypt, their hearts failed them when, "the foe behind, the sea before", they seemed doomed to destruction. It was then that Moses said to them: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exodus 14:13). "Man's extremity is God's opportunity".

Again and again, when going on towards the promised land, the people were discouraged to hear of the terrifying giants that occupied the country. Joshua and Caleb, however, men of faith, said: "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:8, 9). We know that the people would not listen to the words of faith and courage, and as a consequence they did not enter into the land. Only Joshua and Caleb, of all the grown men, went in to possess the land.

Throughout the desert journey the people were sustained in a miraculous way, as was later confessed in the prayer recorded in Nehemiah 9. In spite of their murmurings and disobedience, God remained faithful. To Moses He would say, when Og, king of Bashan, came to fight the people of God: "Fear Him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand" (Numbers

21:34). When Moses gave his final instructions to them before his death, he used the same words: "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 1:21).

At the end of his life this faithful leader of Israel handed over his task to Joshua, but, before doing so, he reminded them of all the promises of God, and concluded with the words: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6). To Joshua, too, fighting the battles of the Lord, the words were spoken more than once: "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed" (Joshua 8:1; 10:25).

Centuries later, in the time of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, the people were again threatened by their enemies. The godly king called his people to prayer for deliverance, and God sent a prophet to tell him that God had heard their prayers, and would give them the victory. "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle", he said: "set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you" (2 Chronicles 20:17). How often we need to remind ourselves, when faced by innumerable foes, that "this God is our God for ever and ever" (Psalm 48:14).

Our blessed Lord delighted to comfort His disciples with these same words. When Peter fell down before Him, overwhelmed by the manifestation of power in the miraculous draught of fishes, the Lord Jesus said: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10). To the sorrowing father, having just heard that his daughter was dead, the Saviour could say: "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50). When the disciples, struggling against the contrary winds, saw the Lord walking on the water, they cried out for fear; but He said to them: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

To His own the Lord Jesus said: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He knew how easily their minds could be occupied with the things of this age, and He would turn their thoughts to the things that are above. Do we not also often need to be reminded that our Father knows what we have need of, and to be encouraged to "seek the kingdom of God"?

What a cheer it was to the apostle Paul, when he must have been cast down after his many labours and experiences, as he sums them up in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, when the Lord Himself spoke to him in the night, with the comforting words: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10). Again, when the storm threatened his life and that of all in the ship, he could stand up and testify that an angel of the God whose He was, and whom he served, had been sent to him with the message: "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before

Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (Acts 27:24). What a word of cheer this very text has been to many of the Lord's servants "in peril on the sea"! Like our blessed Lord, who could sleep in the midst of the tempest, because He knew that He was in the place where His Father would have him to be, so we, too, may enjoy "His peace" as we seek to be obedient to Him in the service that He has given us.

When John, the beloved disciple, received on the island of Patmos such a radiant vision of the glorified Lord, he fell at His feet as dead. But the Lord touched him, and a familiar voice said: "Fear not; I am the first and the last". As long before, on the shores of Galilee, he must have exclaimed once more: "It is the Lord". As he received the divine commission to send letters to the seven assemblies in Asia Minor, how he must have rejoiced to write the words to the suffering saints: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer" (Revelation 2:10). To these suffering ones the Lord revealed Himself as the One who had been dead, but was alive for evermore, and, moreover, had the keys of death and of hades. None has such sympathy with the suffering of His people as the ascended Christ of God. He came, as He reminded His hearers in Nazareth, to heal the broken-hearted, and we know that He, our great High Priest, is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

"Sweet thought! we have a Friend above  
Our feeble faltering steps to guide,  
Who follows with the eye of love  
The little flock for which He died."

The book of the prophet Isaiah abounds with the words "fear not" or "be not afraid". Whenever in our own experience the enemy "comes in like a flood", we can always turn to this precious assurance: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee: Fear not; I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:13). We may say that all these promises were made to Israel, but the last chapter of Hebrews encourages us to take these promises and make them our own; "for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5, 6).

The apostle Peter, who had heard the same words many times from his Lord's lips, passed them on to his readers, going through bitter experiences: "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Peter 3:14). Let us then take courage, and press on without fear, "looking unto Jesus".

# The Forward-Looking Mind (2)

GORDON SPRATT

## PHILIPPIANS 3

*Here we continue the report on the St Andrew's 1986 bible-reading on this chapter. In the discussion there were many contributions from 'the floor of the house', which are covered here. These are acknowledged, but individuals are not specified.*

There is much in this chapter, and in our discussion we should perhaps move quickly to verse 7, and spend our time *mostly* on verses 7-14, and 20, 21. This will give us the main bent of the chapter.

### Discussion

Basic Christian *joy* (joy in *the Lord* (v. 1)) is quite distinct from natural happiness and well-being. It is unique, possessed by believers alone, and an unshakeable thing because it centres in Him alone. Circumstances never rob us of our Lord as a source of true joy. This is not an experience characteristic of this world at all.

On the terms 'concision' and 'circumcision': In the early Christian days, there was an attack by those who would like to return to (or retain) the manners, behaviour, and the ordinances of Judaism. The Jews were referred to as 'the circumcision'. Circumcision was the mark of God's O.T. people. Now, Paul says, things have entirely changed. Because of the rejection of the Lord Jesus, and because of what Judaism had become, there had been an almost complete reversal. Those who had seen others as 'dogs', Paul now refers to as dogs themselves — they were outsiders to Christianity, because they had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who had been the keepers of the Law, or should have been, he now speaks of as 'evil workers'. In Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus said of the Pharisees, those that in the divine intention should have been the exponents of divine righteousness were the very ones who had become 'workers of iniquity'. Those who had borne the outward mark of the people of God, in circumcision, were now 'the concision'. Here there is a play on words — but the word concision means 'mutilation'. What had been originally the mark to remind them of their separation to God, had become the mutilation of their flesh. But Paul says — Ah! there is now *another* company that has the mark of being the people of God — another circumcision — those who worship by the Spirit of God (see John 4:24), who rejoice in Christ Jesus (not in law, or the ordinances of Judaism, but in *Him*), and

have no confidence in the flesh (not living according to flesh, but according to Spirit). Notice that this verse includes the whole Trinity, and also that these (inward) things are the distinguishing marks of Christians. Ourselves, we *cannot* remove from our lives those things that are offensive to God — that would be a hopeless quest — but the Cross removes our ‘old man’ completely — he has been cut off in death.

Verses 14-19 also highlight other ways in which ‘the flesh’ (i.e. ‘self’) can take prominence in our thoughts and occupation, distracting us from the single-minded occupation with Christ which Paul expresses here. ‘Minding earthly things’, setting our hearts and minds on earthly targets, beyond the responsible behaviour which is right for Christians, can so easily dominate the life, and dim the believer’s view of Christ, and his joy in the Lord. Let us pay heed closely to Paul’s word, “be ye followers of me”.

Moving to the verses 7ff. it is to be noted that it is not only the shameful things in his past that he disowns. Here the worthless things (in Paul’s view) are things that look good, that many a person might have been proud of. These are outstanding things — with such a pedigree he had no rival. Yet he dismissed it all, for Christ. Well-born, of the aristocracy, specialist in the pure Hebrew language, of the chief sect among the Jews, zealous in sustaining the Jew’s religion, to the point of persecution of Christians. All this was counted as nothing at all — indeed less than that, loss. We should notice the ‘black and white’ nature of these statements. He does not think of these one-time assets as having reduced value since his conversion. *No value* at all is placed on them. What needful lessons for ourselves these are!

Notice that v. 7 is in the past, while v. 8 is in the present. The losses in v. 7 were the things that until then were gain to him. He counted them loss for Christ. But now, as he writes, he counts ‘all things’ as loss, as filth in his present estimation, replaced now by “the *excellency* of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”. Surely we have an indication of Paul’s progress here. We see here too how assessment of the future, and a high goal with Christ in the future, affects the decisive character of our Christian lives today. Notice also that we do not give things up for service, but we give them up for Christ. Paul does not say, I have put these things on one side so that I may be the apostle to the Gentiles, but that I may win Christ — a searching word surely. Christ Himself, personally, must be the motive power and objective of any service for the Lord. We must realise that there is much slipping away from the real standards of Scripture, in having other reasons for our actions in seeking to serve the Lord.

A quote from Mr Darby, in the Synopsis, seemed like a jewel to be passed on. Speaking about the fact that it was Paul’s assets, not his liabilities, that he counted as loss, he says, “The stars, as well as the darkness of night, disappear before the sun”. To Paul, *everything else* disappears before the glory of Christ. ‘My Lord’, he says — a very personal note. How closely personal is this with us? Here is a heart closely attached to Him.

Now let us remind ourselves that in v. 8, in saying ‘that I may

win Christ', very clearly he is speaking of what lies at the end of his Christian path. When he is at home with the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have reached this great objective which draws him onward. Do *we* have our eyes set on this goal, or do we allow other things to intervene and distract us?

That goal is in Paul's mind in v. 8. "That I may *win Christ*". As an objective kept well in mind it begins to possess us. But meantime Paul's desire is "That I may *know Him*" (v. 10). The intervening verse speaks about being "*found in Him*". Here is our *status* as believers in Christ, not only in time but in eternity, having the righteousness which is of *God*, by faith. All of us as believers have this standing in Christ. But then Paul says that status is not enough to fill his heart. He wants to *know Him*, now and increasingly. This is a present possibility, strongly attractive to Paul. Let us note this well — the *present* time while we await the experience of being with Him and like Him, is the time for *knowing Him*! How does one get to know Him? How does one get to know *anyone*? By being in their company primarily, not by reading about them in the newspaper. Books are valuable; we may read *about Him* there. But reading about Him is not knowing Him personally. We *do*, however, get to know Him in His company, in communion with Him. This can be a great lack with us. We can be so busy in legitimate things, in service for Him even, and lose that personal communion which is the secret of knowing Him. (And most of us can be content with knowing about Him. Perhaps we can ask intelligent questions in Bible Readings, we can give an address that hangs together, we may be fairly happy about these things. These are the kinds of things that Paul counted loss for Christ. Had we thought of that! But he wants to know *Him*.) Discipline is needed. We must find room for this, whatever else has to be displaced. Let us not suppose that our Christianity comes automatically. We *need* to discipline ourselves, and things don't happen unless we do.

But also, it is not a question of knowing Him as He *was*, but as He *is* today. Many dear Christians have their minds occupied with the humble life of the Lord Jesus and the cross of shame where His love was expressed, and those are right subjects to dwell on, as chapter 2 shows clearly. But sole occupation with Him in that place in the past, misses such a great deal of His present glory in heaven, which can shape the very nature of a Christian's life and aims. To know Him where He *is* constitutes the great challenge for us in this chapter. Are all our aspirations, and the bent of our affections, connected with a Man who is out of this world absolutely, and is in the glory? That is the place to know Him, the place where Paul knew Him.

Our comments on 'reading' earlier, of course, were not intended to underrate the Scriptures. Reading Scripture is *necessary* as an important link in enlarging our awareness of the Person to whom our hearts are attached. By this means our minds and our hearts can be channelled

towards Himself, and communion with Him enjoyed. But sadly, theoretical knowledge from the Scriptures — getting well-informed about biblical truth, and being satisfied with this in a cold expository way — is a real possibility.

Three things are spoken of by Paul. The power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death — this last to lead to actual resurrection from among the dead. Paul is saying that he wishes to be fully committed to identification with his Lord. Having looked back (in ch. 2) at the perfect pattern, he now seems to be saying “I yearn to be like my Lord and Master in every possible way — to suffer as one committed to the will of God — if necessary, to die a martyr’s death, so that this may lead to physical resurrection from among the dead. My Lord suffered, my Lord died, my Lord was raised from among the dead; I long to be conformed to that pattern”. The power of His resurrection may be a moral thought — the moral power of the resurrection-faith was certainly demonstrated by the early witnesses to our Lord, and is by no means only a thing of the past. But the end of verse 11, attaining the resurrection from amongst the dead, is actual bodily resurrection which he looks on to at Christ’s coming. These things, sufferings, death, resurrection, were *real* things indeed with the Lord Jesus. Paul wants to follow Him too. His desires were realised too, though the third is yet to be. We should note that these are *attainable* standards. The model of the Lord Jesus is perfect, and as such is *unattainable* here. But Paul speaks of himself, presenting an example such as failing human beings can follow.

The great moment when we ‘take possession’ of that to which this course in life has been the objective, will be wonderful indeed! What a moment comes when all the problems and negotiations over a dwelling place on earth have been resolved — when the furniture is moved in, and we are ‘in possession’! This is the tiniest shadow of that great *moment* that Paul always had his heart set on. He hadn’t got there yet. Nor have we. Although perfected now as to our consciences, as Hebrews 10 tells, in this respect we shall yet be perfected. The process already going on, our advance towards that goal, will be completed in the day when verses 20, 21 are fulfilled. We look for the Saviour! We anticipate the transformation of our bodies, into the likeness of His own body of glory! The term ‘the Saviour’ is fitting here. That action of His will be the last touch of *salvation*. He will come as ‘the Saviour of our body’ to complete the work of salvation He has already begun with us. We shall be saved out of the very place and presence of sin, and into the place of glory of which He is the centre.

Paul forgets the things that are behind — that is to say his past attainments, and any steps of progress that he may have made. But we only have to read Paul to see that he retains a sensitivity about his unworthiness, his weaknesses and shortcomings in the past. He is always conscious of this, and retains a humble lowly spirit. But he does not look back in the sense of looking down. Like a man on a ladder, he knows that this is no help. But his gaze is always upwards and onwards to where

Christ is. What he describes is not exactly a race, for there is no competition in this picture. Perhaps this is better illustrated by those who eventually got to the top of Everest. It was a summit they were to reach. There was a mark ahead, calling them onwards — a prize to be attained; it was the prize of “the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus” (N.Tr.). Christ Jesus was *on high*, in the glory. He was pressing towards Him, in that same high glory.

We shall only manage a few brief words on the last two verses. ‘Conversation’ (v. 20) is misleading. Citizenship, or commonwealth, are better. Citizenship is perhaps to be chosen, since this is a matter that the Philippians, especially, would have understood. Philippi was a Roman colony, and everything about it was Roman. It was a kind of enclave in Macedonia. It was mainly populated with retired Roman soldiers. They served 21 years, and then they were rewarded with Roman citizenship. It was a great matter to be a Roman citizen. The jailer must have been expecting it in due time. But what an immense dignity attached to being a citizen of heaven! We (and the believing Philippians also) are citizens of a continuing city, a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. If the Roman soldiers looked on to the prize of Roman citizenship, *how very much more must this* heavenly prospect appeal to them, and to us!

What will the Saviour do? He will change us! Do you long to be changed sometimes? What a day it will be! Our bodies are to be *fashioned* like unto His own body of glory. This word means, not a change of outward shape, but a complete change, a fundamental change, an essential change. This is something not yet revealed to us. But to quote the apostle John “It is not yet made manifest what we shall be — but *we know* that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”. There can be no doubt whatever about His power to do this, as the last phrase makes clear.

Should we not conclude as we began? Indeed what cause we have to “Rejoice in the Lord”!

---

# The Manna

JACK HUBBARD

*Outline of an address given at Bradford in February 1987.*

## EXODUS 16

A subsidiary title for the message here tonight, could be '*That which came down out of heaven*'. The Manna was God's provision for *them*, the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness. But for *us*, it signifies God's bountiful provision for the path of faith. It speaks of Christ Himself.

Let us remember that our day is a day of movement *away* from what God has *in grace* provided for His people — and of movement *towards* other things (which are distracting, and inevitably less truly satisfying). Dis-satisfaction, losing sight of God's goodness, the murmuring spirit, is the background against which the first appearance of the manna is set. Does it not show itself with Christians too, and perhaps not rarely? Is this not rightly viewed as an affront to God — in this chapter, and also as He sees our attitudes today? The Israelites had just moved on from Elim, a place of refreshment — a place of water, and palm trees. They had seen how a place of disappointment (where the bitter waters were) was transformed, as Moses (instructed by God) cast in 'a tree' and the waters were made sweet: suggesting what a difference the Cross makes to our bitter plight. But, moving on, they are soon murmuring again (not for the first time, even at this stage). God knew it, and felt it, and is aware of *our* thoughts too. Later on, the wonder of that marvellous provision (of the manna) lost its impact on them, and they began to loathe it.

We need to be warned by this. They saw none of the good things He had already done for them — and did not value the provision He continued to make for them. How do we compare with them? So easily can this picture reproduce itself in *us*! It is a story of *bounty* from God, *despite* this wrong spirit, to be sustained over years to follow. Bereft they were, of any other support, in 'a vast, howling waste', and totally dependent on God. Do we realise that the wilderness is a true picture of our environment here? Do we hanker after 'the fleshpots of Egypt' still? Like them we are now in liberty, have passed from bondage into freedom, are beyond the Passover, the Red Sea. God has done it, and yet like them, we often murmur.

God nevertheless provides. But *what* does He provide? By-passing the figure for a moment, He provides the Person of His well-beloved Son! Should we not revel in this, the largeness of His giving? His gift to them — the manna — was astonishing, and it was a pure gift from Himself. They had no part in it — they *only* had to appropriate it! It was small, white,

round, like coriander seed, sweet to the taste. It was there in the morning, available in abundance. The sweetness again contrasts with the bitterness of Marah, made sweet by God's action. Calvary changes the bitterness arising from the effects of sin. What followed was also sweet, the manna. It was a delight to the taste (verse 31). It was their very lifeline. Its purity is important, it was heavenly in its quality, for it came down from heaven, as did the Lord Jesus later. It was other-worldly in character, yet also down here at ground level, to be gathered, and appropriated, by each one. To taste it was to appreciate it. So it is with Christ.

There was something for everyone, and it was for sharing (v. 17). Christ is to be shared with others! Are we, perhaps, somewhat insular in this regard? There is need to collect it for one's self — to enjoy it myself — and then to share it.

With the dew in the morning, the manna appeared too. The manna settled on the dew. The dew in the desert, something refreshing, also coming down from above — how it reminds us of the Spirit of God, involved in making this real to us. Then, we note, the glory of the LORD is seen (v. 10) — by the murmuring people, looking toward the wilderness. They saw it! Their eyes, and hearts, and souls, were taken up with it. What an interlude between the murmurings! Thinly veiled here, the Trinity is represented in the picture. The glory of God appears to all. This, of course, was *before the law was given*. After that, and after the gross idolatry of the people, there were prohibitions on approach to Him. He dwelt with them, yet was shut off from them, behind the veil. But there is nothing of that kind here. God, in all His long-suffering and forbearance, is manifested here. At Sinai, invited up to God in His remoteness from the people, Moses came out and his face shone with the impress of that glory. Today, after God has been fully revealed, the sight of Christ in the glory of God, opens this possibility to ourselves.

There was some disobedience to the instructions from God. Murmuring makes simple obedience difficult. Some gathered more than they needed — it bred worms and stank. Some went to look for it on the Sabbath, and found none, exactly as God had said. Simple obedience to the plain word from God, should be our habit, but how often we import our own thoughts, always with some loss to ourselves. We must get our stint of occupation with Christ for today, and look for more tomorrow. Yet also *preparation* for the special day (for us, the Lord's day — for them, the sabbath) is in order, indeed it is important. It would be strange, surely, if we had no store gathered earlier, for ourselves, but, more importantly to offer to God on the Lord's day.

Coming now towards a close, let us remember the golden pot with manna within it, placed inside the ark of the testimony (Hebrews 9:4), in the 'holiest of all' area of the Tabernacle. That place represents the very presence of God. There, where God is, is Jesus, who once on earth was the pure, holy, accesible One, who 'came down from heaven' to fulfil

all that He was sent to do. Stored up in a golden pot, glorious in His deity and perfect manhood, He is treasured by God, who has such infinite pleasure in Him. With this available to us, in such abundance too, surely we must not murmur, lacking in faith, nor turn cold and apathetic.

But rather let us use the words of John 6:34, and say, with genuine hunger of soul, "Lord, evermore give us this bread".

## Created, Formed, Made (2b)

COLIN CURRY

*"I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."*  
(Isaiah 43:7)

*The first part of paper 2 considered the general context in which the later parts of Isaiah are set. We now take a closer look at Isaiah 43:1-7, which is just one of the bright and confident passages where God affirms His sovereign intentions for His earthly people.*

### Isaiah 43 : verses 1-7

The whole section from 42:22 through to 48:22 is made up of two kinds of passage, alternating with one another. There are expressions of the amazing grace of God, and there are other words on the wilfulness of God's people. *They* seem determined to destroy themselves, but this cannot outmatch *His* tenacity which persists with them in unbelievable grace. Of the many affirmations of this grace, 43:1-7 is selected because of the grand climax of verse 7. This embodies the three magnificent assertions regarding Israel we are studying. God has created, formed, and made him. It resounds with prophetic certainty! Indeed all the passage is remarkable; primarily for Israel, but full of comfort and support for *any* in trouble. It is quite fair for us to rely on it, to stimulate our flagging faith from these great words today. Just preceding it, the unhappy state of the current Israel predominates: the change to these consoling words is very abrupt. Some of the later verses revert to their sad, present condition. In themselves no grounds at all exist for these sure statements from God. But creating, forming, making, are appropriate words for such a situation! God *does* undertake, and will show Himself, in meeting fully all the problems raised in this most unpromising background.

These are wonderful words (verses 1-7). From the start, further words meet us, also describing potent indisputable *actions* from God on their behalf. *Created* (Jacob), *formed* (Israel), come first. Consider for a

moment the shaping process, under God, through which Jacob (personally) ultimately became Israel! There follow the verbs *redeemed*, and *called*. "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art *Mine*." It seems evident that past actions of God, interposing to rescue them, are recalled to them, encouraging their reliance on Him still. In some senses their existence as a people dated from the Passover, and the Red Sea crossing. That month was to them "a beginning of months" — a fresh start on the calendar! They were *redeemed* by blood, and by a strong hand that shattered their foes, breaking their servitude to Egypt indisputably. "Out of Egypt have I called my son": Matthew 2:15 finds a deeper meaning latent in Hosea 11:1, but its first meaning in Hosea is very moving. Jehovah, through that prophet, recalls those early stages in Israel's story, with touching memories of those early days: He helped him along in his first childhood steps, with deep love for him, drawing him with the bands of love. The heart of God is heavily involved in the well-being of His people, and He is deeply hurt by their unfaithfulness, their rebuffs, and the damage they bring upon themselves. Hosea, in the same chapter, represents Jehovah as asking Himself "How can I give thee up?" The present passage has the same stamp upon it (notice verse 4). "Thou art mine": loved and valued by Him, despite what they had descended to.

The assurances continue. Not only should past memories of His powerful interventions encourage them, but His own company *in* the coming experiences will provide *immense* support. "Fear not, I will be *with thee*", "Fear not, I *am* with thee" (vs. 2, 5); passing through waters, rivers, fiery persecutions, these assurances stand! Did they not prove it, soon in their story, passing through the Red Sea, through the overflowing river of Jordan too? Would not Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego find One *with them*, in the furnace heated seven times, when the hard tests of Babylonian fury should come? And would not the pious remnant, amidst the apostate mass of the last days (when tribulation quite unequalled was at its height, see Matthew 24:21) sorely need such words, and prove their truth to their own amazement? Such passages can promote faith under all kinds of pressures, but the God who intervenes for Israel is greatly magnified by them. When did *He* ever fail in what He said He would do for them? How unique and totally distinct He is from the false gods that others resort to — mute, blind, incapable, as they all are. God, through Isaiah, speaks in scathing terms about them, and those who lean on them, in some of the adjacent chapters. "I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside Me there is no saviour: I will work, and who shall hinder it?" Israel will be the evidence of it!

But, in those centuries near at hand in Isaiah's day, release from the bonds of Babylon would by no means be the cure for Israel's unfaithfulness. Still more, and worse, dishonour to God would follow. Their Messiah, present in person, was to be unrecognised, and quite deliberately rejected. As already indicated, underlying His sufferings and death, deeper

transactions were there too. But, for the Jews, destruction of the (rebuilt) temple and of the city ensued. They were widely scattered among the nations, and have suffered themselves — exceptionally so — ever since. In the prophetic future, in “the time of Jacob’s trouble” their sufferings will intensify, in a way allowed by God. Their enemies will seem to have their way with them. Some will be searched to their very core: it will awaken a sensitivity to God, a response to Himself; increasing numbers will be led to a faith, dependent on Him, born in these times. These very verses, and kindred ones, will sustain that faith. The recovered Israel, soon to be that, will be passing through the ‘forming’ stages: being purified by discipline, shaped into a unit, led on towards deep repentance when at last they “look on Him whom they pierced”; being prepared too for the rich blessing and status He will put upon them subsequently. On the other hand, an apostate mass of unbelieving Jews will align themselves with the fearsome western secular power (centred on Rome, we believe — Rome revived after a long lapse following the early A.D. centuries). The apostate Jews will have their own leader, a false Messiah, *the Antichrist*. Both he and the great Gentile head will be dealt with by our Lord, when their rebellion mounts to its peak. It will be done peremptorily and decisively. They will be “*destroyed* by the brightness of His coming” (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-16).

So will come to pass that final deliverance of God’s earthly people from ‘Babylon’ (see Footnote); and the fulfilment of all He had in mind for Israel in sovereign grace will be on the threshold. Within a short space the long-promised kingdom will be realised. God will round off all His designs of grace, for His glory. *Created* he has been, *formed* he will be, but also the *making* of Israel will come about in God’s due time. Though we cannot extend this paper to include the blessings of the earthly kingdom, Isaiah 60 and 65 are chapters with which the interested reader could start!

---

FOOTNOTE — Scripture can use ‘Babylon’ in a way that covers more than the ancient city and empire. We saw this in Isaiah 13. These later chapters in Isaiah *also* extend beyond the Babylon near at hand in history. Babel (meaning *confusion*), with the arrogant, self-exalting way shown in building its tower (Genesis 11), was a signally clear instance of what would mark the ‘times of the Gentiles’, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. The image of Daniel 2, as Daniel interpreted it, depicted those times. Pride, lust for power, desire for expansion, ruthless aggression at times, have been common over all the Gentile years. The confused, chaotic nature of what goes on broadly in the world is evident — though there *are* restraints from God. The stone cut out without hands will fall unerringly on that set-up in its last phase (see Daniel 2:44). The day will certainly arrive when it can be said “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15); and Israel *will* fill her intended place as “the head, and not the tail” of the nations (Deuteronomy 28:13). There is no question *who* will reign supreme then, nor *where*! So sure it is that God can say “I *have* set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6)!

‘Babylon the Great’, in the Revelation, may require a comment: though it has little to do with the substance of this paper. Compare the passage 17:1-19:6 with the other passage introduced in a very similar way, from 21:9 to 22:5. The woman, the harlot,

# Some Surpassingly Wonderful Themes

*“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

*(Isaiah 9:6)*

## The Perfect Servant of Jehovah

*“The Lord Jehovah hath given Me the tongue of a disciple, that I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord Jehovah has opened My ear. And I was not disobedient. Nor did I turn back.* *(Isaiah 50:4,5 NASV)*

See then that perfect Servant reading, pondering, meditating, on the Word of God. Morning by morning from the slumbers of the night He awakes, and *as a disciple*, as all who are really taught of God, He listens to the living Voice that may be heard in those inspired pages.

“God manifest in the flesh” is He; “The Lord of Glory” is He; yet see Him, bending over those very Scriptures that are in our hands today, and by them growing in wisdom (Luke 2:52), as perfect as a dear human child, as He is as a mature Man; just as a rosebud is as perfect in its place as the beautiful flower in its prime!

In very truth He is rightly named “Wonderful”. . . . How altogether incomprehensible to finite minds is His infinite Person! The one single Personality, having all the unlimited attributes of God, yet all the dependencies of man; omnipotence and weakness, infinities and limitations, thus combined in One! What folly to think of comprehending Him! What wickedness to attempt to analyse Him! He loves us and we worship Him, and there we rest!

*from F. C. Jennings*

## His Perfect Humanity

*“And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”* *(Luke 2:52 N.Tr.)*

The glories of the Lord Jesus are threefold — personal, official, and moral. His personal glory He veiled, save where faith discovered it, or an

---

the city — seductive, impure, full of abominable things — is set against the purity of the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the holy city. Could we doubt that *this* Babylon indicates falsity of a religious character, allowed to come to its head, to receive its just judgment from God? Outright opposition to God, marshalled and headed by the last awesome Gentile leader, will also meet devastating destruction from our Lord Himself.

occasion demanded it. His official glory He veiled likewise; He did not walk through the land as either the Divine Son from the bosom of the Father, or as the authoritative Son of David. Such glories were commonly hid, as He passed on in the circumstances of life day by day. But His moral glory could not be hid: He could not be less than perfect in everything — it belonged to Him; it was Himself. From its intense excellency His moral glory was too bright for the eye of man; and man was under constant exposure and rebuke from it. But there it shone, whether man could bear it or not. It now illuminates every page of the four Gospels, as it once did every path which the Lord Himself trod on this earth of ours.

It has been said of the Lord — “His humanity was perfectly natural in its development”. This is very beautiful, and true. Luke 2:52 would verify this. There was nothing of unnatural progress in Him; all was orderly increase. His wisdom kept pace with His stature, or age. He was the child first, then the man. By and by, as a man (God’s Man in the world), He will testify of the world that its works are evil, and be hated by it, but as a child (a Child after God’s heart, as I may say), He will be subject to His parents, and under the law, and as one perfect; in such circumstances He grew in favour with God and man.

*from J. G. Bellett*

In Thee all human graces blend,  
 And to Thy Father e’er ascend,  
     As incense rare;  
 Fragrant to Him Thou ever art  
 Source of rejoicing to His heart  
     Most sweet and fair.

Fairer than all the sons of men,  
 Beyond all praise of tongue or pen,  
     Thou peerless One!  
 In grace, in patient tenderness,  
 In truth, in holy faithfulness,  
     Thine equal — none!

Matchless, incomparable, divine!  
 In Jesus all perfections shine —  
     Oh, blessed Name!  
 How shall we tell its worth abroad,  
 How tell the praises of our Lord,  
     Or spread His fame?

*(Miss S. M. Walker: ‘Spiritual Songs’, Hymn 499)*



Incorporating *Words of Help*

JANUARY, 1988

# Getting the best from the Scriptures

MARTIN GIRARD

*As a first paper for 1988 we start with a printed version of the introductory address given at the St Andrew's Conference in 1987. Martin has himself reproduced his talk in a form for the printer. Advice on approaching the Scriptures in a gainful way is needed, especially for readers of a magazine like Scripture Truth. Not only is this guidance important for young Christians, but it is surely suitable for older persons too.*

All Christians would agree that reading the Bible is vitally important if progress is to be made in the pathway of faith. Yet, while recognising the importance of reading the Word of God, many of us would admit that our "Quiet Times" are not what they ought to be. They do not make a real impact upon our lives. One man who really did get the best from the Scriptures was Ezra. We read that he "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10).

Without becoming submerged in too many historical facts, it is always helpful to consider a text in its context. The people of Israel had sinned and had departed from the Lord. Failing to heed the many warnings given by the prophets of God, the nation eventually was taken into captivity. For seventy years, just as Jeremiah had prophesied, they were detained in the land of Babylon. At the end of this period (in 538 B.C.) Zerubbabel was called to lead the people back to Jerusalem, and about 50,000 returned with him. On reaching Jerusalem a great start was made. The altar was established, the temple foundations laid, and the walls finally were rebuilt. However, the temple worship still needed to be restored and the people of Israel needed someone to teach them afresh the law of God.

It is at this point that Ezra the scribe comes upon the scene. He was

a man of some influence, a kind of “Secretary of State for Jewish affairs” in Babylon. Given the full backing of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, Ezra made the 900-mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem in four months — along with more than 1,500 fellow-travellers. With “the good hand of his God upon him” (Ezra 7:9), the destination was reached and an important work began. Already Ezra had “prepared his heart” for the task God had entrusted him with. In this lovely verse right at the heart of the book bearing his name, we can see three things Ezra was ready for. He was “to *seek* the law of the Lord, and to *do* it, and to *teach*” it to others. Here are three things that are vital for us if we really want to get the best from God’s Word.

### **PROBING the Word of God**

First of all Ezra prepared his heart to *PROBE* the Word of God. Here we see a man of *determination*, a man of resolute purpose. How we need to be people of similar determination too! Daniel displayed “purpose of heart” (Daniel 1:8), and Barnabas exhorted the believers at Antioch to cleave to the Lord with a determined “purpose of heart” (Acts 11:23). A modern writer has said that far too many people today have wishbones instead of backbones! But Ezra wasn’t like that! He had real purpose of heart as well as preparation of heart, for he “prepared” himself before coming to probe the Word of God. So often we can come away from a meeting saying (or thinking!), “I got nothing out of that. What an utter waste of time it was!” But who really was to blame? Was the preacher honestly dull and dry, or was the fault my own for failing to prepare my heart beforehand? Whether listening to an address or studying on our own, we cannot come casually to the Holy Scriptures and expect to be blessed; rather, we ought to come with the same kind of determination that Ezra displayed.

More than this, we notice Ezra’s *deliberation*. He “prepared his heart to *seek* the law of the Lord”. It was going to take time — and it will take us time if we are really to probe the Word of God. Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures” (John 5:39). Be diligent! Just as a prospector searches for gold and a hunter presses on across rugged mountains in search of game, we must deliberately take time to get into the Scriptures. The Bereans in Acts 17:11 set us a fine example, searching the Scriptures daily. These were not mere sermon-tasters! They didn’t just hurry through their “Daily Bread” notes each morning and go away with eased consciences because they had “done” their reading! They really probed the Word of God — and we must do the same if we are to make progress in our Christian lives.

However, it needs to be stressed that as we probe the Word of God we must do so with *devotion*. Bengel’s advice is worth repeating: “Apply yourself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to yourself”. Our study can be intense, but it will be of little practical use if we do not apply the Word of God to our own lives. Geoffrey Bull has

said, "We must come . . . not so much to analyse it ourselves but to allow ourselves to be analysed by it". Important as it is to have a correct grasp of doctrine, we need above all else to probe the Word in a devotional way. In my "Quiet Time" do I come to meet with the Living Word by means of the written Word?

The story is told of a keen gardener who cultivated a most beautiful garden full of the choicest flowers. One day three visitors came to the garden. *The first gave it a cursory glance, said the garden was very nice, and left.* The second visitor was a botanist. He arrived equipped with a notebook and, after making copious notes and congratulating the gardener on his skill, he left too. The third visitor was a bee. He entered a number of flowers, filled himself with nectar, and flew away — very contented. Our Bible readings can be just like this. We can take a cursory glance and go away, forgetting very quickly what we have read in the Word. We can approach our study as experts, armed with commentaries and concordances, making copious notes as we examine fine shades of meaning. How much better to come as the bee, find the Word to be sweeter than honey, meet with the risen Lord Jesus and leave spiritually contented. What is *your* attitude as you probe the Word?

### **PRACTISING the Word of God**

The second point to be noticed is that Ezra "prepared his heart . . . to *do*" what Scripture taught. His message to us is *PRACTISE* the Word! Emerson's lines are famous: "What you *are* speaks so loud that the world cannot hear what you say". Having probed the Word of God, I must practise it by means of *a life that speaks*. In James 1:23-25 we are shown the folly of looking into the mirror and going away, forgetting what we have seen. We must be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only".

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that *they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven*". As I practise the Word, my life must be *a light that shines* to all around — and the light can only shine effectively as I "walk in the light" of His presence. Are others conscious of my "good works"? Does the way I live remind them of the One I am here to represent? The whole purpose of these good works is that glory might be brought to our God.

Before leaving, our Saviour gave us a "new commandment" that we should love one another (see John 13:34-35). In this world, so torn apart with bitterness, hatred, broken homes and unwanted children, how awfully sad it is when love is not seen among the Lord's people. We must practise the Word given by our Lord Jesus and let it be seen in *a love that's shared*. Let's ensure that there is always a loving environment in our assemblies. The Apostle Paul, like Ezra, did not only preach; he lived the life! He could encourage the Philippians not only to do the things he had taught them but to do the things that they had seen exemplified in his own life (see Philippians 4:9). Having probed the Word, Ezra prepared his heart

to practise it in his life. Let us do the same, with God's help.

### **PROCLAIMING the Word of God**

Thirdly, Ezra "prepared his heart . . . to teach in Israel". The order is vitally important. It's no good teaching the Word if we do not live it out daily. But once stage two has taken effect, we must, like Ezra, *PROCLAIM* the Word! God has given us a message; we must pass it on!

The question may be asked, "How can I go about proclaiming the Word? Where can this be done?" The best place to begin is in the *family*. Ezra knew what the Lord had commanded Moses. God's great concern for Israel was that parents should teach their children of His ways. Indeed, "these words" were to be the very foundation upon which the family was to be established. The importance of this training and teaching will be seen if Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is read. We may well challenge our own hearts and ask what place the Word of God has in our family circle. Do you proclaim the Word there? Do you apply biblical principles whenever you have opportunity? As the evils in this world abound, how we need to be fortified against the many corrupting influences that can so easily affect our lives.

It is true that "no man is an island". We need one another — and the great purpose of God is that together we should proclaim the Word of God *through the fellowship*. As we think of Ezra preparing his heart to proclaim God's Word, are *we* prepared to proclaim it through our local assembly? Indeed, what sort of impact does your local fellowship have?

An old country church was burning and all hands in the village were busy helping to put out the flames. In the bucket line, the minister found himself face to face with the village infidel and couldn't help saying to him, "This is the first time I have ever seen you at my church". At once the infidel replied, "Yes sir, but this is the first time I have ever seen your church on fire".

Sadly, many of our assemblies are not "on fire" for the Lord. If they were, perhaps we would see more happening and would make a greater impact for our Lord in the area. Let us ask God to truly quicken our love for the Lord Jesus so that we are empowered by His Spirit to proclaim His Word in all its burning force. All around us are people without hope and with nothing to look forward to. Our task is to proclaim the Word *to the futureless*. The beautiful hymn by Helen Lemmel, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus", contains these words:

"His word shall not fail you He promised;  
Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying,  
His perfect salvation to tell!"

We may not feel that we are gifted; we may not be equipped to serve in any public or prominent way, but none of us has any excuse to be idle. "There's work for Jesus, ready at your hand". The Lord Jesus says to us, "Lift up your eyes, and look" (John 4:35). Ask Him to show you what

you can do for Him. J. R. Miller has said, "An ounce of heart is worth more than a ton of head in winning souls. One word of genuine and hearty confession of Christ by a person whose soul is full of the new-found joy is worth more than the most eloquent sermons to lead others to believe in Christ". This proclamation of the Word must not be simply the presentation of an intellectual formula but must be the person of our Saviour brought before men and women in all His glory, greatness, grace and love.

Ezra probed, practised and proclaimed the Word of God. Let's follow his great example. Geoffrey Bull has written: "Better a grain of truth sown in the soft soil of the heart than a whole granary of truth stored in the dry chambers of the intellect". As we approach the Scriptures, may the Lord grant that our hearts are suitably softened and prepared for His Word so that many of His precious grains of truth will be sown there, bringing forth a harvest of fruit for His glory alone!

## Men-Pleasers

NIGEL WREN

*"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."* *Ephesians 6:6*

*"We make it our aim . . . to be well-pleasing to Him."* (Paul)  
*2 Corinthians 5:9 (R.V.)*

*Another welcome new writer, contributing to Scripture Truth for the first time! This should make us ask ourselves what our aims are in our 'Christian' (or other) activities. Whom do we seek to please?*

Throughout the Scriptures there is a long line of people who fall into the unhappy category of men-pleasers; those who say and do things to win acceptance and favour with men rather than live their lives to please God.

From O.T. times we can think particularly of the false prophets who did not speak the word of the LORD, but instead spoke things acceptable and palatable to their hearers.

One is reminded of the occasion when Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, called upon Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to help him recapture the city of Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat agreed, but said, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD today" (1 Kings 22:5). Ahab gathered the many prophets together and asked for their advice about the

proposed military campaign. They were insistent that Ahab should proceed and the Lord would give success. These prophets were men-pleasers, speaking the things that the king wanted to hear. They had no message from the LORD.

Jehoshaphat was not convinced by what he had heard, and asked Ahab, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?" The reply of Ahab is both illuminating and sad, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Micaiah was called and he fearlessly delivered a message from the LORD. The message was not such as would please Ahab and he had the true prophet imprisoned. As we continue through the narrative we see that events turned out just as Micaiah had foretold. Micaiah was certainly no pleaser of men. He did not speak flattering words to win the approbation of the king. He was not interested in favour or fortune from men. Rather he boldly spoke the word of the LORD regardless of the personal cost to himself of so doing.

When we come into N.T. times it seems that the most subtle and dangerous men-pleasers were those Jews who, claiming to be Christian, were seeking to impose circumcision and the law on Gentile believers. These men, commonly referred to as Judaizers, made much of Jesus but did not give to Him His unique place. Their view was that Paul's teaching about salvation by faith in Christ crucified was true, but was not the whole story; to be saved one also needed to be circumcised and to live under the Jewish law. Christ was not, in their scheme, all-sufficient; human endeavour and effort were needed to secure salvation.

It is primarily, though not only, in the Galatian Epistle that Paul deals with the problem of the Judaizers. In Galatians 6:12 Paul speaks of the reason why the Judaizers insisted on the Gentile believer being circumcised. "As many as desire to have a fair appearance in (the) flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ" (N.Tr.). The Judaizers sought to escape being persecuted by their fellow Jews by showing that they regarded circumcision and law-keeping as essential to salvation. By pressing the law on the Gentiles they hoped to please the Jews and win their support and approval.

Paul would have escaped persecution from the Jews if he had allowed room for circumcision and the law in salvation: "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence (Greek: *scandalou*, stumbling-block) of the cross ceased" (Galatians 5:11). But if Paul had allowed the smallest place for human merit in salvation then the offence of the cross would have been done away with. The offence of the cross, that about the cross which stumbles men, which undermines and removes their very selves, upsets them and arouses their opposition, Gentile as well as Jew. If one were to preach salvation by Christ plus

human effort then clearly the cross would cease to offend. The bearer of such a message, instead of being open to ridicule, abuse and ill-treatment, would be fêted by all.

But Paul would not change the message, making it more palatable to men. He was no Judaizer, aiming to please men rather than God.

Anyone today who seeks to curry favour with men, and to win their commendation, must bear in mind the words of Paul, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

There is, however, a sense, a very real sense, in which we ought as Christians to be men-pleasers. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 Paul states "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under law that I might gain them that are under the law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Paul, when with Jews, had regard for their sensibilities. He would not serve up to a Jewish guest a plateful of pork, knowing the offence it would cause. When, on the other hand, he was a guest of a Gentile family, he would not be bound by Jewish food regulations.

Some might charge Paul with inconsistency, and a complete lack of principle. But such a charge would be incorrectly levelled at him. There is in Paul's behaviour a wonderful consistency and a thorough application of a principle. Paul was governed by a love for Christ and a desire to win others for Him. He did not think of his own ease, convenience, or preferences. Paul was free to eat any food, but he would not use such freedom in a situation where another might be stumbled by this. Likewise, he would not be bound by unnecessary restrictions where the exercise of such restrictions might give offence.

Paul urges: "Give no occasion to stumbling, whether to Jews, or Greeks, or to the assembly of God. Even as I also please all in all things; not seeking my own profit, but that of the many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:32, 33 N.Tr.).

The Christian message is necessarily offensive to natural man; it leaves no room for human merit; it speaks of man's total ruin and sin; it proclaims that a man's only hope is in Christ crucified. The cross is the stumbling-block. What Paul insists is that we should carefully avoid putting other stumbling-blocks in the way of others which could trip them up, upsetting them and not helping them at all — leaving them unwilling to look to the cross and consider its message.

Clearly the subject of pleasing men is vast, and we have only touched on a few points. One has not, for instance, sought to cover our dealings with fellow-believers (for this, see Romans 15:1-3). Nor have we mentioned personal relationships.

As Christians we cannot change the message so as to escape opposition and win the approval of men. If Paul had added law-keeping, and circumcision to the cross he would have avoided trouble and gained a hearing and men's approval — but would have ceased being a true servant of Christ.

How we need to be like Micaiah, that faithful prophet of the LORD, and boldly proclaim His message regardless of the consequences for ourselves.

Much wisdom is needed when we please men in ways which are legitimate and right. Daily dependence on the Lord is needed to ensure that in seeking to please men we do not engage in things that will displease Him.

# To the Seven Churches

## (4) Thyatira

**TOM TYSON**

*“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”*

*If a personal reaction from one who heard these addresses may be given, it would pick out a fact, quite apparent but not seen so clearly before. It is this, that while unsparing assessments of false ‘systems’ and ‘trends’ are always made by our Lord, yet the kindest of support for those true to Him though submerged within those systems, is given. It often happens without rebuke from Him of any kind. This is clearly so as He directs His message to Thyatira, a very low stage in the story of Christianity. If, even in thought, we treat our ‘circle’ as ‘those true to the Lord’, and others as ‘beyond the pale’, are we not by these verses obliged to revise our attitudes? Considerate and prayerful thoughts about real believers in such conditions — not dismissing them out of hand — are much needed, and perhaps overdue.*

While we might pin this message principally on a long period of past Church history, we should remind ourselves that the last four of these seven addresses all mention the coming of the Lord. Thus in a particular way they must represent states which are to continue until the end. This letter is the first of this group. Also, from the earlier three letters (if our consciences have been alert) we too have found much to search us there.

These letters, which can be related to historical periods coming in

sequence, *also* highlight facets of the profession of Christianity still around at present. The wider aspect, the prophetic developments, foreseen in these letters, must be seen alongside the direct voice to every single person with an ear to hear and a willingness to accept its relevance to himself.

The letter to Thyatira (chapter 2:18-29) is the longest of the seven. There are clear pointers to the long period in the church's earthly story known as 'the dark ages'. 'Medieval times', in which Church dominance and Church authority was imposed, were long dark times for ordinary people. Little light and little hope in those conditions could break the darkness which prevailed. The so-called 'orthodox church' was not exactly a single entity — the rift between East and West existed. But, by and large, there were those that sought to 'rule', politically, and to hold the reins over nations, yet broad ignorance (especially of the Bible) among the people. Perhaps that is why the responsible element is addressed so severely here, while 'the rest' receives our Lord's gentle consideration.

For westerners, the aspirations of Rome to be 'the universal Church', and to claim the allegiance of all who take the 'Christian' name, are familiar as part of the present scene — though on some fronts a moderate and less crude guise is adopted. This appeals to the unwary. The Romish doctrines and the Romish practices of centuries ago are nevertheless no less gross today than they were. But our Lord's words to this church state things as they *are* in such a system. At the same time, as we shall see, there is need to be cautious about condemnation of everything there.

How does our Lord address such a church? It is noteworthy that He steps outside the details of the vision seen by John in chapter 1. He presents *Himself* in all the glory of His person — the Son of God — who outstrips and exposes the emptiness of all pretences of glory and supremacy on earth. His word goes to a church subscribing to the truth of His person, yet teaching idolatry. Rome makes so much of Him as 'Son of man', and particularly as 'Son of Mary'. It places a great emphasis on the 'miraculous', even the 'magical'. His eyes are like a flame of fire; He sees the very depths of what is going on there. His feet are like unto fine bronze. Notice that the reference to the 'burning furnace' in chapter 1:15 is left out here. Judgment is deferred, and the Lord allows 'space to repent' still.

Next come the commendations (v. 19). Their works were known. Their *love*. Is this not remarkable? Fresh love for Him is seen (by Himself) in the thick of such a church-situation. And *faith* too, faith working in love, coming out in devoted service. He sees *reality* there. Outward works are noted, genuine works appreciated by *Him!* There was much to be separate from in their environment, needing *patience* and endurance; this He sees and approves too.

Let us be careful when we talk (perhaps sometimes rather glibly) about 'corrupt Christendom'. Let us not lump it all together in condemnation without discrimination. Let us remember that our Lord does *not* do this. Harking back to medieval times, godly men — separate in spirit indeed

— remain on the records of those times. Men like Anselm (c. 1100 A.D.), Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1130), Peter Waldo (c. 1190), Wycliffe (1320-1384), John Huss (martyred 1415), Savonarola (martyred 1498) are a few, no doubt among very many more obscure persons.

He saw their 'last works' as 'greater than the first'. Where broad declension was going on, *something* was on the upgrade! Is this not remarkable, even in Thyatira! Let us be careful how *we* judge motives. Kind, self-sacrificial works, in whatever context, *can* be motivated by love for the Lord Jesus.

"But I have a few things against thee", He continues (v. 20). Remember, the letter is to "the angel" of the church. Those responsible were allowing things that they should not. Teaching was permitted, a woman like Jezebel was the source of it. It claimed to be from God, prophetic in character. "Hear the Church" was, and is, the great slogan of Catholicism. It is seductive, idolatrous, with sacrifices in accordance — luring people into acceptance and involvement — not questioning the teaching of 'the Church'. Jezebel, we know, brought in an idolatrous system, and supported the prophets of Baal, directly countering the law of Jehovah. Ahab, her husband, was of course the doer of this, and had to be confronted by Elijah, but the power behind the scenes was Jezebel. Rome claims authority to teach, to *add* doctrines of its own to the apostolic faith. All sorts of practices, and other paraphernalia, have been introduced with her sanction. The Bible is very secondary. It was kept in the Vulgate version (in Latin) quite withdrawn from the common people. Services were conducted in Latin which few could understand. Rome was bitterly against any activity to undermine her claims and self-assumed authority. Things may be different now in some senses, but her pretentiousness remains. The motto 'Semper idem', which means 'always the same', is still a true version of her basic character. Of course it is also well known that vast accumulations of wealth, and also of power, came to Rome from those who paid court to her. A tremendous, grandiose edifice has been built up. It is seductive indeed, and though appearances may vary, unchanging in her essential style. The call for repentance is made by our Lord, but few feel its force. At her very heart she *will not* repent, and ignores His call for this, held out to her for so long.

As a corrupt system it *will* be judged (vs. 22, 23). He will kill her children with death. She and all satellite systems under her, will discover the truth of this at a time of His deciding. *But* 'every one of you' — each separately, within this gross, all-embracing system, will be treated "according to your works".

A new feature emerges with verse 24. So far, in all these letters, the Lord has spoken to each witnessing church viewed as a whole. But now He speaks to the godly ones within this church. He puts no burden upon them, and credits them as being pure and separate. The words "as they speak" seem to indicate a judgment by the church (led by the hierarchy

dominating it) against these true and godly ones. It was common for the leadership in Rome to condemn and persecute the true witnesses as 'heretics'. The Lord takes the opposite view — He speaks well of the true and loyal ones, and is strongly against those that persecute them in the name of religion. From this point onwards, where there is a fraction to single out (and support) in the ensuing addresses, it becomes a diminishing one. Here, in Thyatira, with *ritualism* and ecclesiastical pretension prominent, "the rest" is quite a number. We may well believe that, within the obscurity of Romanism, there are numerous souls devoted to the Lord Jesus. He knows it. He sees it, and says "Hold fast till I come". Later, to Sardis, where one prominent feature is probably *rationalism*, He says there are "a few" undefiled ones, even in Sardis. To these He gives handsome encouragement. But to Laodicea, where *materialism*, and the laxity that goes hand-in-hand with it, is a main feature, He addresses Himself to "any man", and gives a wonderful promise. One by one they may take up His offer.

For the overcomer here (verses 26-28) He gives a special and sure hope. Viewing "the rest", the remnant now, He seems to indicate that these are the only ones who will listen. (This is a change starting at this point — the words "He that hath an ear . . ." now come *after* His message to the overcomer.)

The overcomers, the sufferers under this régime, will reign with Him! The very thing that false ecclesiasticalism was striving for (to rule the nations) will be its downfall (see Revelation 17:16-18). It will be given instead to these poor saints! "The meek shall inherit the earth". *What an encouragement!* But more, I will give him the Morning Star. Believers of today will surely share the rule of Christ in the coming kingdom. But something else is closer at hand — the harbinger of that day. The One who is the bright and morning star fills the hearts of the faithful — and will come for them first. He will satisfy their love and affection for Him before ever the kingdom-day arrives!

---

### Recommended Reading

**God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale and The English Bible.**  
**Brian H. Edwards.** (Evangelical Press 1982, 174 pages.  
 £3.95. Available from CBHT)

"This fugitive and outlaw gave the English-speaking people their most priceless heritage; the Scriptures in their mother tongue."

A well-written, informative, and thought-provoking book.

# A Man of God

FRANK WALLACE

*This is the first in a series of short papers. The first gives a general view of the term as used in Scripture. It refers to the qualities of the man of God, as Scripture speaks of him. Later, a few men of God, not referred to by name, are picked out; and a brief paper is devoted to each of these.*

'A man of God'. A delightful description for a Christian! The expression is simple but it conveys much to our minds. Principally it informs us that such a man represents God wherever he goes. He thinks, speaks and acts for God. He belongs to God and owns God as his Master.

A man of the world is governed by worldly principles. He is at home in the world. A man of business is often controlled by the desire to make profit. A man of war is trained in military tactics and his training is valuable in times of conflict. A man of God is known for his interest in all things pertaining to God's interests. Such a man is governed and controlled by the will of God. It is his main concern in life.

Scripture has many references to men of God, and a consideration of their lives provides much that is instructive for the Christian. Each man of God lived in a different time for God, but each was governed by what was pleasing to God. They were courageous men, loyal to the revealed will of God. They had something to do for God, and they did it. They left God to look after the consequences created by their own faithfulness.

The New Testament provides valuable information about men of God. 2 Peter 1:20,21 tells us that holy men of God did not speak from their own wills, but spoke under the power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 tells that the Holy Scriptures, inspired of God, are essential for the training of the man of God. Peter's remarks indicate that *all* the O.T. prophets were holy men of God. Obviously this would include more than those who are specifically called men of God. Their main feature was holiness, and the Holy Spirit's power conveyed the mind of God through them. The Holy Spirit had joy and freedom in using clean vessels. There were holy affinities between the men of God and the Holy Spirit which resulted in the mind of God being faithfully presented. The mind and will of men were excluded from the prophecies. There was no mixture of truth and error.

David, the king of Israel, was a man of God. He made serious mistakes in his life, but his main desire was to do the will of God, and Scripture credits him with this (Acts 13:36). His testimony confirms what Peter wrote. In 2 Samuel 23:2, he said "The Spirit of God spake by me and his word was in my tongue". The same testimony was rendered to Elijah, another man of God. The woman, whose child Elijah brought back to life, said to him, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the

word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24). These men spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit. They lived for God, and His will was paramount in their lives.

No one can be a man of God and do his own will. No one can be a man of God and live a sinful life. No one can be a man of God unless the Holy Spirit has complete freedom to use His power and speak through Him. No self-will, holy living, and the Holy Spirit's power, are Peter's essential features for a man of God.

Paul's letters to Timothy contained much good advice for that faithful brother. In both letters the heart of the apostle went out to his younger co-worker for Christ. In the first letter he addressed him as a man of God (1 Timothy 6:11). In the second letter he stressed the importance of the Word of God for a man of God. As the man of God is to represent God at all times and in all circumstances he must be fully qualified to do this. A novice in the things of God cannot adequately perform what God desires. The man of God must be fully instructed to know God's will, and must also be morally upright, so that the will of God will not be discredited by careless behaviour. The Word of God is the only means whereby a man may attain to God's standard for him. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 instructs the man of God. First, he requires to be taught. It is a process needing some time and experience with God. This teaching enables him to learn God's will and to have no confidence in his own will. It also enables him to distinguish between truth and error. But, like David, he may go astray morally and dishonour God. The Word of God convicts and enables the man of God to see his sin. Psalm 51 was David's conviction, and he lived on to do his best work for the glory of God. Conviction leads to correction. The Word of God exposes, but it also teaches the man of God to adjust his life to the will of God. Finally, there is instruction in righteousness. The man of God is brought to know what is right according to God. Compromise, personal ambition, popularity, and other human principles, must all bow to the supreme demand of God's will. If the man of God is to declare God's rights to individuals or companies, he must know what is righteous before God. The essential knowledge is found in the Word of God.

These features pick out a man of God. Thus he is adequately equipped to be God's representative. Every good work is within his capability. A man of God is a mature, intelligent, and practical, yet humble, servant of God.

Men whose wills are subject to God's will; who lead holy and upright lives; who speak obviously empowered by the Holy Spirit; whose lives are characterised by obedience to the Holy Scriptures; these can be identified as men of God. These features come about by inward and private exercises with God, and manifest themselves in words and acts that glorify God and defend His interests.

## QUOTATIONS (from C. H. Mackintosh)

### (1) Epaphroditus

*"I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus . . . since he had a longing desire after you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. . . . Receive him therefore . . . with all joy, and hold such in honour: because for the sake of the work he drew near even to death." (Philippians 2:25-30 N.Tr.)*

Who was Epaphroditus? Was he a great preacher — a very eloquent speaker — a prominently gifted brother? We are not told. But this we are told — and told right powerfully and touchingly; he was one who exhibited a lovely spirit of self-surrender. This is better than all the gifts and eloquence, power and learning, that could possibly be concentrated in any single individual.

Epaphroditus was one of that illustrious class who seek to make nothing of themselves; and, as a consequence, the inspired apostle spares no pains to exalt him. But what did this remarkable man do? Did he spend a princely fortune in the cause of Christ? We are not told; but we are told what is far better — he spent himself. This is the grand point for us to seize and ponder.

"He had a longing desire after you all, and was distressed." Why? Was it because he was sick? Because of his pains, and aches, and privations? Nothing of the sort. The only thing that affected him in his illness was the thought of how it would affect them. This honoured servant of Christ had brought himself to death's door to serve others, and when there, in place of being occupied with himself and his ailments, he was thinking of the sorrows of others. Perfectly exquisite! And then mark the tender solicitude of the apostle. "Receive him therefore . . . and hold such in honour". Why? Was it because of his gifts, his rank, or his wealth? No: but because of his self-surrender. Let us think on these things.

### (2) Obedience and Devotion to the Scriptures

*"And these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, receiving the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the Scriptures if these things were so." (Acts 17:11 N.Tr.)*

There is but one supreme and paramount authority, and that is the Word of God. Now, having such a guide, such an authority, what becomes us as Christians — as children of God and servants of Christ? Why, clearly, to submit ourselves absolutely to its teaching in all things. And it is here we feel there is such serious failure. We do not find the conscience under

the immediate action and government of the Word. Human opinions bear sway. Human traditions and habits of thought are allowed a formative influence over the soul.

If it be a question of personal salvation, profit or blessing, Scripture will be listened to. People are glad and thankful to hear how they can be saved and blessed. But the moment it becomes a question of Christ's authority over us, in spirit, soul and body; when the Word of God is brought to bear upon our entire practical career, upon our personal habits, our domestic arrangements, our commercial pursuits, our religious associations, our ecclesiastical position, then, alas! it becomes apparent how completely the authority of the Holy Spirit is virtually thrown overboard.

God has put His Word into our hands, and He has put His Spirit into our hearts, and by that Spirit we can understand the Word; and we are solemnly bound to be guided and governed by that Word, in all the details of our lives. It is this we feel imperatively called to press home upon the hearts and consciences of our readers.

---

## POINTED WORDS

### Belief in God — on the Ninevite Style

*“Ninevites shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas.”*  
*(Matthew 12:41)*

What does it mean to repent? Let the Ninevites teach us. When that reluctant prophet called Jonah burst into their midst with the terse announcement, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown”, they didn't form a committee to discuss it and make recommendations. They didn't send a team to investigate whether or not Jonah had really been in a great fish for three days and three nights. They didn't start studying their scrolls to find out how Jonah's message compared with their own religious beliefs. **THEY REPENTED.**

This means that they believed God, but not in the same way that we modern people usually “believe God”. Today we talk about our faith in God and go on living as if He didn't exist, or at least as if what He says isn't really that important.

Not the Ninevites. They took the Word of God seriously. Nineveh would be destroyed because of their wickedness. They had outraged His justice and His holiness, and could not plea-bargain with Him. But they could

humble themselves — and they did! From the king to the beggar, they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth. They cried mightily unto God and turned from their evil ways. They sought God's mercies, even as they owned that they deserved His judgment.

Does this all sound quaint and old-fashioned? The Ninevites were neither. Nor was their deliverance from God's judgment. The same deliverance is still open to those who will repent and turn to Him in true faith.

G. W. Steidl (from **The Lord is Near** Calendar)

### Who is my Neighbour?

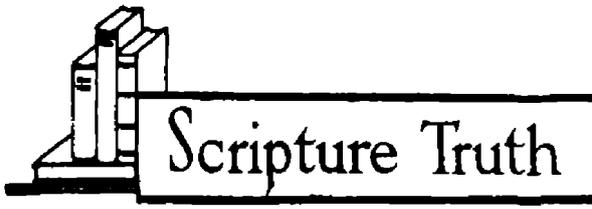
*“But a certain Samaritan journeying came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion and . . . bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and . . . took him to the inn . . . and said to the (innkeeper), Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I will render thee.”* (Luke 10:33-35)

The Lord created this parable to answer the question “Who is my neighbour?” but deftly redirects the emphasis by asking “Which of these three seems to thee to have been neighbour of him that fell into the hands of the robbers?”. The answer, “He that showed him mercy”, clearly shows that our being “neighbour” is to be a matter of behaviour and not merely a matter of location!

The Lord Jesus' command, “Go and do thou likewise”, tells us to show compassion to *all* who have physical and material need, not just to our brethren. But do we not, nevertheless, often see the supposedly spiritual, the assemblies and churches, behaving like the priest and Levite in the parable and passing on on the opposite side?

Excuses for ignoring the Lord's command are legion. One can rationalise as the priest and Levite undoubtedly did, saying, “If I try to help, I may be defiled” (Numbers 5:2). Or, we may excuse ourselves by reasoning, “He probably is not of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). But the parable carefully does not tell us whether the half-dead man was a Jew or a Samaritan, and Galatians 6:10 clearly says that we are to do good to *all*. The subtlest excuse of all is to say, “I do help whenever I know of need”, and then never seek to discover it! Is not such a lack of effort a kind of passing on the other side? Let us put aside all excuses then, and, heeding the Lord's command, do as the Samaritan did!

A. H. Crosby (from **The Lord is Near** Calendar)



## “JESUS HIMSELF”

“Jesus Himself drew near and went with them”

Dismayed, depressed, and thoroughly downhearted,  
Two men were walking down a dusty road,  
Enthusiasm quenched — all hope departed,  
Dark sorrow lying on them like a load.

Then at this lowest ebb — this zero hour —  
(Their hearts within them failing them for fear;)  
In fulness of His resurrection power  
JESUS HIMSELF — the Risen Lord, drew near!

O happy sorrow! — since it brought their Master!  
O sweet discouragement that drew Him nigh  
To show that seeming failure and disaster  
May but be heralds of His majesty!

Discouraged soul: though shattered hopes lie round thee  
And lowering clouds ahead no good forbode,  
Let not mere circumstances thus confound thee,  
But listen for His footstep on the road!

So shalt thou find no terror shall alarm thee  
No road dismay however dark it be!  
There is no power in earth or hell can harm thee  
Thy RISEN LORD doth bear thee company!

**A. M. Chambers** from *Scripture Truth*, 1937

# The Three Ministries

GORDON SPRATT

## Some aspects of Christian doctrine (1)

*After the Gospel-writers, the apostles Peter, Paul, and John are the major contributors to the New Testament. This article introduces a series in which it is hoped to pick out the distinctive broad lines of teaching entrusted to these particular servants of the Lord. Such a framework is potentially of great value to us. Let us look forward expectantly and prayerfully as the series develops. By this means may we, under the Spirit, obtain a broad overview of much of N.T. instruction, and thus be enabled to grasp better the content of the N.T. teaching. More than that, may we 'obey from the heart' and work out in Christian practice the 'form of doctrine' presented by each of these servants of God.*

There is with many Christians a marked tendency to read and study the Scriptures on a 'verse by verse' basis. The use of calendars with a daily text, along with a daily reading based on a few verses at a time, encourages this habit, whilst in public Bible study we are most of us familiar with the practice of proceeding through a book of the Bible at the leisurely pace of a few verses each regular week-night occasion.

It would be folly to criticise this tendency too harshly, and every true believer will recognise not only the inspiration of the Scripture as a whole, but also the power of the Holy Spirit to give a verse or a passage a particular and vital force at a given time. Nevertheless, there is the considerable danger in the 'verse by verse' habit if, as a consequence, the general structure of the Scriptures, and the themes which run like threads through the pattern of the Bible, may be neglected. It is rather like standing so close to an oil painting that only the paint and brushwork are seen. One admires the painting without seeing the picture.

Related to this danger is the practice, common in Bible-study meetings, of 'cross-referencing' by bringing into the discussion a range of passages which seem related by similarity either of word or thought, without always considering whether the context justifies the comparison with the main subject under review.

Having begun with these fairly obvious observations, the intent of this article and others which may follow from it, is to examine the proposition

that the doctrinal basis of the New Testament, and therefore of the Christian faith, is founded to a very large degree on the three ministries of Peter, Paul and John.

*It should be added immediately that nothing in this statement must be taken as implying that the recorded ministry of the Lord Jesus is not vital and uniquely precious to every true believer, nor indeed as assigning a lower value to the Spirit-indited writings of Luke, James and others. But it must surely be agreed that the Holy Spirit, in laying through the apostles the foundations of the Christian faith, has committed to Peter, Paul and John three aspects of truth, each distinct though interrelated, which taken together form, to a very significant degree, the basis of Christian doctrine. It is with these three aspects that we shall now concern ourselves.*

Speaking very generally, the three parts of our subject are the Kingdom, the Church and the Family of God. The particular association of Peter with the Kingdom is clear from Matthew 16:19, and his writings amply confirm the connection, as we shall see. Paul's special commission regarding the Church is explicitly stated in Ephesians 3:9. That John's ministry concerns primarily the divine Family can surely not be doubted even from a superficial acquaintance with his Gospel and Epistles, though in saying this we must acknowledge that the Revelation has a distinctive place of its own.

Before examining these three threads of truth separately, it may clarify the general proposition if we establish a framework. First we can look at the three broad divisions and then at some particular aspects of each.

How did the three apostles arrive at their respective views of the truth that centres in the Person of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that each of them had a particular experience which left them with a deep and distinctive impression of the glory of the Lord Jesus which never left them, and which formed the dominating theme of their ministry. It is not difficult to see how this could have been so.

For Peter, that experience must have been on the Mount of Transfiguration. However limited his understanding at the time, the experience of seeing Jesus transfigured and hearing the voice from the cloud, as described in Matthew 17:11-15, left such a lasting impression on Peter that nearly forty years later he recalled it in the words: "We . . . were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". The key words are, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty", and Peter's Epistles look beyond the present time of suffering to the coming kingdom, "when His glory shall be revealed" (1 Peter 4:13).

Paul's experience was different, but the impact of it grew rather than diminished as he spoke about it in later years. It happened on the Damascus road as he was about his mission of persecution, and the light from heaven shone round about him, a light that he described to King Agrippa as "above the brightness of the sun". But it was not just the light that left its impression on Paul. Acts 9:4 records the words of Jesus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest", and those words must have filled out his ministry concerning the Church with a deep sense of the value to a risen and glorified Christ of the members of His body on earth.

To understand John's ministry, with its emphasis on the divine Family, we must return to the Holy Mountain. What John saw there was substantially the same as Peter, but the impact it conveyed was different. We may reasonably conclude that the parenthesis in John 1:14 is his record of the event, and he says: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father". He received an enduring impression of an eternally subsisting relationship which has imprinted its distinctive character on Christianity.

And so we have these three truths, the Kingdom, the Church and the Family, each a particular aspect of Christian doctrine and experience, but none complete without the others. And we must not suppose that Peter has nothing to say about the Church, or Paul about the Family of God, for these truths are intertwined as doctrine just as they are intermingled in Christian experience. But Peter never forgot his impression of the majesty which will soon be acclaimed in Kingdom glory, just as Paul never forgot his impression of what the suffering members of His body mean to a glorified Christ, and as John never lost the sense of relationship which came to him on the Holy Mount and provided the special emphasis of his ministry. Let us look at a few different facets of these truths.

First of all, let us examine the distinctive character of each. Peter's view of the Kingdom glory is a future view to be contrasted with the present time when suffering and reproach are the portion of the believer. We may therefore think of *hope* as the particular characteristic of his writing. It is Peter who says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath begotten us again unto a living hope". Paul also refers often to hope, but he lives in the light of a heavenly world unrealised by mortal sight, yet open to faith, and the word *faith* occurs more than 130 times in Paul's Epistles. By contrast, the word 'faith' occurs only once in John's Gospel and epistles, whereas the word 'love' appears no less than 60 times. We would expect *love* to be the ruling characteristic of a ministry which focuses on the Father and the Son, and which contains those sublime words of the Lord Jesus, "That the love with which Thou has loved Me may be in them".

Now let us look at the general principles which are presented in our three areas of truth. The Kingdom is clearly the sphere of God's *government*. There is a danger of using the expression "the government of God" in a wholly negative sense, relating it to God's dealing with evil or failure. But Christ's coming Kingdom will display the full range of God's government under the beneficent rule of One of whom Isaiah prophesied, "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6).

A different idea is presented in the Church. Of course order and discipline is to be found in the Church, for it is the house of God, but it is the *grace* of God rather than His government that is the ruling principle. Paul uses the word 'grace' nearly ninety times: a study of the twelve references in the Epistle to the Ephesians will show that grace is the pervading principle of his ministry.

When we turn to John, it is neither government nor grace that rules, but *love*. We are in the divine Family and it is love that regulates all our relationships. John says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone that loveth him that begot loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John 5:1).

If the ministry of each of the three apostles was permeated by a particular view of the glory of Christ, we may expect to find that reflected in the way in which He personally is presented and in the titles used of Him. Perhaps we are not as careful as we might be in using suitable titles when we speak of or to the Lord Jesus. For example, there is a tendency among many Christians to use the title, King, and it is interesting to discover that Peter, the apostle of the Kingdom, does not use that title of the Lord Jesus. He declared at Pentecost, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ". He is, of course, the coming King, but in that present aspect of the Kingdom in which every true believer recognises that authority of the One who is rejected and absent, He is *LORD*.

Paul, of course, refers to Jesus as Lord many times, but he introduces another title which is appropriate to his ministry concerning the Church. He says in Colossians 1:18, "And He is the *HEAD* of the body, the church". Sometimes the word is used *organically* to distinguish the Head from the members of the body; sometimes it is used *positionally* to describe Christ's supremacy, as we might use the expression 'head of state'. In either case it is the distinctive title which describes His relationship to His church.

More than any other title John speaks of the Lord Jesus as the *SON*. Writing nearly sixty years after that scene on the mountain, nothing has diminished the impact of those words from out of the cloud: "This is My beloved Son". It is the title that not only describes His unique personal

relationship to the Father, but also introduces us to the thought that God is to be known to us as Father in the intimacy of a family relationship.

Not only does each of the three apostles have his own particular view of the Person of the Lord Jesus, but also his own way of looking at believers of the present period. Peter's view is perhaps best described in his own words in 1 Peter 2:9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people". What Israel should have been nationally is to be realised spiritually in those who now form the Kingdom through their subjection to the One who is publicly absent and rejected.

Paul's view no doubt was formed largely by his experience on the Damascus road.

Whether looked at in their individual feebleness as those for whom Christ died, or in their mysterious unity as built together for a habitation of God, or in their various but interrelated functions in the local church, believers are members of the body of Christ. Paul's valuation of them derives from their value to Christ, and as such they are to be loved, respected, served, taught and if need be disciplined, because they are His.

John's view is summed up in the words, "Beloved, now are we the *children* of God" (1 John 3:2). The translators of the Authorised Version have confused this verse and a number of others by using the word, 'sons' where the Greek original was clearly 'children'. Sonship for the believer is taught by Paul in Ephesians 1:5 and elsewhere. It is received by adoption, and has more to do with *position* than with relationship. Sonship in John's ministry relates to Christ personally, and believers are *children*, the point being that by new birth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit they have received the divine nature and become a part of the family of God.

We can end our brief review of the three ministries by considering the *objective* that each has in view. Both Peter and Paul are looking on to the second coming of Christ, but in different aspects. Peter is looking for His *Appearing*, when the rejected King will receive His Kingdom and His glory will fill the very scene in which He has been despised and disowned. Paul looks forward to the *Rapture*, that moment when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven" and every believer, raised dead and changed living, shall meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with Him. The Church's long witness will be over and she will be ready for presentation as the Bride to Him who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it".

John's outlook has a different character. He is concerned not so much with the earthly Kingdom or the Bridal Day as with the heavenly Home. He alone records the words of Jesus: "In my *Father's House* are many mansions", and the promise: "that where I am there ye may be also".

And the glory that he looks to see is not so much the glory that will fill the earth, but that sonship glory of which Jesus had said, "That they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory".

Let us remind ourselves again that these different views of truth are not exclusive one of the other. They must be taken together, each in its own context, to convey some idea of the wealth of the Christian faith and the glory of the Person who in all things must have the pre-eminence.

# The Nazarite

## COR BRUINS

*"All the days of his separation he is holy to the LORD"*  
(Numbers 6:8)

*A series of five addresses on "On the march with God", based on the early parts of the book of Numbers, was given at Bradford in October 1987. This paper gives, as a sample, one of the addresses, perhaps less difficult than the others to put into print, but certainly carrying a very important message.*

## NUMBERS 6

Verse 8 is a key-verse, conveying the chief characteristic of one who became a Nazarite. He (or she) was to be "holy to the LORD". This also involved being *wholly* to the LORD.

Many of the features of the children of God we have seen in earlier chapters were a little different from this. So that we may see this, a quick review of the preceding talks may help. In Chapter 1, a general overview of all the true Israelites was given. Who is *for real?* was a relevant question. Do we know our identity, our birthright, our pedigree, as children of God? A mixed multitude journeyed with the Israelites, but the distinct God-originated nature of the true people of God must be recognised. We must be deeply thankful for the work of God within, which has made us what we are as children of God.

Next, in chapter 2, 'Do you know *your place?*' seems important to ask. We see them placed around the Tabernacle (with all its wonderful pictures of the features and glories of Christ). There they were, not randomly gathered around that centre, but in their God-ordained placings, tribe

by tribe, according to His appointment. We must seek to know what *His* place for each of us is? It is not for our choosing.

There was a *special* place for the children of Levi (God's recognition of their special loyalty to God at Sinai; Exodus 32:26). Chapter 3 devotes itself to the differing functions of the sons of Levi in relation to the Tabernacle as it *moved forward* through the wilderness. Do you know *your particular gift?* — might be asked here. It may be a relatively small thing, a 'help' perhaps, but we must fit into our place. The three sons of Levi had three parts of the Tabernacle to take down, and to set up, when they made an onward move. Handling the things of Christ is a holy responsibility, but it is part of the service we are called to. Do we face it? It is a tremendous privilege too. *All* have a part, but no man selects his own service.

Chapter 6 indicates, on the other hand, something which is not a matter of obligation, nor allocated by God, but rather arises from free heart movement towards the Lord. Any one of the true Israelites, man or woman, of whatever tribe or other distinction of place, may desire to '*separate himself* to the LORD'. Not all were Nazarites, indeed not many are distinguished in Scripture thus. But in N.T. days, the desire in love to live *wholly to the Lord* is 'our intelligent service' (Romans 12:1). Nevertheless, it is done voluntarily, and the Lord notices and approves such commitment to Him.

The question of *vows*, undertaken today, was mentioned briefly. In the light of full Christian instruction and truth today, as compared with the position under the law of Moses, the following general advice was given — *don't undertake vows*. Knowing ourselves, and Christian truth about ourselves, should surely give us sufficient self-awareness to realise that we could not fulfil anything of the kind that we might take on.

A Nazarite, then, was a person set apart in a special way to the LORD. Clearly, the only perfect example of this is our Lord Himself, well worth our meditation and imitation. But, as we shall see, for our encouragement, failure with a Nazarite, and recovery thereafter, is envisaged — so that we ought not to refrain from complete commitment to our Lord on account of a (right) sense of our own weakness.

This kind of commitment to the Lord was therefore *voluntary* and *very individual*; and (we must surely add), very challenging for each hearer or reader of the passage. Think again about the phrase "holy, and separated unto the LORD". Note the word *unto*. In the whole chapter, positive separation (i.e. *to* the Lord) is alluded to at least six times. Separation *from* things only comes twice. This is a corrective for our natural ideas about separation. '*Do not*' is not the main principle of a separated life. Rather,

it is: *Do* those things that attraction to and love for the Lord would draw us into, in pleasing Him. A life influenced and controlled by the Holy Spirit, who directs us after the Lord Himself, is a truly spiritual life. True spirituality is *not* legality. Indeed, legality often has a touch of pride in it. It puts the emphasis on what I don't do. It does things always in conformity to outward rules, and is a *denial* of true inward spirituality.

There is a completeness of separation in this Nazariteship. Wine and strong drink were to be left alone. "Be not drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit"; Ephesians 5:18 indicates the spiritual principle. Primarily we are not thinking here of avoiding sinful things, but those legitimate things which may be seen as a hindrance, and so left alone for more positive aims. The preparedness to *forego* things, not wrong in themselves, for *Him*, our Lord, will show the kind of purposefulness that suits a truly devoted person. Do *we* show anything of this? But it is not our business to criticise others in what they allow themselves in the sight of the Lord. It is very easy to be superior, with other believers in mind. I am to be severe with *myself*, not others. Paul, in Philippians 3, spoke of things in his past (allowable things mostly) that he now put on one side as loss, because of the surpassing excellency of Christ. Legality was quite absent with him. Something positive and excellent now outshone those other things that once he valued.

A true Nazarite, then, has no legal spirit about him. It shows no kinship with asceticism, the attitude that sees some merit in what we deny ourselves.

There was reproach attached to this Nazariteship. "If a man have long hair . . . it is a shame to him", says 1 Corinthians 11:14. The Nazarite must be prepared for this. There will be some reproach, some stigma, associated with a distinct, separated and purposeful devotion to the Lord. People would see that he was different. One cannot be truly devoted to our Lord without the distinctiveness of our lives becoming clear. If we really belong to the Lord, we surely must not expect, nor wish, to pass as non-Christians at times. Are these not serious lessons for us?

Elisha asked a hard thing on that day when his Master (Elijah) was taken from him into heaven. He asked for 'a double portion of Elijah's spirit'. But he *did* see Elijah caught up (2 Kings 2) and as 'the sons of the prophets' looked on it was clear from his actions that he had received his request. Can observers see the difference with us — the difference that wholehearted devotion to the Lord Jesus brings about in our way of living?

A Nazarite gives up his dignity, his rights — he foregoes much for Christ, but thinks little of its cost to himself. This difference is a spiritual difference. He moves in a scene where 'death' is all around, and defiling

influences are prevalent. So far as is within him, he steers clear from these. Just as a non-smoker's clothing reeks with smoke on emerging from a smoke-filled place, and he himself and others notice it, so defilement 'clings', and affects persons. At times it is unavoidable — a dead body can be contacted by mis-chance, and other unhelpful things crop up inadvertently. But no one should deliberately *choose* the 'risky' things. Sensitivity to what displeases our Lord is needed, and cleansing is necessary if we come too near such things.

From verse 9 onwards, failure and restoration are envisaged. Knowing ourselves, how miserable we should be if no restoration were possible! But it *is* provided for — the Lord is very gracious to us! Failure can (and *does*) happen. We must be alert, we must not walk right into trouble. But *if* we fail, what then? Look now at verses 9 and 10. Note that action is needed on the seventh day, and something more on the eighth day. Why the delay until day seven? If uncleanness is contracted, then a waiting period is needed. It would be wrong if quick restoration gave us a light view of sin. God does not look at sin *that way*. We must have time to feel it fully. But a new start, a full restoration, is possible! This can come on the eighth day, after the fault is fully realised and confessed. How gracious God is! Micah 7:8 expresses this confidence in Him: "When I fall, I *shall* rise".

John Mark, in the N.T. is a good example of a servant who failed, yet was restored. There was a time when he turned back after a period. Luke says, "He went not with them (Paul and Barnabas) to the work" (Acts 13:13; and 15:38). But much later, the servant who failed was restored, so that Paul speaks of him as a fellow-servant. Writing his last epistle, very near his end, Paul urges Timothy "Bring Mark (if at all possible), for he is profitable to me for the ministry". We should remember that Mark, who failed, also wrote his Gospel which speaks of the One truly devoted and unflinching Servant.

But how was the Nazarite to act on the eighth day — the day of the *new start* in the Nazarite's devotion? Beginning at verse 9, right down to verse 21, we find the procedures required. It is clear that it was the Nazarite's action, bringing certain sacrifices, done publicly (at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation), with the priest participating, with the offerings he brought. Lives may fail, but such lives, restored to further devotion to the Lord, have an influence (a blessed influence indeed) for all to see. Amazing it surely is that God can turn failure around, so that there arises glory to Himself, and everyone else benefits when such lapses are confessed. It is to be noted that all the kinds of offerings are covered in these verses. Some of these are there because the sacrifice of Christ is basically needed to meet the sin and failure of the offerer; others

because of the pure virtue of the One who pleased God in all things. One remarkable point is that only here (v. 18) is something put along with sacrifices that picture the work of the Lord Jesus; this is the shorn hair of the Nazarite.

The priest too has a part in this restoration procedure. What he (the Nazarite) brings has its part in what fills the hands of the priest as he offers to the LORD all those items which speak of the beauties of our Lord Jesus. The Nazarite is involved in a gainful way, the priest is also involved, and the whole congregation takes note too, in this action to bring the failing but well-intended person back to the course of whole-hearted devotion to the LORD.

The speaker's final words referred to the beautiful close to the chapter. These verses, often quoted, deserve more than brief comment, but we refrain from this here.

# Shibboleth

COLIN CURRY

## A lesson from the story of Jephthah (Judges 11 and 12)

*Reading the book on Judges by S. Ridout, I have been arrested by his comments on Jephthah. Rather than quoting at length from the pages, I have attempted to outline something there which I feel will be salutary to consider, and then add a few notes of my own which should sharpen up for us the current relevance of this O.T. passage.*

*I give the details of the book in the footnote below (\*), so that a better appraisal may be gained by those prepared to read it. It will prove to be a profitable experience.*

The word 'shibboleth' has passed into our language and is used by many who may not know its origins. In my dictionary its meaning is said to be 'a petty or arbitrary test of social correctness' or 'an attitude (or custom) enforced on all members of a group'. In Judges 12:6 however, for those tested, correct usage of the word was a matter of life or death. Those who 'could not frame to pronounce it right' were slaughtered mercilessly.

---

\*Judges and Ruth, by Samuel Ridout, Loizeaux Bros. (Paperback, available from CBHT, £5.80.)

First these chapters describe a threat to the people of God from the Ammonites, who were among their many enemies. These Ammonites had previously occupied a portion of 'the land' now occupied by the Israelites, and were disputing their title to it. A repeated situation is described in the book of Judges, when, after the deaths of Moses and Joshua, there was a rapid decline in faithfulness to God amongst His people, and enemies were allowed to act as a scourge upon them. Time after time they were driven to acknowledge their departure from Him, and then a Deliverer was raised up to counter the inroads of their enemies, and for a while there was recovery. Afterwards comes more departure, and God sends a fresh deliverer as they confess their unfaithfulness. Gideon is perhaps the best-known of these persons, though he himself had his failures at the end. In the main, however, these deliverers (though used of God when His Spirit came upon them) were not the high-quality persons that Moses and Joshua had been. Samuel, later, would be among the outstanding servants of God. Samson, among the 'judges', is well-known for other reasons. Though used of God against the Philistines he was far from true to God in all that he did.

Jephthah deals with the Ammonite foes very effectively. The central part of chapter 11 describes this. He met the Ammonites by recounting the history of God's action in dispossessing them — eventually giving their one-time territory to Israel. It was theirs by His sovereign allocation, and none could gainsay their title to it. In other words 'the inheritance' possessed by the people of God was theirs by His sovereign and gracious will, and is not open to dispute. Jephthah basically gains his victory by an appeal to Scripture, quoting past events (recorded in Numbers). When the Ammonites refused this, we are told that the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. He entered into conflict with them, and they were totally subdued before the people of Israel.

That part of the story is good. The word of God will support strongly our claim to the wealth that He has given us. It is founded upon past actions of God. We do right to resist by His Spirit any reduction of its value in our thoughts, any influences that would take away the fundamental things, indeed the heavenly things, which we rightly treasure and value. Strong defence of all that is basic to our true Christianity, even attack against heretical beliefs (discerning them and exposing them for what they are) is urgently needed. We must not give back any of our precious ground to the enemy! Let us not be weak in contending for the truth!

But what about the ensuing events? Regrettably, a cloud shadows several parts of Jephthah's story. Though God used him, he does not seem to enter this conflict with the Ammonites in a good spirit. A certain bitterness against his brethren, because of their rejection of him earlier,

is revealed in the record. He only ventures forward on the assurance that he will be the 'head' afterwards. Severe activity against the Ammonites, the real enemies, was followed up by strong action against his own daughter. He had committed himself under an unnecessary and rash vow. His dearest and best was not exempt from this foolish undertaking. It seems that his (justifiable) harshness with God's enemies (and Israel's) became habitual, and could not be moderated. It was soon being maintained quite unjustly regardless of the recipients of its severity. Next, the number slaughtered at the fords of Jordan was 42,000! And they were not enemies at all. They were his fellow-brethren! Admittedly there was provocation, but no mercy was shown. It was all over a triviality, a small error in the first Hebrew consonant in the test-word. What a striking example of the vicious spirit of extreme legality, which descends on people in the name of upholding God's standards. Consider, dear brethren, how important (and *extremely relevant*) is this lesson for today.

Though His words were often gracious words, the Lord Jesus could use strong words too. We can be sure that these words of His were righteous words, well-deserved by those He addressed. Such words were directed to the scribes and Pharisees — the very champions of legalism. Think of His description of them in Matthew 23:24. "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel". Notice how these remarks follow words about making much of trivialities, and neglecting 'the weightier things': indeed He said they were *passing over* massive and vital things — *mercy, judgment, and the love of God*.

What shameful omissions for supposed leaders! (See also Mark 7:6-16, Luke 11:42.) This concentration on trivial things was no harmless matter, however. It misled the very ones they were supposedly leading, it damaged and robbed those they sought to guide. It undermined the very standards from God they were supposed to represent. The chapters 7-9 of John's Gospel have much about the jealousy of the Jewish leaders, as the Lord Jesus asserted His authority and the truth of His Person, to their confusion. Yet these same chapters show them planning to kill Him. Much of this centred on His activities on the Sabbath. He showed plainly how vital was the *spirit* of the Sabbath, so distinct from a rigid prohibition on proper usage of it (see John 7:23f.). Alongside strict Sabbath-keeping, murderous attitudes to Him could be nursed.

Some examples of the activities of 'enemies' of our Christian faith follow, in section (1). These inroads must be rejected with Jephthah-like firmness. But later, in section (2), I give current instances of what seem to me more like shibboleths, about which, guided in wisdom by 'judgment and the love of God', we should deny ourselves those strong feelings

mostly based on tradition, which can be wrongfully harsh with our brethren.

(1) The N.T., through the apostles, teaches us about activities flatly opposed to the Christian faith, and therefore to be regarded as extremely serious. Those busy on these lines must be positively and strongly rejected. John goes to the root of things. "He is a liar that denies that Jesus is the Christ". "He is antichrist that denies the Father and the Son". Even a lady has to reject one who "abides not in the doctrine of Christ". "Receive him *not*" is his direct word to her. See 1 John 2:22; 2 John 6-10.

The 'non-eternal Sonship' teaching, current in some circles some time ago, would in my view be among matters which should be firmly resisted and countered.

Paul has strong words too about those who mix up law and grace, and thus confuse "the truth of the gospel". To these he "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour". These were false brethren, Ammonites it could be said, to whom he conceded nothing. When Peter prevaricated, he "withstood him to his face". See Galatians 2:4,5,11. Purity of the truth had to be contended for.

The resurrection (of the body) had to be spelt out clearly, and foolish speculations about it countermanded strongly. And so we might go on. There are many things clear in the N.T. as needing our strong loyalty. See how, in Paul's last letter of all, he envisaged the downward currents of departure from the truth (especially the teaching entrusted to him to transmit to others). How he counselled Timothy to be a strong person — "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" — valuing highly (and himself committed to) the truth that Paul stood for.

(2) Jephthah 'went overboard' in severity against large numbers of his fellow-Israelites — and indeed with his own kith and kin. Severity gone mad, surely! But in some extreme cases brethren today are known to *cut off* in their thoughts and sympathies dear believers outside their own rules of acceptability. It can include their own natural relatives, (who may also be believers), and they discontinue friendships and fellowship with other people they once were glad to know as believers. I need hardly say that permanent scars remain with those of the Lord's people who have suffered from this severe treatment.

We may know about this, and not consider the warning it has for ourselves. But surely *anything* that drifts that way must be seen in advance, and arrested. It cannot be done by blindness to such trends, even though they may begin in a small and incipient way. But it is difficult to avoid the impression that some amongst ourselves, by their very manner, *appear* to show an 'inner-circle' attitude. They seem to consider themselves to be

fit persons to dictate in these fields. How like the Pharisees, looking with disdain at others, as “this people who know not the law” (John 7:49). Exposure of the wrongness of this on Scriptural standards is very clear in Mr Hole’s paper ‘Assembly Ground, or Eclecticism?’, which I think is now incorporated in his ‘Assembly Principles’\*.

Now I pass to give just a few instances of small things from which large issues could arise. These are observable things, around which rifts develop, and before long chasms open, with brethren taking entrenched positions. Here, it seems to me, *obedience* as the first principle of a walk worthy of our high calling, has been ignored, or forgotten. Lowliness and meekness, forbearance with one another, in *love*, endeavouring thus to keep (in practice) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace — these are the only ways, if we are to avoid that strong way of condemning others that so easily overtakes us. The issues I raise show kinds of situations where *forbearance* and *love* are the key-attitudes needed. This requires straightforward obedience to Ephesians 4:1-3.

But please understand that, as compared with the ‘weighty’ matters under paragraph (1), these are minor matters. Only one (the last) is of a *major* kind. A sense of proportion is needed. I raise them, not provocatively I trust, but with the pure desire that fairness with our brethren will prevail, and the treatment of others in love may be encouraged.

I begin with the simplest example. Surprisingly, the use in prayer of the term ‘heavenly Father’ has been made an issue, when surely it could have been overlooked. There are some who cannot refrain from ‘correcting’ an offender (as they would think him). Much goes on that shuts young mouths in meetings. Heavy-handed intervention in such matters is not at all in the spirit of the true pastor. It shows little love, and a lack of wisdom and tact. Older persons (so treated) can sometimes bear with this meekly in the spirit of Christ — but the ‘longsuffering’ is with *them* rather than with those who administer these rebukes. Surely, if this is a gross matter (which I doubt), then leading by example is preferable to dictating, assuming a perfect right to do this.

In some quarters the word ‘Gideon’ is a critical word. Any sympathy with, or involvement with the Gideon movement, classes a person as ‘a second-class citizen’ in the eyes of some. They think it, and (worse still) they have been known to say it. ‘The Gideon Bible’, a modified N.I.V., is anathema to some. This is prejudice. On the vital points, none of which are more important than the Person of Christ, its translation is *better*

---

\*Eclecticism in this context means clannishness, or ‘a huddle of selected, superior, mutually approving, persons’. The same matter is dealt with briefly in the reprint of F.B.H.’s paper “One Loaf, One Body”, in *Scripture Truth* (May 1986).

than the A.V. If you know a little Greek, you can check this yourself. I do *not* say that we should switch to the N.I.V. There are, of course, other reasons for using the A.V. — it is to be preferred that all involved in exchanges and discussions on Scripture should refer to a single version. But I *do* say that strong demotion of the N.I.V. is unfair to it.

The perennial Thou/You issue arises here — an area where attachment to King James English decides. Veneration for a version's style has little to do with the original New Testament — nothing to justify it *there*. Reverence has nothing to do with 'form' — everything to do with the *spirit* and the *manner* of the person involved. I feel I could not disavow, or even try to correct, *anyone* who displays a truly reverential spirit in their words to the Lord. I would respect such a person, indeed seek to be like him.

A new rule, in vogue in a few places, is that standing up for singing the occasional hymn (at the Lord's Supper) is undesirable. It is a mark of 'the spiritual ones' to refrain from this. Does it not seem self-evident that there is something artificial about such a 'spirituality'?

I conclude with a *much more substantial* matter. Because it comes last, let no one think *this* is trivial. I refer back to Mr Hole's paper in *Scripture Truth* (1986) to which I have alluded in my previous footnote. Reading this with attention shows that the commonly used phrase 'holding the truth of the one body' is ambiguous, and therefore dangerous. It depends on what we may think it to mean. On the one hand it may have the primary, positive, desire in mind — the desire to hold this truth by reception of every true believer, who is not disqualified *on Scriptural grounds*. Those limits on accepting people are few, and clear too in Scripture. On the other hand, this truth can be used negatively (distorting its principal meaning), as ground for excision of persons who should Scripturally be welcomed (cutting them off, like Jephthah). That phrase is no catch-phrase. If we use it, let us do so thoughtfully: let us be sure we know what we intend by it; for it disguises the difference between a Scriptural view of the matter and a sectarian one.

---

"Love has long patience, is kind; . . ."

*1 Corinthians 13:4, N.Tr.*

"That ye, being rooted and grounded in love . . . may walk worthy . . . with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love".

"Be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

*Ephesians 4:2,32.*



Incorporating *Words of Help*

May, 1988

# Three Book Reviews

T. BALDERSTON and the EDITOR

## Preliminary remarks on Book Reviews

This issue is unusual in the sense that about half of it is devoted to Book Reviews. Also, as readers will see, all of these are of an uncommon kind. I am thankful for Theo Balderston's thoughtful assessment of the first of these books. His preamble — before starting on the main body of his review — is specially helpful in a more general sense on "good practice in Christian reading". It is because of his remarks there that I have felt it right to review the other two books.

## THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

A Book Review by T. Balderston

**Henri Blocher, In the Beginning. The Opening Chapters of Genesis.**

Leicester (IVP), 1984, pp. 240, £6.95.

Darwinism has an insidious hold even on the minds of those most strenuously opposed to it. It confines our reading of the early chapters of Genesis largely to reaction against its errors, so that the only parts of the narrative which strike us as important are those which contradict it. True, we maintain without limit the main teaching of these chapters, namely, that God is sovereign creator. But the rest of what we derive from them tends to be purely negative: that the earth was *not* formed over aeons of time, that the species did *not* evolve out of each other, that man does

*not* have remote, apelike ancestors. However, there are surely positive spiritual lessons to be learned from Genesis 1 beyond the great and simple truth of God as creator. What is the positive significance of the seven days? Does the order in which creation took place have any meaning? Why the emphasis on “after its kind”? What exactly does “in the image and likeness of God” mean as a description of Adam? Does it apply to us?

Much the same can be said for chapters two and three. In insisting on the historicity of Adam and Eve, and the fall, inquiry into the deep meaning of their relationship and failure may have been neglected.

Readers of a certain cast of mind will find much to assist such inquiries in the book under review here. I write “of a certain cast of mind”, firstly, because they must be prepared to follow quite a demanding level of exposition, conducted at quite a brisk pace. There is, however, nothing technical about the book, it does not pre-suppose any specialist knowledge and it has been well translated, so it presents no inherent obstacles to those who are prepared to regard reading as work, and not just as a passive process whereby familiar and easily assimilated thoughts slide into the mind. But secondly, readers must also be of the cast of mind which, proceeding from the confidence that the writer is a believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is willing to weigh what he writes — neither uncritically swallowing all, nor, equally uncritically, dismissing his suggestions out of hand. This is in any case good practice in Christian reading. We need to be discriminating — certainly: even Christian bookshops are nowadays full of lightweight ephemera which, if often not wrong, nevertheless are not worth the time spent reading them. But our discriminating reading reaches the level of stultification if even mature believers (the guidance would be different for new Christians) will pick up a book in the expectation of help only if the author’s credentials assure them in advance that they will agree with 95% of it. “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you”, wrote the apostle John, “and ye need not that anyone teach you” (1 John 2:27). By this he clearly did not mean literally that they needed no teaching — or why was he himself writing them? He meant that the indwelling Spirit liberated them from slavish dependence on the teaching of any man. They — not individually but collectively — had the power to discern, to judge, to get the gain of what they heard, and to winnow out the chaff.

With this exordium I come at last to M. Blocher’s book. The writer is a French evangelical teacher of theology. Beginning his book with a strong affirmation of inspiration and acceptance of the Mosaic authorship, his plan is not a verse-by-verse exposition but rather the examination of the main themes of the first three chapters of Genesis, devoting a chapter

or two to each: the week of creation, the image of God, man and woman, the fall and its consequence. A concluding chapter briefly considers “the aftermath” as far as chapter 11. In the author’s view the first chapter of Genesis has perhaps three great themes. Firstly and obviously, creation out of nothing as a sovereign act of God. Secondly, that creation is a creation of *order*: it was an act of *separating* — of light from darkness, waters above from waters below, dry land from sea, animals after their kind. And through all these: of time from time by the week of creation, and the repetition of “evening and morning”. God is the God of order, not confusion. Noting the prohibitions in the Law against the mixing of things diverse, M. Blocher concludes the chapter on the subject by a quotation of Isaiah 45:18-19. In a day which is characterised by rejection of order, there is much need for Christians to imbibe this truth of creation, the author insists. The third theme is of course the Sabbath.

The order between man and woman is also naturally one of the topics of discussion in connection with man as the image of God — and the author discusses it well with reference to 1 Corinthians 11:7ff, noting modern attempts even in the church to deny it. For the rest, I found what he had to say on image/likeness helpful but weakened by an unwillingness to take account of the moral aspect of the image, and therefore a reluctance to infer that the image/likeness was spoiled at the fall and that this spoiled all human relationships in turn. The powerful connection which, I think, exists between Genesis 1 and 3 and the latter half of Romans 1 is neglected.

I found the examination of Genesis 2 and 3 of variable help. What stood out most was his careful examination of the meaning of “the knowledge of good and evil”. I had casually taken this to mean that in doing wrong the man and woman became aware that there was such a thing as wrong, and hence of its obverse, the category of good which hitherto, in innocency, had not been apparent to them. The defect of this view is that the mere fact of the prohibition made them aware that there is good and evil, and not the act of transgressing it. The use of the phrase in Deuteronomy 1:39 and Isaiah 7:15 suggests that the “knowledge” in question is not simply awareness of good and evil (children, too, know that there is such a thing as naughtiness) but the action of judging for oneself what is good and what is evil. In its relative sphere (adults opposed to children) this is right, indeed necessary. But for Adam and Eve so to take this judging to themselves in the face of God’s clear prohibition was rebellion — a rebellious rewriting of the standards of good and evil which mankind pretends to today as never before.

I should add that M. Blocher has a good section on the necessity of upholding the historicity of Adam and Eve as real individuals, and of the fall.

But I have deliberately reserved to the end an account of the author's view of the relationship between Genesis 1 and "science". He sets out three possibilities. Firstly the "concordist" — which seeks to find correspondences between the events of the six days and the accepted scientific picture. Secondly, the "anti-scientist" which rejects this picture. Thirdly, the "fideist" which asserts that since the Bible and "science" approach the same phenomenon from different standpoints there can be no conflict: they complement each other. In his view the "concordist" approach — e.g. the interpretation of the six days as six epochs of pre-history — slides too lightly over clear conflict, chiefly as to the sequence of events, between the two accounts. Of anti-scientist views, the "young earth" theory of the Creation Research Society claims more in respect of its criticisms of standard science and of the cogency of its alternative model than it can actually deliver (I defer consideration of his criticisms of the "gap" theory until the end). But "fideism" weakly surrenders a part of reality as if God had nothing to say to it. "The fact that the primary purpose of Genesis is not to instruct us in geology does not exclude the possibility that it says something in relation to the subject. In the last analysis one cannot make an absolute separation between physics and metaphysics, and religion has to do with everything, precisely because all reality is created by God and continues to depend on Him. . . . Faith rests on facts, objectively asserted." (p. 24).

Fine words. But where does this discussion leave the author himself? His conclusion is as follows. Since it can be shown that the framework of the seven days serves a doctrinal purpose (in teaching that God created *time* as an orderly sequence of events) and that the sequence of creatorial activity in these days is deeply significant to this theme of order (the spaces created and separated on the first three days, the spaces populated on the subsequent three days: first the "without form" negated, and then the "void") — and since this pattern was evidently the inspired author's *intention*, we need look for no further intention. The omission of "evening and morning" on the seventh day shows that Moses did not understand *that* day as 24 hours at least (and hence John 5:17) — and so not the other days either. Other Scriptural arguments are adduced to the same effect.

We must certainly credit the writer for his intention and his procedure. His rigorous aim is to interpret Scripture by Scripture: to interpret passages firstly according to their own plain sense and the context, but secondly as further illuminated and modified by the book in which they appear, and lastly, in the light of the whole of Scripture. He has no time for casual, tendentious parallels, as his dismissal of Psalm 90:4 shows. We should not malign his intention, nor forget the rich teaching which he has been able to bring out concerning the meaning of the days, the repetition of

evening and morning, and what took place in them. And yet . . . does this add up to a demonstration that Moses did not intend to teach a creation in seven days? I for my part find M. Blocher to slide awkwardly round Exodus 20:11. None of us is in a position to throw stones. I know of nobody, for example, who thinks that the sun and moon were actually created (as opposed to being caused so be seen from the earth) after day and night. And those who hold — as I tend to — the “gap” theory must accept that we too read Exodus 20:11 not quite as it might at first sight be read (even if our reading seems less remote from the verse than M. Blocher’s). Nevertheless, I think that M. Blocher has insensibly been eased into the “fideist” position, despite his intention to resist it, by what he, as a layman, thinks to be the weight of scientific evidence. It seems that he does not reject some form of evolution, whilst entirely rejecting the notion that any of it could be the product of chance. Thus he *has*, in the end, denied that Genesis has anything of relevance to say to geology; despite his best intentions we may wonder whether his stance has in part been shaped by a desire to find an interpretation which science and its progress cannot touch.

If I might conclude with some remarks on the “gap” theory — the theory which postulates a great space of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Although opposed to it, M. Blocher in fact disposes of the serious obstacle which many versions seem to raise against this theory when they translate, “In the beginning, when God created the heaven and earth, the earth was without form . . .”. This is, he says, an unlikely translation on its own terms, and it in any case would replace a simple, majestic introduction to the stately prose of the chapter by a weak, clumsy one. The AV reading is the more likely. This is good to know. M. Blocher’s own arguments against the “gap” theory seem largely to relate to C. I. Scofield’s speculations about the fate of earlier ages — which speculations are quite unnecessary to the theory. The third alleged difficulty — that science knows no catastrophe, of the scale it alleges, in the past seven thousand, or indeed forty thousand years (is Archbishop Ussher’s chronology sacrosanct?) — may be the most serious; unfortunately there are no rigorous scientific defences of, or attacks on, the “gap theory” in recent times to know whether this is so.

An author’s credentials are, notwithstanding what was written earlier in the review, always a good guide as to whether a book will be worth reading. If, as in this case, these mean little to us, then personal recommendation from one who has read it must suffice. As, and in the terms that this book was recommended to me, so I recommend it to those who have gained some idea both of its edificatory value, and of the questions it raises, from this review.

## THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

### Two books reviewed by the Editor

**D. C. Spanner. Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution.**

(Exeter, The Paternoster Press, 1987, pp. 191, £6.95)

**J. N. (Tim) Hawthorne. Windows on Science and Faith.**

(Leicester, I.V.P., 1986, pp. 128, £2.75)

I begin my comments on Professor Spanner's book with a substantial quotation from page 32. (Publisher's permission for this review was readily granted.) It will be apparent that the author is now retired.

"In my work as a biologist researching into fundamental problems it fell to my lot to introduce radioactive tracers into plants; to kill and fix their delicate tissues in powerful chemical reagents; to embed them in tough epoxy resins; to cut them into incredibly thin slices (about a millionth of an inch thick); and finally to examine them in the electron microscope, at a magnification of anything up to 500,000. All this the tissues, of almost infinite delicacy of structure, bore with great dignity. I often felt that my own dignity as a human investigator suffered much more, as very occasionally, with an exquisite pang, I realised that the scientific, analytical, manipulative approach had all but obliterated the marvel of the living thing. I sometimes wished, with scarcely bearable longing, to be able to recapture the wonder with which a child looks at a flower in its hand, or watches a tiny moving insect. Alas, the analytical approach, for all its necessity and worth, is potentially devastating. This has often been borne in on me as I sat in a gathering of professional biologists; rare indeed it is to find one who still regards his research material as 'fearfully and wonderfully made'.

"Now what is true of the research biologist is, I am afraid, sometimes true also of the critical scholar (examining Scripture). He dissects and analyses, compares and theorises; and before he knows where he is, the wonder of his material has gone. Of course he sees plenty to excite his interest and admiration (so does the probing biologist); but the glory has departed. 'Ichabod' has to be written over it. The Lord says, 'This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word'. There's the rub. Who retains the ability to tremble before something he has just analysed into J, E, P and D? (\*see footnote, p. 231). Few indeed. And if the Bible is not that Word before which we

must tremble, what is? Our society no longer stands in awe at the mystery of the foetus growing mysteriously in the womb. Haven't all its secrets been probed and laid bare? So it is here. The human foetus and the divine Word: both have become commonplace in popular (and sometimes in learned) estimation. Without a tremor we abort the one and dismiss the other. No wonder our civilization reels."

I found this quotation quite entrancing. It epitomises the whole tone of this book. It is the work of a well-informed yet humble scholar. He is beautifully explicit on his own convictions about Scripture — as firm and acceptable (to such as ourselves) as anyone could wish. I have quoted this excerpt first in order to forestall any predisposition against a book with such a title. Were it not for the preamble to the review of M. Blocher's book I might not have attempted this review (nor the one that follows) but, with it, I seek to persuade the reader to abandon prejudice and suspend disbelief until he has read the book carefully. If the criterion is 95% agreement one might as well not start. But if a true and humble believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit (such as this author) expresses his considered judgements, not at all insistently, we should not dismiss his suggestions out of hand. I certainly found that I could not agree with everything here, but have gained considerably from reading it nevertheless. Also I feel that outright dogmatism against 'evolution' is *not* warranted — and in extreme form comes close to ignorance. The book is carefully expressed, making room in a complete way for the supreme sovereignty of God. Indeed it stresses this.

In presentation it is thorough, well-arranged, well-documented, as we might expect from a meticulous author. I do not think it is excessively demanding on the reader. The gist of what is being said on the 'science' side would, I think, be enough to enable a willing reader to be carried along with the general run of the text. There I must leave this particular book, hoping to promote interest with some.

The other book is not so substantial. The writer (currently a professor of biochemistry in a University Medical School) produced a shorter booklet nearly a quarter-century ago, but as he says there is *much* more to relate in the field of the life-sciences now, so that this is virtually a new book. He says enough to assure us of his high view of Scripture, its authority and the respect due to it. But he takes a humble line in thinking of

---

\*These refer to the Documentary Hypothesis (of the origin of the Pentateuch) associated especially with the names of Graf and Wellhausen.

(While the author has destructive criticism in mind, the remarks are applicable in a milder form to the systematic, pigeon-holing, style of study and exposition of Biblical 'truth', which may lose the fear of God, and the humility, shown by persons *truly* devoted to it. — Ed.)

himself as a 'layman' in the detailed field of Scripture, and moreover in the other branches of science too — including the life-sciences other than his own. It is well to have such a responsible guide, who (from a basis of Christian faith, and great respect for the Bible) 'sticks to his own last' in his own narrow field. Though small in relation to the whole, that narrow area proves to be a vast area, of interest and wonder indeed from the believer's standpoint.

First, I should say that the book is slanted towards sixth-form types, not necessarily studying 'science', and to others, like myself, who came late in life to interest in the life-sciences. It has to fall back on some basic physics, of course: he spells this out sketchily but sufficiently. Though quite bare, it is sound.

But, one may ask, how is this at all related to the opening of Genesis? Genesis 1 speaks of the creation of *living* things, of *the origin of life*. *Life* is a great wonder, a cause for speculation with some, of course, but that first chapter says plainly that *God* created living things, and gave them the ability to grow and multiply. But what do we know about processes of life (of development and reproduction)? In so far as answers can be found some of what is known about life-processes can be imparted. This our author is able to do in his simple yet expert outline. It confirms the thought in the mind of the psalmist that he himself (and it by no means exempts other living things) was "fearfully and wonderfully made". A grasp of the simple contents of this volume will, I believe, make any reader align himself further with the psalmist, in feeling, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139). With the psalmist it evoked a true response to God in His greatness: and it is because I would wish readers to share this experience that I draw attention to this book.

One does not have to be put off by chemistry. The complexity and structure of organic molecules of enormous size, most notably the *DNA* molecule which carries the genetic code, and acts as a template for the replication processes underlying growth and reproduction, is all spelt out simply and effectively by Professor Hawthorne. I found it so, and am grateful to have been instructed on these matters. I hope readers may share the high thoughts of God, the Creator, here available. True, there are thoughts of God on a vastly different (spiritual) plane which must occupy us today — but surely *nothing* about God in His glorious handiwork must willingly be ignored.

Finally, on page 60, the pure speculative nature of 'scientific' guesses on the actual *origin* of life is made clear. Our author says that there is some evidence that science seems to be at the end of its tether in trying to account for life's beginning. Such a marvellously complex structure as a

DNA molecule depends for its production on several other highly complex (protein) molecules, each of which requires DNA for its synthesis. It is a 'chicken and egg' situation. Professor Spanner also refers to this, though in his (larger) book it is less easy to find! This *impasse* is recognised in the scientific field, though some still make efforts to avoid it.

How thankful we must be that the Lord has taught us to rely, not on the imaginative and unprovable speculations of men, but on the living Word of God. Tribute is due to our three authors covered in these reviews, who have stressed for our benefit this common respect for that Word.

## **“The Form of God” and “The Form of a Servant”**

**Philippians 2:5-8**

**A page or two from “The Son of God” by J. G. Bellett**

Under the covenant, under the divine purpose, at His own divine pleasure, He had surrendered Himself, saying, “Lo, I come”. For the great ends of God’s glory and the sinner’s peace, He had taken ‘the form of a servant’. And, accordingly, in due time He was made ‘in the likeness of men’ and went on in a course of self-humbling even to ‘the death of the cross’.

In such a course we see Him through life. He hides His glory, ‘the form of God’, under ‘the form of a servant’. He did not seek honour from men. He honoured the Father that had sent Him, and not Himself. He would not make Himself known. He would not show Himself to the world. Thus we read of Him. And all this belonged to the ‘form’ He had taken, and gets its perfect illustration in the histories or narratives of the Gospels.

Under the form of a tributary, He hid the form of the Lord of the fulness of the earth and sea. He was asked for tribute — at least Peter was asked if his Master did not pay it. The Lord declared His freedom; but, lest He should offend, He pays the custom for Peter and Himself. But who, all the while, was this? None less than He of whom it had been written “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof”. For He commands a fish from the sea to bring Him that very piece of money which He then passed over to the receivers (Matthew 17).

What an instance of the precious mystery that He who was ‘in the

form of God', and 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God' — using thus the treasures of the deep, and commanding the creatures of God's hand as *all His own* — took on Him 'the form of a servant'! What glory breaks through the cloud in that passing and trivial occurrence! It was all between Him and Peter; but it was a manifestation of 'the form of God' from beneath 'the form of a servant', or of a subject to the power (as in Romans 13:1). The fulness of the earth was tributary to Him at the moment when He was consenting to pay tribute to others. As, on another occasion, the unnoticed guest at the marriage-feast spread the feast, not merely as though He had been 'the bridegroom', but as the very Creator of all that furnished it. There again He 'manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him' (John 2).

So again we read of Him, He would not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street. He would not break the bruised reed, but rather withdraw Himself. And all this because He had taken 'the form of a servant'. And, accordingly, on that very occasion the Scripture is quoted, "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen" (Matthew 12).

Very significant of His way, all this was. Show us a sign from heaven, was another temptation to exalt Himself (Matthew 16). The Pharisees then tried Him, as the devil tried Him when he would have Him cast down from the pinnacle of the temple; as the kinsfolk were doing when they said, "Show Thyself to the world" (John 7). But what said the perfect Servant? No sign should be given but that of Jonas — a sign of humiliation, a sign that the world and the prince of this world were apparently to get advantage over Him for a moment, instead of such a sign as would awe and silence the world into subjection to Him.

Excellent, indeed, are these traces of God's perfect Servant. David and Paul, standing, like Moses and Elias on the holy hill, reflect this Servant thus hiding Himself. David slew the lion and the bear, and Paul was caught up into the third heaven; but neither of them spoke of these things. And lovely reflections of the perfect Servant such actings were. But they, and all like them which we may find in Scripture, or among the saints, are more distant from the great Original than we have measures to measure. He hid 'the form of God' under 'the form of a servant'. Jesus was the strength of David when he killed the lion and the bear, and He was the Lord of that heaven into which Paul was caught up; but He lay under the form of one who had 'not where to lay His head'.

So on the top of 'the holy hill', and again at the foot of it. On the top of it, in the sight of His elect, for a passing moment, He was 'the Lord of glory'; at the foot of it He was 'Jesus only', charging them not to tell the vision to any till the Son of man were risen from the dead (Matthew 17).

Observe Him again in the vessel on the lake during the storm. He was there as a tired labouring man whose sleep was sweet. Such was His manifested form. But underneath lay 'the form of God'. He arose, and as the Lord who gathers the wind in His fists, and binds the waters in a garment, He rebuked the sea into a calm (Proverbs 30:4; Mark 4).

# To the Seven Churches

## (5) Sardis

TOM TYSON

*"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches".*

*To be involved in a 'Christian' environment where our Lord justly says "Thou hast a name to live and art dead" should surely cause us disquiet. The more so when He adds that the little that remains is "ready to die". Sadly these comments come very close to ourselves. This letter can be seen as relevant in the period extending onwards after the bright witness to truth from God at the Reformation. A great light shone when the Reformers, at high cost to themselves, stood for much of God's truth re-discovered at that time. But it is sad, and salutary too to find that what followed became, after some time, far from pleasing to the Lord. In His view it **required** the statements in this letter, and His appeal for repentance and watchfulness. Let us each be sensitive to His true comments about us. Let us seek to find in Himself that spiritual 'life' and energy so much needed personally, and in our assemblies.*

There can be no disputing that a great turning-point in Church history took place at the Reformation. Our Lord's words to Sardis, while applicable to that church, seem also to foresee the state of affairs within the Christian profession **following** the Reformation. At the Reformation great light from God, based on the Word of God, broke into the earlier darkness. God's servants, loyal to the Scriptures, lived and died for the truths they found there. But this sequence of letters is concerned with dominant features of stages in the course of Christianity on earth. As our Lord looks at still

later developments in post-Reformation times, He sees much to criticise, and to give wise and earnest counsel about. He is no strong supporter of 'Protestantism' with all the ingredients that have become embodied within that system. We must be clear that it is *not* the Reformers, nor others like them since, that He reviews here, but He is assessing the build-up afterwards of trends not at all aligned to the truth of God found in Scripture.

As often, what Satan could not do by one means, he attempts to do by another. The authority and guidance of the Word of God is little recognised here in Britain today. This is probably true of 95% of the population. 'Christian' activities are often thought of as confined within the bounds of social reform, philanthropy, political affiliations; ignoring (so it seems) what is at the root of individual personal (and national) inward need and failure. Blindness to Christ is common; and little attention to all the personal Christ-like features that can only flow from His life within us. Undue occupation is devoted to earthly targets: and bland unawareness of the heavenly realms where Christ now is, exists — scenes to which He has called us. On top of all this the clarion style of the Reformers, the costly but clear witness to Him, and the emphasis on the Word of God as the standard for truth and for conduct — how *lacking* all these things are (except with a minority who set themselves to please the Lord)!

Freedom to think, after the days of dictation and bondage, was a great asset, provided it retained its humility and did not rear itself against God's authority. Sadly subjection of man's reason to God was soon thrown off in the main. Scientific advances were made; some of them entirely beneficial, but often the growth of knowledge inculcated a spirit of independence. The rational mind, and pride in its capabilities, soon was dominant. It must be said, however, that some of the first-class minds (among the scientists particularly, including some current ones) have been found with truly humble men. But has not 'rationalism' invaded the profession of Christianity? Clearly it is so — and the Word of God accordingly receives scant obedience.

Here (3:1) the Lord Jesus introduces Himself as the One that has the seven Spirits of God. The mighty upheaval brought about by the Spirit of God *at work* had been known *then* in Reformation times. But this letter directs itself to a condition when the freshness of things as they were in those movements from God had been lost. In the Sardis climate that manifold power of the Spirit of God must be understood as being *still available*.

He knew their works. But is it not sadly significant that in Thyatira He was able to say much in approval of their works, yet here in Sardis He saw little to commend? He only says He sees and knows their works. The

great truths of the Reformation were soon compromised. Although the Creeds are recited, only an outward form remains, with few exceptions. We have the situation foreseen in 2 Timothy 3:5. The form remains, but the living creature has left the shell. This is a day when often we have 'programmes without power'. Let us take care not to exempt ourselves from these statements. How much, let us ask, of tradition, form, custom, clings to our way of doing things?

The Lord Jesus says that He had not found their works complete before God. The Reformation did not bring about a complete overhaul of Church practice, entirely suitable to Him. We may marvel how far things *were* recovered, and against such odds! But after the Reformation much of what went before was retained. Clericalism remained, prophetic truth still was obscure, and many of the weighty things which lie close to the very centre of Christianity (the true Church, its hope and destiny, the revelation of the Father, etc.) were not brought to light in those times. They are not widely appreciated still. Less famous names, of humble persons content to be in obscurity, have in later times uncovered from the Word some of these great truths, there in the Bible from the very first. How much we owe to such persons (and to others strong in evangelical witness) in recent centuries! How utterly *wrong* to under-rate and disregard God's movements in the recovery of His truth to His people in these more recent times!

Be watchful, our Lord says. Strengthen the things that remain. This is vital if we are not to wake up too late to our plight. If not, He will take us totally unawares, coming like a thief in the night. To be surprised in our unfaithfulness, though we may be believers, cannot be a comfortable state to be found in, when He breaks into our deadness despite His warnings.

Remember how thou hast received and heard, He advises. Go back to recall *how* you first heard the message. It came liberally from God, and our hearts were moved and full of joy (as in some of the earlier churches). We had it through blood, and sweat, and tears. The martyrs were part of the means by which it came to them, and to us. The sufferings, the blood of the Lord Jesus, were the basic means through which all that we have received came to us. How could we be cool and 'dead' in return? With so much later given to us by leaders who 'have shown unto us the Word of God' (in recent centuries) how could we possibly de-value their service to God and to ourselves? Not surprisingly the call to "Hold fast, and repent" is urged strongly by our Lord.

There are a few names, even in Sardis, of persons keeping clear of the defiling influences of the world. How much should *we* wish to be

amongst them! And how little we ought to treat lightly the defilements of the world! He will later display these persons in all their purity. His company is given to them *now* in that kind of walk. In due course “they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” He affirms. That white raiment, given by Him, and His statement “for they are worthy” is really what He has made of them, the product of His own work within them. (We are reminded of John 21:10, where Jesus said “Bring of the fish which ye have now caught”. He credits them with something which, apart from Him they could never have done!)

He will confess the name of each of these worthy ones before His Father, and will *not* blot out their names from the book of life. This is a sure fact for any believer, but has special encouragement for faithfulness too. It is said here, perhaps, because it was not uncommon for those who protested against Romish practices to be branded as ‘heretics’, and had their names erased from Church registers and the like. The Lamb’s ‘book of life’ has firm entries in it, and will *never* be tampered with!

## “I John”

**ALLAN RETALLICK**

*A meditation on John’s direct way of addressing his readers in the closing book of the Bible.*

It is noticeable that, although the apostle John was chosen to write five of the books in the New Testament, only one of them, the last, contains his name. In his Gospel he begins with the words: “In the beginning was the Word”, and in his first epistle he begins similarly, without introduction: “That which was from the beginning”. In his second and third epistles he refers to himself simply as “the elder”. In his Gospel he is called “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, or “the other disciple”. In the last chapter he refers to the “sons of Zebedee”, of whom he was one, but his name does not appear. Yet his whole Gospel is full of references to a personal experience of the blessed One whom he followed, and in his first epistle he speaks of “That which we have seen and heard”, reminding us of the testimony in the early days of the Church’s history, when he and Peter said: “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

In the Revelation, however, John’s name appears several times. The

very first verse tells us that the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, was sent to His slave John. This is the first description of him in this book. Paul loved to use this same expression. He had been purchased by the blessed Lord, and was no longer his own. John it is who speaks about the blood that was shed when the soldier pierced the Lord's side, and the fact that He came by water and blood. He it was that said, after the Lord was risen: "It is the *Lord*". In this first chapter of Revelation he also bursts into a doxology: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood".

But not only is he a slave. He is a witness. He "bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Revelation 1:2). After his initial greeting: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia", he tells us that he was exiled in Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ". But before this he sets his seal on the book by the words "I John" (verse 9). He tells us that he is a brother, and also a companion in tribulation. Peter speaks much of the suffering that is a Christian's lot in a hostile world. We know very little of this in a favoured land where all forms of religion are tolerated. John knew what it was to suffer for his faith, from those early days of walking through the land of Israel with his Master, and later being beaten and imprisoned for his faithful witness. But he was also a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Of this the later chapters speak. The kingdom is assured, but this is the time for patience, as other apostles had pointed out. Paul says: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (or patience of Christ)" (2 Thessalonians 3:5). James also tells us: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). In the epistle to the Hebrews we are told that we have need of patience.

The next thing that John tells us about himself is that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (verse 10). Much has been written about this delightful expression, but surely we ought to know more of this experimentally. Little by little the sanctity of the Lord's day has been eroded, and, even when we come together around our blessed Lord, it may not always be in the frame of mind that shuts out the world and all the other things that have occupied us in our business and daily lives. Because he was in the Spirit, he could hear the voice of the Lord, and be entrusted with the solemn words that were to be addressed to the churches in Asia.

We do not get the expression "I John" any more until we come to chapter 21. Then the apostle says: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her

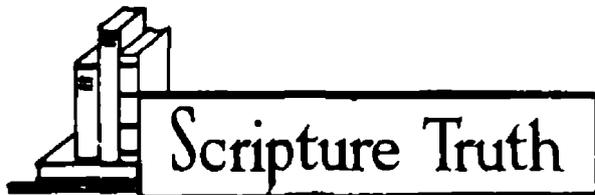
husband". He had seen wonderful things, and terrible judgments, including that of the false church, the apostate Babylon. But now he sees the *holy* city, coming down out of heaven. This reminds us of the words that Paul wrote to the saints at Thessalonica, who were sorrowing for the saints that died, fearing that they might miss the glories of the kingdom. He points out that it is essential that the saints must first be caught up to be with the Lord before they can come with Him at His appearing. Here we catch a glimpse of that which delights the heart of the Lord. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25,27).

"What a day will that be when the Saviour appears!  
How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!"

Here is the culmination of God's purpose, the answer to the cross of shame. Then He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. As Dr Rossier puts it:

"Thou wilt behold the object of Thy choice,  
Thy spotless bride for whom Thou, Lord, hast died;  
And in the travail of Thy soul rejoice,  
Thy perfect love for ever satisfied."

Once more we read the words "I John". This is in the last chapter: "I John saw these things, and heard them" (22:8). We remember that he had already witnessed of that which he had both seen and heard. Now he sets his seal to all that he has written in this last book of the Bible. Peter speaks of being an eyewitness of the majesty of our blessed Lord, but so was John, although, significantly, he tells us nothing of his remarkable experience in his Gospel. Now he is ready to fall at the feet of the angel that testified these things to him, but the angel forbids him. He was only a fellow-servant. Worship was to be offered only to God. Then it is that John, as it were, disappears from the scene, just as his namesake, John the Baptist, made way for the coming Messiah. From now on we have the words of the Lord Himself, and He uses a similar expression to that of John (verse 16): "*I* Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches". We know that the whole Bible speaks of Him, and here is His last word to all that have ears to hear. He introduces Himself as the root and offspring of David, as the bright morning star, and for the third time says: "I come quickly". May our response be indeed: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."



Incorporating *Words of Help*

JULY, 1988

# Bible Studies in Joshua (12)

J. S. BLACKBURN

*The previous paper in this series appeared in September/October 1987.*

*Plainly, with this chapter we reach a high point in the book of Joshua, and, as this paper indicates, the highest point of exaltation and triumph now occupied by Christ in glory can be seen indicated there. It is something absolutely central to the proper appreciation of Christian truth and its outworking in our lives.*

*We need to sense the amount of careful study our brother has devoted to this continuing series. These are not at all well-trodden areas, judging by the paucity of thorough coverage of them by earlier respected authors. Those who have retained the whole series could re-read all the earlier papers with profit. I have felt the value of his treatment of this chapter with particular force.*

## **JOSHUA Chapter 10 — THE DAY WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL**

We now enter upon the two great battle chapters of our Book. In its place — Joshua 3:7 — we noted a remarkable word from Jehovah to Joshua: “This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel”. I think we shall see that the chapters now before us record the completion of this process. In the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before Israel, and the sun stood still at the command of a man, then the Word records: “There was no day like that before it or after it”. When the confederate hosts under Jabin of Hazor were utterly destroyed at the waters of Merom, then it is recorded “As the LORD commanded . . . so did Joshua; he

left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses". And at the end of the chapter, "And the land had rest from war". Joshua was magnified, honour put on him in the eyes of the people, and, as it must be, in the eyes of their enemies.

We have been tracing parallels between the books of Joshua and Ephesians, and it is obviously of first interest to enquire if there is such a parallel on this point. The counterpart of the magnifying of Joshua is very plainly to be seen in that epistle: it is the work and triumph and exaltation of Christ. The exposition of these tremendous truths is centred on Ephesians 1:19-23 and 4:8-10. At this point it will be helpful to bring forward the consideration from our chapters of verses Joshua 10:28-43. Here we have a practically word-for-word repetition of these few verses describing Joshua's destruction of the five Amorite cities. In each of the five cases the phrase is repeated: "Joshua and all Israel with him". It seems evident that in this phrase attention is drawn to those cases, the bulk of the book of Joshua chapters 1-12, in which Joshua fights the battles and gains the victories *with* and *for* all Israel, clearly distinguishing them from other cases in which battle, victory and possession are the result of individual faith and initiative. In the latter class are the achievements of Caleb and Othniel (Joshua 15:13-19) and other instances in the early chapters of the book of Judges. This distinction is paralleled by way of type in Ephesians by the distinction between the victory of Christ, now in glory (1:9-23 and 4:8-10), and the fight of the saints against principalities and powers in 6:11-19.

In greater detail let us attempt to seize the parallels between "all Israel *with* him", in Joshua 10, and "quicken'd . . . and raised *with* Christ" in Colossians 2:12,13. The parallel is more complete in Ephesians: "quicken'd together *with* Christ" (2:5) "raised *together* in Christ" and also "made to sit *together* in heavenly places in Christ" (2:6). These results of the victory of Christ are secure for eternity. We are contrasting them with the warfare of the saints, found in Ephesians 6:12, whereas, alas, only partial and so often temporary victory is obtained. These thoughts will, we most earnestly pray, prompt us to concentrate heart and mind to muse on these chapters of conflict and victory, and to see in them power to move us deeply concerning the battles which raged over the cross and the grave of the the Lord Jesus — battles which have resulted in His victory and present exaltation at God's right hand in glory. The unique blessing with which believers of the church dispensation are privileged is that they are united to Christ where He is in heavenly glory by the Holy Ghost sent down from that place. The direct relevance of this to our theme of victory over the nations of Canaan (representing principalities and power in

heavenly places) is explicit in Colossians 2:15; “having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it”.

Before a few comments in order on our chapter a preliminary word may show how the annihilation of the forces of Jabin of Hazor fits in with what has been suggested above. This was the greatest assemblage of kings and nations and their hosts: but it was “of the LORD . . . that He should destroy them utterly” so that “the land had rest from war”. We are intended to see how complete and final this was. It depicts and confirms the completeness which we must see in Ephesians, regarding the heavenly glory of Christ at the right hand of God. In both cases the victor immediately dispenses the fruits of victory. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Ephesians 4:8). It is a remarkable fact that this expression “led captivity captive”, quoted here from Psalm 68, first appears in Scripture in Judges 5:12 regarding a later Jabin, king of Hazor, and his destruction. I feel at liberty to take account of this fact in considering Joshua 11:17 as a pointer to Ephesians 4:8.

*Chapter 10:1-5.* We meet here a special section of the nations of Canaan — “the five kings of the Amorites” (vv 5 *et al*). The form of the phrase seems to suggest that they were in some way the totality of the Amorites, at least in this area. It compares with the similar expression “the two kings of the Amorites”, in Heshbon and Bashan. Wherever examples are required of luxuriant vegetation, then Bashan and Gilead are sure to be mentioned. Taking account of the cities listed in verse 5, it is clear that these Amorite kings possessed some of the choicest cities of the land, which, earlier and later, were the cherished dwelling-places of Israel. Who can forget the description of Jerusalem, the first of the cities named here, in Psalm 48? “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion”. Hebron, already an Amorite city, was the chosen dwelling-place of Abraham and Isaac.

Thus we see that the cities or locations fought for in contest with these Amorite kings became the dwelling-places in which the wealth and beauty of Israel’s inheritance is prominently displayed.

The attack of this confederacy of Amorite kings was not immediately directed against Israel. Evidently they thought to discourage any further adhesion of Canaanites to Israel by destroying Gibeon, a great royal city. Israel was drawn into this conflict by their treaty with Gibeon, but it was of the LORD that Israel should meet and destroy the Amorites, and Joshua took it as from Him.

*vv. 6-11.* In these verses we meet again the unchanging importance of Gilgal in this war, and consequently are reminded of the need for the Christian to return again and again to *self-judgment*. If we neglect this,

we shall be weak, and the flesh will betray us. It appears that the distance to and from Gilgal was sometimes very great, but nothing must prevent Israel's return thither after *every* episode. We must repeat the meaning for us of the return to Gilgal. It is exactly Colossians 3:5,8. Several references have been made in these pages of the critical importance of self-judgment in the life of the Christian. The writer must not be ashamed of this repetition, and it is earnestly desired that the reader, rather than permitting a rejecting response, be moved to a firm purpose to seek help in every reading of Scripture to promote it.

The repetition of the word 'camp' here is significant. The phrase is "and Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal". There is no word in this book describing a permanent residence, a house. Israel was still on full war footing: and war demands discipline. And this is very true of the Christian warfare. Verse 9 expresses the very spirit of discipline, something very close to self-judgment, and the LORD gave the victory. He cast great stones upon the enemy, and soon after responded with the immensely greater event at Ajalon.

*Verses 12-14.* We cannot be surprised when the Spirit of God speaks thus: "there was no day like that before or after it". It was preceded by a vigorous night-march of some twenty miles; the fighting must have begun at dawn; as the fleeing Amorites tumbled down the pass from Beth-horon towards shelter in their fenced cities, Jehovah's artillery slew more than Israel's swords. But now "the sun was westering. It wanted but an hour or two, and its sudden disappearance would bring on the sudden eastern twilight, whilst the moon's pale face appearing over the purple waters of the great sea was waiting to lead on the night", which would rob Israel of the completion of their victory. It was a moment for the great spirit of Joshua, doubtless moved on by the Spirit of the LORD, to call for an intervention which would convert that already memorable victory into an event unique in all time. "The sun stood still".

In verse 12 two addresses are attributed to Joshua. "Then spake Joshua to the LORD", and he said, "Sun, stand thou still". To this command, the sun rendered immediate obedience, thus displaying the fact that, in response to the prayer, the LORD had exalted Joshua above the rulers of the day and night. In praying thus, Joshua is a lesson to the believer in all ages; when the believer prays that God will open the eyes of his heart, he is asking for an event just as much outside the realm of nature as the sun standing still. Nevertheless we believe that in this command Joshua is, in the typical way, standing beside the Lord Jesus Himself in His exaltation.

It is time we turned specially to a passage to which these events

directly lead us, Ephesians 1:19-23. This passage is the concluding section of the apostle's first prayer in that epistle. We shall never enter upon the possession of the Christian's Canaan unless we make and carry out a firm purpose to use this prayer in definite spiritual exercises of prayer, meditation and self-judgment. Verse 18 presents an opportunity for the kind of "arrow" prayer on the pattern of Nehemiah in the presence of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:4) addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ: "O God, open the eyes of my heart . . .". It is here we meet for the first time the Christian's enemies in the characteristically Christian warfare, "principalities and powers", only to learn immediately that Christ is "far above" them. And this position of Christ is the very heart of Christianity. If we have been permitted to seize this truth, then there is cause for thanksgiving, for it is not generally recognised in Christendom. Any reference to "Jesus" can with practical certainty be referred to the Jesus of the Gospel story. But the saints' union with Christ where He is now seated (at God's right hand in heavenly places), a union in His body which is the church (effected by the descent of the Holy Ghost from that place above), is the unique privilege of believers in this present period, and in no other. This centrally important though much-ignored truth will bear being repeated. I believe we have a pointer to it in the exaltation of Joshua above the sun in victory over the Amorites.

*Verses 15-39.* These verses indicate the prosecution of the victory to the utter destruction decreed by Jehovah. "Joshua left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded". Verses 22-27 record the execution by hanging of the five Amorite kings, and it is noteworthy that Joshua is careful to obey, not only the special commands for this time, but also the written word in Deuteronomy 21-23: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day . . . that thy land be not defiled, while the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance". Verses 28-39 came forward for special comment, when attention was drawn to the importance of the phrase "Joshua and all Israel with him".

*Verses 40-43.* It is important to see the great part played in this day's work in the totality of Joshua's conquest of Canaan. In these verses we have the geographical summary specifying exactly the region conquered in the narrative of chapter 10. It should be compared with the summary in 9:1, concerning which we stated, in its place, that "it is a description of the entire land of Canaan, from the mountains of Lebanon in the north, to the wilderness in the south", indicating how widespread was the alarm created among the kings and nations of Canaan. Here in these verses we learn that the first actual campaign was confined to the southern portion

of the land. The kind of country included brings in the well-known words — the hill country, the Negev, the Shephelah, and the Springs. The place names in v. 41 clearly delineate the whole of Canaan south of Gibeon, that is, Judah, eventually to become the southern kingdom. All the names of places smitten in chapter 10 are in fact listed in the inheritance of Judah in chapter 15. There is no reference here to the nations encountered.

## The Sons of Korah

R. A. CREETH

*It is generally accepted that the psalms for the sons of Korah are among the sweetest in the whole book of the Psalms, especially such gems as psalms 45 and 84. But who (the author asks) were the sons of Korah?*

First of all a few words on the sin of Korah himself. The story is given us in Numbers 16. Korah was not content with the position of service God had given him; he sought to be a priest as well as a Levite, and he conspired with Dathan and Abiram to wrest the priestly privileges from Moses and Aaron. This rebellion was in direct defiance of the sovereign choice of God, and is typical of man's apostasy against Christ, Moses being the apostle of the Jewish people and Aaron the high priest. Hence the typical character of Korah's rebellion: it portrays the full-blown character of man's apostasy against Christ, and the summary judgment that will surely follow. Jude warns us of this when he writes, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core". Thus the whole course of Christendom is set before us: first the way of Cain, the way of natural religion and self-will which has no need of an atoning sacrifice; then the error of Balaam, the spirit of seduction and corruption and that for gain; and finally the gainsaying of Korah, the climax of all iniquity and apostasy, which brings down the wrath and judgment of God.

God caused the earth to open its mouth and swallow up the wicked conspirators and "all the men that appertained unto Korah", and the earth closed upon them. And if we only had Numbers 16 we should conclude that all perished without exception in the righteous judgment of a sin-hating God. But God's mercy triumphed over His judgment, for we read in Numbers 26:11, "*Notwithstanding the sons of Korah died not*". It has been

said that in this one little verse we have the divine record of perhaps the greatest miracle of all time. When Korah and his fellow-conspirators rose up in rebellion against Jehovah and the earth opened her mouth to engulf the presumptuous rebels, God's hand was stretched out in mercy to snatch the sons of Korah as brands from the burning. Thus God secured a marvellous triumph of mercy, and ensured that His sovereign grace, so blatantly despised by Korah, would secure wondrous blessing for Korah's sons.

In their preservation from divine judgment and being entrusted with Levitical service, the sons of Korah represent believers today. We too have been delivered from going down to the pit, for God has found a ransom in His own beloved Son, who has delivered us from the coming wrath and has brought us into eternal blessing. As thus delivered is it not our joyful privilege to serve our great Redeemer, as the sons of Korah devoted themselves to the services that were entrusted to them?

Let us trace their history a little further. In *1 Chronicles 6:52-57* we are told that as part of the family of Kohath they had given to them the cities of refuge, of which Hebron is named first. They are spared from the pit and given the place of Abraham who dwelt in Hebron (Genesis 13:18; 18:1). Hebron speaks of communion, and who enjoyed communion with Jehovah like Abraham? It was at Hebron he built his altar and worshipped the Lord, and there it was he entertained the heavenly messengers.

In *1 Chronicles 9:19-32* we see their *stewardship*. They were entrusted with the charge of the gates of the sanctuary. Belonging to the family which incurred God's summary judgment for presuming to draw near to God without priestly title, they are entrusted with the responsibility of seeing that no person approached God but such as had divinely-given fitness to stand in His presence. Psalm 84:10 reminds us how they valued this privilege: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness".

We read of four who were chief porters, who were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God (verse 26). What a stewardship was this! "All the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense and the spices" (verses 29-30). All these things are types of the Person of Christ in all His wondrous perfection, and this is our portion! All the riches of the glories of Christ are entrusted to us!

In verse 31 Mattithiah is specially mentioned as having charge of the things made in the pans. His particular service was to attend the holy cakes of fine flour mingled with oil which were cooked upon a flat plate or pan, and were thus openly exposed to the direct heat of the fire. This points

to the fiery trials which fell upon the lowly Son of man from without. They brought out the sweet odour of the frankincense which then pervaded the holy place. The outward trials of our blessed Lord brought into view the beauty and fragrance of His perfect life in this world.

“Thank God, there is still Mattithiahs in the world. There are still those specially called to take charge of the offerings “made in the pans”. There are loving hearts who care for our Lord Jesus Christ. They come together to think of Him as the Holy Sufferer. They have special charge of the remembrance of Him in His sufferings and death, and their worship-service is acceptable in heaven” (W.J.H.).

Praise was another service of the Korhites. “These are the *singers* . . . they were employed in that work day and night” (verse 33). We too are exhorted to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). We have been saved from judgment by God’s sovereign grace and entrusted with many precious privileges so that we may make melody in our hearts to the Lord at all times.

Divinely given strength was required if the Korhite porters were to fulfil their responsibilities, and this was given, for we read that some were mighty men of valour, some were strong men, and others were able men for strength for the service (1 Chronicles 26:6-8). May we too be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. May we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (Ephesians 3:16 and 6:10).

In *2 Chronicles 23* we read that when Athaliah the usurper schemed to destroy all the seed royal, Joash (the sole representative of the royal line) was hidden in the house of the Lord. At such a time the porters had a very responsible part to play: they were the royal guards of the hidden king — guards of the house, and guards of the gate of the foundation. We too as those saved from the pit are called to be the royal guards of the hidden, but coming King of glory. We should be ready to contend earnestly for the truth concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Korhite porters were called upon to guard “the gate of the foundation”. What a privilege is ours to become guards of foundation truths! Many truths have been committed to us, such as the divine inspiration of the scriptures, the Lord’s supper, His coming for His own, Christ’s present position as risen and glorified, the formation of the assembly and the truth of the one body, the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling and operating within the church. These are priceless truths which we should endeavour in the face of all contradiction to maintain faithfully to the end. Paul speaks of his being entrusted with the gospel, and he urges Timothy to keep the entrusted deposit. We too have a responsibility to keep what has been

entrusted to us. The Lord's message to the church in Philadelphia was, "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown".

In *2 Chronicles 31:14-16* it is stated that the sons of Korah had the happy service of distributing the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things. It would seem that a portion of the offerings and voluntary gifts, though consecrated to Jehovah, was given to the priests to be eaten by them in the sanctuary. Should not this speak to us today? Are we not priests as well as Levites? Let us then ask ourselves, are we enjoying our priestly portion? Are we feeding upon the precious things of Christ? And are we distributing portions to others?

The last glimpse of the sons of Korah is in *Nehemiah 11:19* where we are told that some Korhites returned from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah, for among the remnant that returned were 172 porters or doorkeepers. They valued their service as given them by Jehovah, and though it was a day of national ruin they were ready to minister to Jehovah in their special task of attending to the thresholds of God's house. Does not this continuity of office in times of weakness and failure teach us that what is of God remains permanent and unshaken? So in the epistle which speaks of the failure of the outward testimony today we read, for our encouragement, "Yet the firm foundation of God standeth" (2 Timothy 2:19).

Two further references to the sons of Korah remain to be considered. First in *1 Chronicles 12:1-6* we are informed that Korhites were among those who were prepared to share David's rejection. They came to David to Ziklag, while he kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. Are we prepared, like these Korhites, to share our Lord's rejection, knowing that if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him? Are we prepared to go forth unto Him without camp, bearing His reproach (Hebrews 13:13)?

The second scripture is *2 Chronicles 20:18-19*. Jehoshaphat is on the eve of a great battle with his enemies, and we read he "bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the *children of the Korhites*, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high". May we too value the great privilege of worship, for the Father seeketh worshippers to worship Him.

There are thus two outstanding privileges open to us in this present day:- (1) sharing our Lord's rejection, identifying ourselves with Him outside the professing camp of Christendom; (2) rendering the praise and worship

of our hearts to our God and Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name”.

# Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

JOHN BARNES

## Ephesians 5:19

*These three words form part of an exhortation which occurs in similar terms in the epistle to the Colossians. A recent enquiry stirred my interest to look at them again, and I offer the following comments (Author's opening words):*

When a man sings he generally does so because he is happy (James 5:13); and in singing together people express their common happiness. This may have no Christian bearing and, indeed is sometimes occasioned by unwise indulgence in alcohol as v. 18 may hint. When believers sing together they can tell out the common joy of their hearts, promoted not by artificial stimulants, but by the Spirit of God. It has been noted that these words are not strictly synonymous, so we are justified in concluding that they view the matter of song in different ways.

### 1. Psalms

The word is near transliteration of the original noun which is derived from the root 'psallo'. The verb means 'to play with the fingers on a stringed instrument'. It seems to me important to note that this manner of playing excludes the use of a plectrum, the strings being strummed by the player with his fingers alone. So the relationship between the musician and his instrument is close and intimate, and no mechanical devices are interposed between them. This suggests a near and personal touch, the strings of the harp being stirred to music by the living movement of the harpist's fingers. Perhaps, then, we may think of the psalm in this way. Our hearts are inspired to the response of song by the touch of that powerful but loving hand. The Lord Himself has had a hand in the detailed affairs of our lives and He knows what strings to touch and how to touch them. The path

of the saints through life may lead them into conditions of strain and pressure, but under the touch of the Lord's hand, melody is produced. The example of Paul and Silas will immediately come to mind as an illustration of this point. In the prison at Philippi, subjected to severe strain, they may have had every reason to be downcast, but, on the contrary, conscious of God's hand in their circumstances, their hearts responded gratefully in a song of praise to the Lord.

As we consider the effect of that caring hand in our lives it will surely raise a note of thanksgiving from our hearts to God. On one occasion, Asaph was in some despondency, and the conditions at the time were so hopeless that his soul refused to be comforted (Psalm 77:2). Then he remembered the influence of God's hand in his life; "The years of the right hand of the Most High will I remember" (part of verses 10, 8, 11. New Trans.). How often had that gracious hand touched his life and the life of the nation! There could be only one response to such a memory; "Who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders" (vv. 13,14). In the sanctuary we give expression to the deep feelings of hearts stirred by those fingers that touch our lives in love and power. A lyricist of later times wrote:

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising souls surveys,  
Transported with the view I'm lost  
In wonder, love and praise."

Such lines were obviously written in the consciousness of the Lord's hand guiding and controlling the author's footsteps (Psalm 78:72).

Psalm 23 is possibly the best known example of this kind of lyric. David, himself a shepherd, pondered on Jehovah's care over him in the turbulent events of his life, and string after string in his heart responded gratefully to the memories. The sweetest harmonies were thus produced, the chords of which have cheered the spirits of uncounted millions of believers down the ages. David recalled how his needs were met; his hunger by green pastures, his thirst by tranquil waters, his wanderings by the recovering crook, his helplessness by the protecting staff, his loneliness by divine companionship. As these, and other memories were revived, streams of praise flowed richly from his pen, captured for all time in this gem of psalms. Each of us can take up the language as it applies to the details of our lives and our personal experience of God's care.

Then, too, the harpist may hush the vibrations of the agitated strings by placing his hand upon them and so producing a pause, which is, in fact, a part of the composition. These silences in the Psalms are quite

important. The Lord gently places His hand on our hearts in a divine 'selah' that we may stop a moment and 'think of that'.

## 2. Hymns

The noun 'hymn' is also a transliteration of the original word. In its verbal form it means 'to descant upon, to honour someone; to express these eulogies over and over again'. The word may sometimes include the concept of a prophetic response. Maybe, then, some sense of the Lord's greatness, of His power and glory, of His grace and goodness arises in the heart of a believer and evokes a response which is expressed in a hymn of praise. We are privileged to have many such compositions in our hymn books. In a gathering of believers, a hymn may be suggested the language of which corresponds to the thought of the brother's heart. Probably the hymn declares in a form more exalted than we would feel free to use in prose what are, nevertheless, the true sentiments of our hearts. We are grateful for these warm breathings, spelled out in such words, and we can sing them in reality, addressing ourselves in unison to the Lord, or to God as the occasion may arise (see Colossians 3:16, New Trans.), in true appreciation of what He is and what He has done.

While the psalm may often be individual, the idea of the hymn seems to imply the company of the saints. As united we take up the same language as being the worship of our hearts while gathered to Him. The Lord Jesus leads the brethren in this holy exercise, for it is He who says, "In the midst of the church I will hymn thee" (Hebrews 2:12, A. Marshall Trans.). In Mark 14 we read: "When *they* had sung an hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives". There were enormous pressures weighing upon them. For the Lord Jesus these were infinite and wholly beyond our ability to understand or estimate. It is Mark, also, who tells us of the Lord that He began "to be amazed and deeply depressed" (Mark 14:33, New Trans. footnote). The disciples were also under severe strain. They were facing violent separation from their Lord and faithful Friend, while the prospect of their own abysmal failure lay, like a sombre shadow, across their path. But the Lord led them in singing this hymn. It is from the very depths of pain that the new song begins to swell out. In Psalm 40 the Lord Jesus says, prophetically, "He hath put a new song in *my* mouth, even praise unto *our* God"; His own voice leading the hearts of the saints in a hymn of praise to God. So, as He led them out of the quiet upper room into battle, He went out with the notes of that hymn upon his lips, and they took up the words and followed His gracious lead. What an experience that must have been, dear brethren, to hear His rich voice strike the chord! At times we do, in unspeakable grace, touch such moments in our gatherings. So they went

out, over the brook into Gethsemane, the garden of the oil press, with all its tragedy, yet with the notes of that hymn in their hearts.

### 3. Spiritual Songs

Spiritual songs is the third of these three interesting words, and the original, translated as 'song', is the noun from which our English word 'ode' is derived. The ode is lyric poetry and it is understood that an ode is generally "addressed to someone or something" in particular. So this kind of poetry is a composition on a special theme. In Psalm 45 the author writes, "I say what I have composed touching the king" (New Trans.). He had meditated often on this theme and his precious ode gives us the benefit of his thoughts set out in the exalted strains of poetry. In the book of the Revelation we are told of those who "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb". In each case the word 'song' is 'ode'. These hints seem to confirm the idea of the choice of a subject on which the verses are based. The word may often be used of a poem with an earthly theme and the well-known 'Ode to a nightingale' will be remembered as one such fine poem on a particular subject. However, the addition of the adjective 'spiritual' lifts these Ephesian odes out of the world of nature into the sphere of the spiritual. Many of the lovely hymns we sing were composed on that principle, the author's thoughts being concentrated on a particular aspect of the Lord's Person or work, or on the Father and His activities, which had brought blessing and joy to his own heart.

The thought of a theme is one which we appreciate in the gatherings of the saints, and it is a matter of great interest and pleasure to observe the way in which the Spirit of God leads the minds of the brethren. A hymn is proposed succeeding vocal prayer or praise, which leads on to further development of a sequence of thoughts, calling forth further worship. What a joy it is also, to hear a brother suggest a hymn, the very words of which are in one's mind at the moment!

The apostle emphasises the need of singing from the heart. Singing hymns formally, however exalted the language may be, means little. Our singing is to be the affectionate response of our hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit of God, who has brought us into some appreciation of what grace has conferred upon us. Our song is to the One who loves us and whom we have learned to love as the One who died for us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood. A sense of this, however feebly felt, would enrich our song and bring some pleasure to the Lord's heart.

# To the Seven Churches (6) Philadelphia

TOM TYSON

*“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”*

*After the first address on Ephesus, the later churches were taken in pairs. The final two, Philadelphia and Laodicea, were taken in the reverse order. This was done so that last of all the hearers might be left with an impression of what really pleases our Lord, and with an urge to follow that pattern. With our brother’s agreement we revert here to the Scriptural sequence.*

We have seen that the letters to the seven churches were directed to extant churches, conveying real personal messages from the Lord Himself. We have seen too that the letters have a prophetic bearing, tracing historical progress in the church-situation here on earth. At the end, the message to Laodicea envisages *total* departure in the professing church. In stages already covered in the sequence, we have been able to point to periods, not difficult to identify in past history. Some of the trends highlighted still exist, so that our Lord’s comments are relevant still. But at this point we need to think of two contrasting *moral states*. These are represented by Philadelphia and Laodicea. Broadly these now go on side by side (together with some other things indicated in the earlier letters). We miss a lot if we fail to grasp the stark moral contrast between the attitudes picked out by our Lord as He sends His messages to Philadelphia and Laodicea.

We cannot dare to say that any group of Christians is in one or the other of these states. To label others as Laodicean is surely unwise — rather we should be sensitive to our own tendencies to drift that way. Any claim to have the Philadelphian character is suspect, too, since it partakes of the pride that marks Laodicea. Avoidance of words about ourselves best becomes us. But to seek humbly to *be* the kind of Christians meeting the Lord’s approval as described here *must* be a right objective, in answer to the Spirit’s call to heed these words.

While taking due notice of the warnings yet to come (in the words to the last church of all) our chief lesson from reading His words to

Philadelphia is to show that meek and quiet spirit which pretends nothing, has the highest regard for *Himself*, and finds encouragement from Himself to *hold fast* until He comes.

There is indeed encouragement to be found in *Himself*, in what He *is*. He is *holy*. This comes in because He has been speaking of *defiling* things. With our sights on Him, a *holy* walk is needed. He is also *true*. How often John's writings draw attention to the *true* things, centred on our Lord Jesus. There is nothing of *ersatz* character about Him. (Note: *ersatz* is a wartime expression, meaning artificial, or, used as a substitute for a superior or natural product.) The world is full of those kinds of things, of uncertainty and instability. But all about the Lord Jesus is genuine, stable and reliable.

He has "the key of David". This refers to Isaiah 22:20-23, where Eliakim is in some sense a type of the coming Messiah. *He* has the key to everything. All final control is in his hands! In the Gospels He showed Himself often as having the key to an immediate problem. Think of Him aroused out of sleep in the boat, yet meeting the raging storm so surely, while the disciples were overcome with panic. Such is the One who sets before the Philadelphian church an 'opened' door (v. 8). There is no lack of opportunity to please Him, and to serve Him, in our day. He has our whole situation in His hands. That opened door can be shut overnight, but *only* if He allows it.

Verse 9 conveys promises in relation to their adversaries. Isaiah 60:14 is similar. All their opponents will come to learn that His approval of them was *right* — it will be made plain that He *loved* them! What wonderful, supportive, words for such readers to receive, directly from Himself!

Verse 10 has promises for them relating to the coming judgment. "Because thou has *kept* the word of my patience, I also will *keep* thee from the hour of trial . . .". Steady patient loyalty to Him, enduring much, in expectation of His coming, is encouraged in this firm way. The great hour of unprecedented trouble which all earth-dwellers will know, is *not* in prospect for them. This verse alone is sufficient (though there are others) as assurance that "the rapture of the church" will come first, before the great tribulation processes take place. Believers are to be kept from that "hour" — the hour of the worst trouble of all. "Behold, I come quickly" is emphatic, and certain. "Hold fast" in simple devotion to Him, is a word needing our urgent attention. Let no one rob us, by deflecting us from this kind of persistence at this late stage.

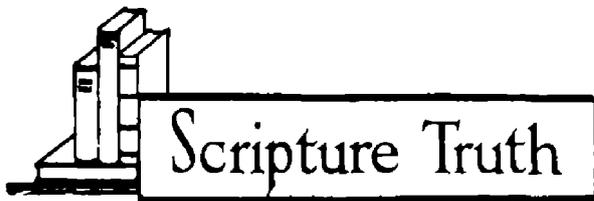
Then there are promises in relation to the coming glory in verse 12: "A pillar in the temple of my God" — their strength in attachment and loyalty to Him is to be manifest in the day of display. It will be the lot of obscure but faithful people here, the overcomers addressed here. They

will have their part in the display of the glory of God in the heavenly city, new Jerusalem, seen in vision by John near the end of this book. Notice how the Sender of this letter speaks of His special place with God, and yet associates these readers with Himself as encouragement for their devotion. The word 'My' is to be noted, repeating itself through the verse — the temple of *my* God, the name of *my* God, the city of *my* God, *my* new name. It is most surely promised, and they, the overcomers, can take heart from this!

But let us go back to verse 8 and pick out the qualities of these Philadelphian believers. He sees these things with perfect knowledge. There is nothing world-shaking about them. They "*have* a little strength, they *have* kept His word, and they *have not* denied His Name".

There are two positive statements first, and we should look at it that way. Often we speak about the "day of small things", but perhaps not rightly in this context. This is "a day of strength", though only a little, it is *a day for honouring the Lord*, and continuing to do so, of being alert lest anything that denies Him may show itself within us. *Keeping His word* is specially noted by Him too. This involves prizing that word, guarding and treasuring it and, most of all, obeying it without question. Only there, by the Spirit, do we find all the truth that makes Him precious to us, and the directives as to how to receive these words, and live by them. Only there can we receive the stimulus to be faithful to Him and to respond to His love.

Not denying His Name is no small consideration. 'The Name' covers all the qualities and glories embodied in Himself. It embraces all the recorded things about that perfect life and death, once witnessed here on earth, all His present and future pre-eminence, all the mysteries of His Person. There are many deniers of such things today. We must be jealous for *His* honour, being deeply attached to Him. John's third epistle speaks approvingly of those who act "for the sake of the Name". Support for those who back them is readily given there. It is dangerous to overlook obscure persons we may know nothing about, but who may very well be strongly approved by the Lord in this way. We can perhaps recall Elijah, that prophet who confronted Ahab and Jezebel, yet who tended to think that he alone was left in loyalty to Jehovah. God spoke of seven thousand whom He had reserved for Himself, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Those 7,000 companions of Elijah were unknown to him, yet well known to God. Perhaps they had not done much — we cannot say — but at least they had not denied His name. Let us aim to be in the humble moral state picked out in this letter, claiming nothing, strongly attached to our Lord in love for Him — to be those relying on Himself, and concerned to please and honour Him until He comes.



Incorporating *Words of Help*

SEPTEMBER, 1988

# The Benediction

DAVID ANDERSON

*Here is a welcome and substantial paper from a newcomer to the writing role.*

## Introduction

In studying the New Testament we discover several verses of Scripture which stand on their own and can be considered in isolation as well as in their context. They have a completeness all of their own, each with full statements of truth or truths which are joined by the conjunction 'and'. Examples of these 'complete' verses are:

Matthew 28:19	The complete commitment in Baptism
John 14:6 (N. Tr.)	The complete revelation of the Father
Romans 11:36	The complete wisdom of God
1 Corinthians 15:3-5	The complete facts of the Gospel
2 Corinthians 13:14	The complete benediction
1 Thessalonians 5:23	The complete sanctification

Each of these merit prayerful study. Of these "the complete benediction", or the full blessing of Christianity, is often commended to us at the end of public prayers. Whilst ritualistic use may have diminished its significance in many hearts and minds, every true Christian will desire to know something of its meaning so as to realise its power over his life.

This paper is written with the true desire to bestow "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *and* the love of God *and* the communion of the Holy Ghost" upon every saint, those who are the "beloved of God" (Romans 1:7).

## An analysis of the verse

A simple analysis of 2 Corinthians 13:14 shows that this blessing

consists of three complete items (the word 'and', like every word of Scripture, is therefore all important). Paul does not make a list of blessings but says, if I may be permitted to expand the verse for emphasis, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all* and the love of God *be with you all* and the communion of the Holy Ghost *be with you all*". Each one of these in all its fulness, in all its blessing.

Now the central blessing is *the love of God*, a theme which underlines all the Pauline writings. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* being with us brings the *love of God* to us, and the *communion of the Holy Ghost* being with us makes the *love of God* good to us.

### **The context of the verse**

Paul closes all his epistles with a benediction which bestows the grace of the Lord Jesus upon his readers, but it is only in 2 Corinthians that he extends his desire to include the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost. There are several reasons for this:

1. 2 Corinthians is the epistle of Paul's ministry and explains how his life embellished the truth. His movements and experience form a kind of framework around his teachings. We see how he experienced the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost in every circumstance of his life (see chapter 6:4-10). The power of it made his ministry effectual in his own soul (12:9-10).
2. This letter presents the "glory that excelleteth" (3:10). Only the fullest of blessings is suitable for those who are able to "behold the glory of the Lord" (3:18, and 4:6).
3. The most complete of blessings must flow out from a ministry of which Christ Jesus the Lord is both the subject (4:5) and the spirit (3:17) in order that His moral features might be seen in His people (3:3).
4. The "ministry of reconciliation" is presented (5:18). God has been at work in Christ bringing about the most marvellous reconciliation with such sinful offenders (5:19-21). Today is "a well-accepted time" (6:2 N. Tr.) and the blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14 is available to those who have believed "the word of that reconciliation" (5:19). Secondly the Corinthians needed it in a very practical way as they were instructed to "receive back" the man who had so grievously sinned but who had now repented (2:6-8).
5. The blessing must be commensurate with the position of the believer "in Christ" where "there is New Creation" (5:17).

### **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the first blessing which is commended to these Corinthian saints. This grace was well-known by

every believer: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (see 8:9). GRACE indeed! **Great (God's) Riches At Christ's Expense**. Here we are told that He voluntarily *became* poor for us (in contrast He *had* to be made sin, see 5:21). This was as necessary for the Jew as well as for the Gentile (see Acts 15:11). His SAVING GRACE, known and appreciated by everyone who has been "called into the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6), measured once the deep of Calvary's woe so that we might be enriched with every blessing in Him: such undeserved favour!

Sometimes grace is described as love in action. We are told that "grace (and truth) subsists through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17 N. Tr.). He was "full of grace and truth". Grace was "poured into His lips" (Psalm 45:2) and "all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). Many, like the woman mentioned in Luke 7:37-50, became the subjects of His grace, and confessed "and of His fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:16). This SURPASSING GRACE even had its effect on the hard, arrogant Saul causing him to admit that he was "the chief of sinners", and to exclaim with wonder the greatness of the grace of his Lord (1 Timothy 1:14, 15 N. Tr.).

In his own ministry, Paul knew of the present SUPPLY OF GRACE from this risen, ascended, exalted, glorified One, Christ Jesus. It was given by the gift of that same Person (Ephesians 4:7) and he expected others like Timothy to live in the benefit of that unfailing supply (2 Timothy 2:1). But Paul also experienced the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the most remarkable of ways. Satan, who had not succeeded either in blinding the apostle or beguiling him (2 Corinthians 4:4 and 11:3), was allowed to buffet him. Three times he asked the Lord to remove the thorn in the flesh but instead heard those most wonderful words "My grace is sufficient for thee". It seems that the grace was specially personalised by the Lord for the great need of His servant (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). This SUFFICIENT GRACE\*, which is exactly right for every circumstance of life, has been realised by the Lord's people down the centuries. According to Revelation 22:21 (N. Tr.), it is promised to all the saints, present or future (when the most trying of situations will be encountered) until He comes!

### The Love of God

We now embark on a theme which is the very essence of Christianity (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). It is so wonderful that every speaker and every

---

\*The reader is recommended to read "My Grace" from J. Sidlaw Baxter's book 'His Part and ours'.

writer on the subject has found it, and will find it, beyond telling. "God is love". It is His very nature, and love originates from Him (1 John 4:7-10). The Scriptures identify the love of each person in the Godhead (see 2 Corinthians 5:14; Romans 15:30 and John 16:27) and they highlight the uniqueness of the Father's love (see John 3:35; 10:17; 14:21, 23, etc.).

Love is known through what it gives. In John 3:16 we are told that God *gave* His only-begotten Son to show His love for the world (see also Titus 3:4). This **EXPRESSION OF THE LOVE OF GOD** is stated for us in Romans 5:8 where He positively holds it out to us. Such love is worthy to be accepted by all. According to Ephesians 2:4-7 those who have accepted it have been taken from being "dead in trespasses and sins" to being "made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus": Such is the **EXTENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD** that "He has graced us in the Beloved" so that we can be "before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4-6). Not only so but we also have the **ENJOYMENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD** shed abroad (deluged) in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5). Furthermore the **EVERYTHING OF THE LOVE OF GOD** is set out for us in Romans 8:31, 32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" That love is still fully active towards us so that nothing will be withheld and everything will be given to us without cost to us because "God is for us".

"What shall we then say to these things?" There was nothing in us or about us to provoke such love. We can only worship and adore as we exult, along with the apostle, in **THE ETERNITY OF THE LOVE OF GOD** which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). May He direct our hearts into this love (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

### **The Communion of the Holy Ghost**

The phrase "the communion of the Holy Ghost" occurs twice in the N.T., here in 2 Corinthians 13:14 and again in Philippians 2:1 where it is translated "fellowship of the Spirit". A related phrase "partakers of the Holy Ghost" is found in Hebrews 6:4.

The word "communion" basically means living in common, a partnership, a fellowship, and is best understood in the Scriptures by reference to Luke 5:10 where the fishermen all had an equal share or right. They were 'partners' (same Greek word as 'communion'). (In verse 7 of Luke 5 'partners' is the same Greek word as 'partakers' in Hebrews 6:4). Communion is the act of using a thing which is common to all and speaks, especially in the verses cited above, of the benefits to those who participate. Every Christian benefits then from what is derived from the Holy Spirit because every believer has the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13).

In Philippians 2 Paul states that if there is any meaning to the “fellowship of the Spirit”, it is that He will produce in us that which is of Christ, CHRIST LIKENESS in our lives. This is in keeping with the explanation which the Lord gave for the sending of the Spirit (John 16:14). Philippians is the epistle of Christian experience (or life), the epistle of the Christ-centred life: Christ its aim, example, object and strength. Turning then to chapter 3, there is another reference to the Holy Spirit (verse 2, N. Tr.). We find that He produces CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST and none in the flesh! We certainly need the communion of the Holy Ghost every day of our lives for the very important issues of Christian living mentioned in this verse. In chapter 1:19 another reference to the Holy Spirit is found. Just like the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to be delivered, or kept safe, in the most opposing circumstances. This again brings into prominence the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the upper room concerning the Holy Ghost. He is the one called “another Comforter (one called alongside to help) to be with you for ever” (John 14:16). It is noteworthy that the word for comfort and consolation, used so frequently in 2 Corinthians 1 (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), is related to “Comforter” and we can see how the comfort of God that Paul experienced was provided by the communion of the Holy Ghost. After Saul’s conversion the persecution of the disciples ceased, and the church enjoyed a peace in which “the comfort of the Holy Ghost” was a salient feature (see Acts 9:31).

The reality of the communion of the Holy Ghost is a common feature of the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles (see 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 15:28; 16:6, 7; 19:21 and 21:4). Furthermore many points concerning the importance of the presence of the Spirit within the believer are brought out in the teaching of the N.T. Epistles. These all combine to emphasise the blessedness of the communion of the Holy Ghost. Suggested references are Romans 8:2, 4, 5, 10, 13, 15, 16, 23, 26; Romans 15:19, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2.

## **Conclusion**

The Lord Jesus Christ, not only has every resource (all riches) at His disposal; but He also has the ability and the desire to dispense, in His wisdom and love, that which is best for us on every occasion, and He is the Person whose grace is to be with us all. To this is added the love of God, which is of such a character and consistency that it has been perfected in us. Finally there is the special power and reality for living given by the communion of the Holy Ghost. All three blessings are both immeasurable and inexhaustible.

# Colossians 3:1-17

GORDON KELL

*An address on this passage given in Bradford in February 1988.*

A light-hearted remark has been made about some believers, that they are “so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly use”. This is really a gross distortion of the *true* heavenly-mindedness. No passage could make this more plain than the present one. Belief in a Man now in heaven has changed the lives of thousands who fix their attention upon Him, and are thoroughly occupied with Him *there*.

It seems that it is possible today to think of Christianity as an ‘add-on faith’ only expressed by the additional things in which Christians become involved — i.e. in all kinds of Christian activities. But this passage reminds readers (both then and now) that what must come first and foremost is to have their eyes focused on a living Christ above; Christ Himself is to be *their very life*, and in result their ‘manner of life’ will derive from Him, and reflect Him. This is more than any activity, however laudable, though it clearly does not exclude such things. What is *central* to a truly Christian life must first be realised, and it is Christ Himself who fills that place.

So, at the opening of this chapter Paul exhorts us to have our minds and hearts fixed on the great Person who is at the very centre of our faith — who is the only power for that faith in practice. In Oldham recently a number of elderly sisters have received their heavenly homecall. Perhaps we did not understand, until they are no longer here, how much we owed to these godly sisters. Christ truly *was* their life. Theirs was a *living* faith!

And so the question comes to us — are *we* ‘missing out’ on this part of our Christianity? Are we missing something which is the very key thing in Christianity? It *is* practical indeed, as the rest of our verses will show.

We need to be aware that Satan attempts to make surrounding things, whatever they are, more important than our *real* life. Our life is hidden with Christ, there above, and *He* is our life. These are the *real* and substantial things, though hidden as yet from the world. Let us be alert enough to foil Satan in these attempts.

Of course, that life was once seen here on earth, in Christ Himself. Some witnessed it, and could recall it. Paul could not speak of that. But he begins here where his own Christian experience began, with the sight of Christ in glory. What a mark this made on Him! And what a life for the Lord was Paul’s life, filled and energised by that vision! Your life is

'in Christ' and Christ is in heaven, he says. Recently, though never before, I was taken to the Alps, and went to the summit of Mont Blanc. To be so high, with such magnificent views around, how clean and pure the whole atmosphere seemed to be! Returning to Oldham, to move around in all the busy and populous Manchester area, was not so easy to get adjusted to! How real and glorious is that realm where Christ now is, and how exalted it is, compared with all the sordid goings-on and even the best of things at the earthly level. 'Set your affection (mind) on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God'. To do this *will* change the kind of lives we live here.

Also, "Christ, who is our life, shall appear" — what is hidden now will then be manifested — and "we also shall appear *with Him* in glory". This prospect made it worthwhile to Paul (and to many another) to suffer and even to die for Him, and thus to live a purposeful (and practical) life well-pleasing to Him.

We now move on from this vision of Christ in heaven above to those practical consequences on earth in a life affected by it. We must agree that what follows in the chapter is down-to-earth in its character. To be occupied with Christ above (as in vv. 1-4) carries a responsibility with it. The detailed behaviour described in verses 5ff (things both negative and positive) *ought* to follow, just as effect follows from cause.

'Mortify' (i.e. put to death), 'put off' etc., are the kinds of words used. The behaviour detailed in vv. 5-8 shocks us, but we believers of today need these urgent words, no less than early Gentile Christians did. It closely fits the current climate around us today. In particular the word 'covetousness' can come so close to our inward thinking, along with so much else no longer uncommon among 'Christians'; here is real cause for self-examination with us all. We live in a world patently diseased by such foul things — it is impossible now to take the utopian view of trends here on earth. The earth is blighted by these gross things, and they are in evidence on every hand. We cannot, fairly, take the view that we Christians are so enlightened as to be immune from such tendencies. Think of Abraham, 'the friend of God', and the wrong steps that he could take at unguarded times. David, too, frequently so loyal to his God, fell into the grossest of sins, adultery, covered up by murder. What lessons we should learn here! It would seem that the higher the faith of a man, the greater the fall when he loses sight of his weakness, and fails to rely on God.

Speaking again of covetousness, let us think of the words of our Lord about 'the *deceitfulness* of riches'. Many of these tendencies wear the guise of harmlessness. Things apparently harmless can erode and undermine our Christian power. Notice how our *tongues*, our speech, and the

substance of what we say, lie at the root of most things in these verses (v. 8 prominently). Much damage can be done among Christians in this way (see James 3). 'Lie not one to another' may seem un-needed, but there can be deceit in the manner or in the tone of what is said. It would be bold to claim perfect adherence to this word.

After the repeated 'put off' of these verses, 'put on' recurs in verses 8, 10, 12, 14. Once, these Colossian converts lived the kind of life just related, and showed all those shameful traits. But in their conversion a great change had come about in them. Because of this, since in Christ they had the power for it, the instruction to shed the old life, the old habits, can be pressed. In these verses the gist of Paul's teaching for them seems to be that they (and we) might live *now* as much like what we will be *then* with Christ in His glory. No longer is this unattainable since Christ is our life, and this can be shown out in us.

I feel it important to point out that with some there seems to be the thought that, since all is well with us now we are the Lord's, we need not be too much concerned about *how we show it*. It is so easy to 'jog on' as we did before, unchanged in our ways, contented in the 'way of life' of our pre-Christian days. We do so like to live in the kind of life which suits *us*, the kind of life in which *we* feel comfortable (I am only thinking of fairly harmless patterns of life) — but the big question is "Is our kind of life measured by the *true* standard of Christian life? That standard is Christ.

Of course the words 'put off' and 'put on', carry the idea of having the *purpose* or *will* to follow this guidance.

Our ways are not to be only negative, abstaining from the unsuitable things for believers. But the positive words here (what we are to 'put on') are important features of Christian behaviour. If we obey this teaching 'Christ, who is our life' will show Himself livingly in us! Whatever else we may engage in will have *His* stamp on it (see verse 17).

Going briefly through the 'put on' verses: looking first at vv. 10, 11 — is it not quite amazing that Paul (having once been Saul of Tarsus) should now pen *these* words! Once Jesus was an anathema to him, a hated name — but now he knows (and speaks) of a realm where 'Christ is all and in all', where all distinctions disappear — where the unity of believers is real, and all that makes for it is sustained.

Verses 12, 13; All these lovely features of Christ are to be shown. We can select no more than 'kindness' and 'readiness to forgive'. Wonderful if we can show a little of this!

Verse 14; 'Above all these things put on *love*', perhaps basic to all the rest, as well as additional to them. This is the bond that unites believers,

and it is one of the active things in the Christian's life.

Then follow (in verses 15, 16) one or two more passive things, features we have to allow to show themselves. 'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts', 'Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly' etc. Clearly these are shared matters among believers. How necessary it all is! Among the themes, grace, and thankfulness, and singing from the heart are mentioned. What a glimpse of brethren as they *might* be! Let each of us personally and willingly be involved in obeying these verses in practice.

# To the Seven Churches (7) Laodicea

TOM TYSON

*"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"*

*Such a letter, addressed to the first-century church at Laodicea, reveals the sad state existing there. In our Lord's view these statements were needed. Though there is no pleasure in reading what He exposes there, it makes necessary reading for ourselves, since the professedly Christian scene today may merit this description. One of the features of the letter is that it shows their blindness to their own condition. We (who come under the 'Christian' label too) must recognise, with our Lord's help, our own tendencies depicted here. We must always be sensitive to what is distasteful to Him. We must vigorously steer clear of the attitudes of heart and mind He exposes here.*

While our Lord's true diagnosis of the Laodicean condition makes sad reading indeed, His presentation of Himself at the opening of the letter is striking. He is "**the Amen**". It is the only place this name is used for Him. It carries the thought that everything that God has purposed finds its fulfilment in Him. Everything in relation to the Church, and to Israel, is established, and completed in Him. Laodicea had neglected the heavenly purpose for the Church. In themselves they were a denial of it.

The Lord Jesus is "**the faithful and true witness**". Absolute truth marked His witness. Never did He compromise the truth. His reply to the question "Who art thou" was "Altogether that which I say unto you" (John 8:25 N. Tr.). The contrast between Him and the Laodicean church was absolute.

He is also “**the beginning of the creation of God**”. This, in this context, refers to ‘new creation’. God has brought in a new Man, a new Headship, in Christ, a *new* Creation. This is a fresh activity of God, of which *He* is the beginning, its basis, and indeed its end.

In verse 15 He begins His assessment of them. “I know”, He says as usual, “thy works”. He sees all inward motives there; and, for the first time He has nothing to commend at all, only condemnation. They were sickly and lukewarm (like their own hot springs). They were not cold, not even holding formal Christian ground in a lifeless way. Nor were they hot — there was no warm zeal, no warm love, for Himself, or for others. They were ‘all compromise, and no commitment’. The worst attitude of all to Him is complete *indifference*. Dare we say that we have nothing at all of these tendencies? It is intended to shock us into self-judgment and repentance.

It is to be noted that there is no general call for repentance made to the church as a whole. In a sense they were beyond that possibility. The call, when it comes, is made to individuals. It seems that what was needed was new life, conversions, regeneration. The general condition will remain, to be finally rejected *after* the true church is called away at the rapture. One catches a glimpse of it in ‘Babylon the Great’, later in Revelation. She says in her heart: “I sit a queen, and am no widow, I shall see no sorrow” (chapter 18:7). *Therefore*, in one day, her judgment will fall. This surely is the full-blown version of that spirit of self-congratulation which the Lord Jesus picks out in Laodicea.

Nevertheless He speaks to them with great tenderness and concern. He does not dismiss them out of hand. That is not His way.

From verse 17 more details are brought to light. The difference between the church’s thoughts about themselves, and His own estimation of them, is total. This is the only one of the seven churches that has anything to say about itself — surely a bad sign. ‘I am rich, increased in goods (and self-esteem too), and need nothing’. Nothing about Himself at all! “All of self, and none of Thee” would be a fair summary. Yet *truly*, as He sees them, they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. What a picture! *You are the wretched one*, He says (the definite article stresses this). Look back at chapter 2:9 and see how different it was with Smyrna!

Brethren, is there not cause for thought here? With some awareness of our riches in Christ, with the considerable breadth of our knowledge of the truth God has given many of us through His word, what sort of persons has it made of us? Is there a touch of pride about us, as though these things were to our own credit. If so, we must face the fact that

He, for our own well-being, seeks to humble us, and to correct us.

“I counsel thee” (v. 18); here He persuades them towards conversion rather than recovery. “Buy”, He says, gold, white raiment, eye-salve. Buying is a transaction to be entered into, at a cost (see Isaiah 55:1, 2). These things have the marks of purity about them. “Put on” says Colossians 3:12,13 “bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, forgiving one another . . .” This involves working out from within the qualities of Christ, beginning from God’s gracious re-making of us. This is always the way. What progress have we made in showing *these* moral qualities, which are like Christ? *Buy* also eye-salve, He says — begin to see your own state. They needed the ‘anointing’ of the Holy Spirit for this (1 John 2:20).

It is His *love* that prompts these forthright words. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (v. 19).

Then comes something very heartening and precious. He stands outside this church and knocks. “If *any* man”, He promises, “hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (v. 20). If a person takes note of His (the Shepherd’s) voice, and acts upon it, He will enter into his own particular personal circumstances, and, more than that, He takes him up into His own area of things. What a picture this is of person-to-person communion with the Saviour! Perhaps it is right to say that the most precious promise of all is made to the overcomer in Laodicea. Verse 21 adds still more. Obedience to Him, responding to His voice of love, is judged by the Lord Jesus as following in some measure the line which He also took in obedience to His Father. Pleasing the Father ultimately took Him to that place above, with His Father, and on the Father’s throne. And the overcomer in Laodicea is promised a place with the Lord Jesus, sharing and sitting with Him on His throne above!

Surely, if we are among those “for whom Christ died”, it is no optional matter to desire to please our Lord. Anyone with a conscience knows that there are failures and shortcomings, with ourselves personally, and in our assembly life too. Self-centredness and self-esteem can almost wholly destroy any devotion to Him, as we have learnt from this last message of all. And so, as for the last time we come to the words “*He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*”, let us treat this as no catchword — but as a serious word to ourselves. Let us have ears opened wide to His assessments of us, and to His encouragements for us. Let us have the obedient frame of mind that takes full note in practice of His guidance in these two chapters.

# Created, Formed, Made (3a)

COLIN CURRY

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; . . . And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” (Revelation 21:1,5)*

*“If any one be in Christ, there is a new **creation**; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”*

*(2 Corinthians 5:17, N. Tr.)*

*“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be **formed** in you.”*

*(Galatians 4:19)*

*“Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform (**complete**) it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”*

*(Philippians 1:6)*

*Paper 1 considered the words of the title in the context of things physical, as they took shape under God from the start of time. In Paper 2 we saw the same words used of God’s ways in history, in effecting His plans in sovereign grace for Israel, the earthly people of His choice. In this final paper we look at what the N.T. says about God’s eternal purpose, settled “before the foundation of the world”, to be consummated in Christ to His eternal praise and glory. To see God in action in the realm of “new creation”, preparing unworthy people for the highest destiny and favour in Christ, outside the bounds of time and history, allows us to appreciate some of the most magnificent thoughts about God the Bible unveils to us.*

## “All things new”

The second, third, and fourth Scriptures at the head of this paper have been chosen to pick out the same three words, already seen in the O.T. in our earlier papers, appearing in the N.T. in a different setting. We assume that the reader is now familiar with the three ideas embodied in the title of these papers — so that we may now take the liberty of departing from the sequence they indicate, and look first at the grand end-point they converge towards — the sure *completion* in perfection of all things as God intends.

Hence we have put first of all a quotation which envisages the

finality and magnificence of the ultimate consummation, in purpose in the mind of God, and firmly indicated in Scripture for our present encouragement and hope. Drawn onward by these entrancing themes we shall first think about the eternal day of complete and final *fulfilment* of all God's new creation activities. Some marvellous passages near the close of Revelation present this in a most moving way. The section 21:1-8, particularly, speaks of the replacement of the material heavens and earth by something entirely fresh from the hand of God. 2 Peter 3:12, 13 refers to that day in prospect, a complete renewal of the material heavens, so that all things may become entirely and eternally new. Not only will righteousness dwell in those new scenes, but also *God* will dwell among men, wiping away their tears, removing all the heartache associated with "the former things".

The prophets spoke of great days ahead for the earthly people of God. Isaiah 65:17 uses the expression "new heavens and a new earth", the product of God's *creative* activity; yet the context (the rest of the chapter) plainly foresees the time when God, in pure grace, establishes His earthly people, after having purged away in judgment all rebellion, including the apostate element amongst themselves. That day of millennial blessing — the day of Christ's open supremacy here on this earth will be a period when Jerusalem under God becomes "a rejoicing, and My people a joy" (65:19). This is the day when God's sovereign intentions for Israel (already referred to in the previous paper) will be fulfilled. In that coming day the redeemed nation will stand in firm and uninterrupted relationship with the Lord. Perhaps more than any other passage the remainder of Isaiah 65 describes the unspeakable prosperity and joyful blessedness of that coming time. Revelation 21:1-8 picks out the *ultimate* end-point — when *all things* (in the most comprehensive sense) are made *eternally* new — yet the immediately ensuing passage in Isaiah reverts to the millennial situation in *time*. Christ's beneficent rule will be enjoyed, and righteousness shall reign on *this* earth. Heaven's administration, over and upon this earth, and its wide influence affecting all the nations, will be widely acknowledged and appreciated. The role of the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, the Holy City, New Jerusalem — herself a product of God's creative and formative work, preparing her for her part in this sublime display of His glory — is very clear in these splendid verses, so honouring to Christ, and so heartening for us to read today.

In these great times Satan, earlier cast down from heaven (and having reacted viciously for a period on earth) will then be totally restrained in the bottomless pit. His power, long allowed scope on earth, will then be completely nullified. The curse, as it has affected the earth, will have

been lifted. Prosperity, in unimagined fulness, will be known. The outward effects of sin, known for so long, will be banished. Any hint of rebellion will be suppressed. Righteousness will *reign* because Christ will reign supreme. It is plain that the day of Christ, to be seen *here* while the present heavens and earth subsist, is to be a period of an *entirely new* kind, a new order of things *morally*. Earth and heaven are to be *right* according to God's high standards! How different this will be from the current situation, when the reign of sin is so well known, and the power of Satan (though always within bounds), is so real.

These unprecedented earthly scenes, when heaven and earth are at one under the blessings of the rule of Christ, do not form the last stage of all. At the close, some last vestiges of intransigence, deep-rooted in unregenerate human hearts, will stir and mount. This will occur under a fresh deceitful lead from Satan (released for a time). This last defiant move will be quelled summarily, and the devil will be finally put away in the lake of fire, his eternal end. Also at that point, the dead, small and great, those who died in their sins, will be raised and judged. The last enemy, death itself, will be destroyed. All rule and *all* counter-authorities will be cleared from the scene. According to 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28, when Christ has subdued every possible adversary, the *end* will come, and He "will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, . . . that God may be all in all". The very physical heavens, purified by fire, and re-made in all freshness, will take on new character according to God. Thus the point will be reached, anticipated in Revelation 21:6, when the word "It is done" will be pronounced upon all the work of God's hands. (Revelation 20 may be consulted in support of points mentioned above.)

### **"In Christ: accepted in the Beloved"**

We have covered, very briefly, some of those end-scenes described at the close of the Bible. These bring great encouragement and hope for the believer who has to face pressures and tribulations in the distressing world-situation today.

But we must now return to our three words — created, formed, and made. New creation is a sovereign activity of God which is *afoot already*, and clearly evidenced by persons who in faith rely on Christ. Hence many of the epistles use words like 'in Christ' to describe the Christian's status, acceptance, and favour with God. A living bond has been formed — a bond of life, union, and destiny — an unbreakable bond that links us with Christ Himself. The work of God in grace, pure grace, initiated within our hearts, has brought it about. We believers "are His workmanship *created* in Christ Jesus . . ." (Ephesians 2:10).

Though there are relevant passages elsewhere, *Ephesians* in its early chapters says much about God's sovereign action in grace embracing true believers. Much in chapters 1-3 relates to individual believers, yet there are words about the body of Christian believers too — the church. Some statements refer to God's intentions from eternity past — His purpose. Many speak of these plans already put into effect *now* — "in Christ". There are forward-looking statements too; to the redemption of the believer's body, and to things to be realised in the fulness of the times (1:10, 14). All are positive, sure, assertions — we must honour God by believing them fully. "In Christ", a man is newly created (2 Corinthians 5:17). That statement, today, covers the following: in Christ he has every spiritual *blessing*, he has been *chosen, accepted, is redeemed, forgiven*, has the *Holy Spirit* indwelling, *sealing* him, the assurance of his security and Christ's firm ownership. The inheritance is ahead, and the Holy Spirit is God's own down-payment assuring His promise. Let the reader go carefully through the verses and pick out the marvellous assertions. Have we any small awareness of the riches and the fulness in which we are involved? Paul prayed that our eyes might be increasingly opened to it.

*Why* has God acted thus? The verses say that it is *His will* to act in this way — a sufficient answer in itself. But they also speak of His good pleasure, His rich and superabundant grace and love, His overflowing wisdom, opening to us the secrets of His heart — telling us that He will bring all things to a head in Christ, when time comes to its fulness. Then Christ will be supreme in heaven and in earth. It seems that thoughts of *the Beloved* and God's *good pleasure* are primary considerations here. Right at the heart of all these workings of God, causative of them, is God's delight in His beloved One. Our blessings, rich as they are, are *in Him* and *for Christ's sake*. *Love* is fundamental. It has acted to reach us in Christ, and to bring us in — to be "holy and without blame before Him in *love*."

Earlier we mentioned the church, the one body, comprising every Christian believer truly linked in life with the Lord Jesus. This also is prominent in *Ephesians*. The union of disparate elements in Christ — elements far apart previously (Jew and Gentile especially) — has produced *one* unique living object of God's handiwork, something of special preciousness to the One who loved her, and died for her. This too was in mind eternally; and His death and resurrection, out of which it all springs as its basis, is now accomplished. Christ is now building *His Church*, and values her outstandingly. Here is something now begun (at Pentecost) and to be completed (when He takes her to glory). She is capable of responding to Him now; and in eternity more adequately to His own satisfaction. This, as a theme, is certainly one vital feature of N.T. revelation and

instruction. But God is working in the Church, and Christ is doing a progressive work within her today — as the next section will indicate.

(To be continued in Paper 3(b))

---

*“And all the crowds who had come together to that sight, having seen the things that took place, returned, beating their breasts. And all those who knew Him stood afar off, the women also who had followed Him from Galilee, beholding these things.”*

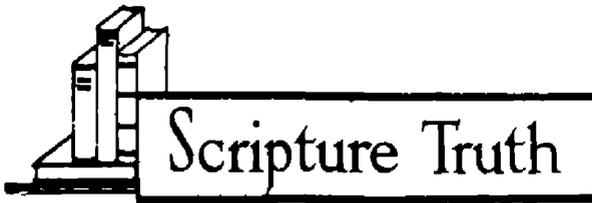
*(Luke 23:48-49)*

What a sight indeed for the whole creation! The eternal God of glory, the great Creator Himself having come in manhood, now hanging in shame, reproach and ignominy on the tree of the curse! The crowds had first despised and reviled Him, clamouring for His death. But they heard what they never had anticipated. His pleading, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” must have soberly affected many hearts. His calm submission in bearing the sufferings with which men abused Him could not but speak to any honest heart.

Who could ever forget the thick darkness that enveloped the land from noon to three o’clock? — an awesome sign of God’s intervention which must surely have caused serious thoughts in some. Then the Lord’s crying out, in full vigour of strength, “It is finished”, so surprised the executioner (who knew that death by crucifixion was particularly exhausting) that he was persuaded that this Man was the Son of God. His dismissing His own spirit was another detail the centurion observed, and no doubt others also.

The crowd left the scene, no longer crying out against Him, but beating their breasts. That sight they could never forget, whatever might have been the outcome for each individual. But those who knew Him, the women who had followed Him from Galilee being singled out, stood at some distance, beholding these things. What thoughts of grief and sorrow must have filled their hearts, together with deepest respect and adoration for One whose death was infinitely more affecting than any other.

**L. M. Grant** from *The Lord is Near* Calendar



Incorporating *Words of Help*

NOVEMBER, 1988

# Elijah: A man just like us

MARTIN GIRARD

## 1 Kings 19

*This paper from Martin, on my first reading, raised my spiritual morale substantially. Plodding on in what can seem the rather lonely path which an editor treads (mostly due to the apparently diminishing flow of fresh material coming my way), it gave me great encouragement. I am sure that others will find the same.*

Whenever he has the opportunity to instruct young preachers of the Word, Dick Lucas lays down a number of ground-rules for them to follow. One of these, he states, is that if an Old Testament subject is to be discussed, careful attention must be given to New Testament controls. In other words, the preacher must seek to understand the Old in the light of the New. He also stresses that when an Old Testament character, incident, or principle is actually quoted in the New Testament, it is doubly important to see how the New Testament interprets it.

This is sound advice. A reading of 1 Kings 18 on its own would lead us to think that Elijah was a spiritual giant. God had responded to Elijah's prayer before all the people, causing them to exclaim, "The LORD, He is God!" (v. 39). Viewing this scene, we might feel justified in applying the epithet "Superman" to him, were it not for the clear New Testament teaching that Elijah stands not *apart* but *alike*. James reveals that "Elijah was a man just like us" (5:17, NIV). Although he knew the exhilaration of victory, he also knew the exhaustion of defeat. Thus, with confident expectancy we can read the Old Testament narrative knowing that we shall be able to identify fully with the contrasting experiences of this man of God.

Perhaps at the seaside you have watched a windsurfer riding majestically on the crest of a wave. His poise is perfect, and for a moment you envy his skilful control of the sailboard. Then, for some unknown reason, the sailboard slips into a trough and the champion topples into the sea. Often we cannot understand *what* causes us to lose our spiritual poise or to reach the point when, with Cowper, we have to lament: "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?" Elijah, "a man just like us" (James 5:17, NIV) became depressed, dejected and deluded. As we consider the causes and the cures in *1 Kings 19*, we may be able to trace analogies that will help *us* in our spiritual pathway.

At the close of *1 Kings 18* Elijah, empowered by the Spirit of God, is seen running ahead of Ahab's chariot. A distance of at least sixteen miles was no mean feat for a man of his years! Yet, as chapter 19 opens, we find a remarkable contrast. "The man who just a short time before ran before Ahab's chariot to the glory of the Lord now ran for his life" (Theodore Epp). Bravely, Elijah had stood alone on Mount Carmel to challenge the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, and the Lord had wrought a mighty victory. Now the same prophet is terrified by the threats of one woman and thinks nothing of running almost a hundred miles with his servant from Jezreel in the north to Beersheba in the far south! Then, as if he had not gone far enough, he goes "a day's journey into the wilderness" alone (v. 4). In a state of dejection, Elijah sits down under a juniper tree and prays, "O Lord, take away my life". Poor Elijah was terribly confused! If Jezebel had intended to take his life, she could have done so instantly without issuing a warning beforehand, as she had done (v. 2). After escaping *for* his life, he now asks the Lord to *take* his life! Any reasonable person might ask, "What on earth was the point of escaping a hundred miles when, at the end, his request was to die?"

The root of the problem was that Elijah had taken his eyes off the Lord. Previously, when sent to Cherith, Zarephath, and even to Ahab, he had obeyed the Lord implicitly (see 17:3,5,8-10a; 18:1-2). God had not told him to escape from Jezebel, for "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Instead of trusting in the Lord for safety, Elijah trusted in his own ingenuity and fled as far as he could. However, it was not simply a *spiritual* problem. *Physically*, Elijah must have been tired even before commencing his "escape". His experience on Mount Carmel must have been extremely demanding, and the subsequent 16-mile run must have left him drained of energy. It is hardly surprising therefore in one sense that he should pray as he did in verse 4!

Remembering that Elijah was "just like us", we need to apply these

important lessons to ourselves. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”, we are told in Proverbs 3:5. If we take our eyes off Him and obtain instructions apart from Him, things will soon go wrong. We must also remember that our physical condition can affect our spiritual feelings and can result in us praying the wrong kind of prayers. Have you ever realised that Elijah’s prayer in verse 4 was *never* answered? God took His servant home to Heaven, much later, without dying!

In his excellent book “Elijah: A Man of Like Nature” Theodore H. Epp says: “Our inner life is very sensitive to our outward condition. Rest is very important to all of us. Proper exercise is also important. We sometimes forget this, but God does not” (p. 106). How thankful we should be for our Father’s constant care! “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him” (Psalm 103:13). God fully understood His servant’s thoughts and feelings and had the appropriate remedy for him. It may surprise us to realise that He catered for Elijah’s *physical* needs before ministering to him spiritually. In view of the tasks that lay ahead, Elijah needed *rest*. “He giveth His beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:2), and Elijah “lay down under the tree and fell asleep” (v. 5, NIV). Some hours later he could have testified, “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me” (Psalm 3:5). It was then time to receive *refreshment*. An angel of the Lord provided him with a nourishing cake before he slept again in preparation for the 200-mile journey to Horeb, the mount of God (v. 8), where he was to receive his *spiritual* tonic.

All Christians experience periods of spiritual depression, like Elijah, at one time or another. Although we can determine certain causes (physical *and* spiritual) accounting for Elijah’s despair, we must not blame him; indeed, he is to be commended for turning in prayer to the Lord when things went wrong! Do we? Rested and refreshed, Elijah is now able to commence his arduous trek to Horeb. This time he steps out with a resolute purpose in his heart. He is not escaping for his life but is heading deliberately towards the very place where, years before, the Lord had appeared to Moses and commissioned him after his failure (see Exodus 2:12,15; 3:1). A similar work now had to be done with Elijah.

It is said that Elijah could have covered the distance to Horeb in about a week, yet it took him forty days. “Why it took him longer we are not told, but it reminds us of the Israelites’ wandering in the desert for 40 years to complete a journey that could have been made in a few weeks” (Epp, p. 119). There, ensconced in Horeb’s lofty heights, the Lord asked him that deeply searching question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (v. 9). Often he would present us with the same challenge. What are *we* doing

in our assembly? What sort of witness for Him are *we* in our neighbourhood or workplace? Elijah replied very honestly, but his reply in verse 10 was not altogether true. Although he had been “very zealous for the Lord God Almighty”, it was *not* true that he was the only one left. The dejection seen earlier in the chapter had passed, but there still remained a delusion for the Lord to deal with. Indeed, Elijah was so convinced that he stood alone that he reiterated his answer verbatim when the Lord repeated His question (v. 13-14)! Little did he know that there were “seven thousand in Israel . . . whose knees (had) not bowed down to Baal” (v. 18, NIV).

Do we ever suffer from a similar delusion? Have you ever felt alone in your work for the Lord? Often we fail to realise that the Lord has many other servants whom *He* owns in our own neighbourhood! We should never be discouraged like this!

A great demonstration of God’s power followed, with wind, earthquake, and fire, but it was the “still small voice” that moved Elijah, (v. 12b,13a). Today, many Christians desire spectacular, convincing displays as evidences of God’s presence. The Lord’s way, however, is for us to “be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). It was not in the thunderings of the Law but in the gentle whisperings of grace that the Lord recommissioned Elijah with the words, “Go, return . . .” (v. 15). There, on the mountain, He unveiled His plans to His troubled servant. Hazael and Jehu were to be anointed as instruments of judgment and Elisha was to be anointed as prophet to continue Elijah’s ministry. What an encouragement it must have been for this disappointed man to realise that the Lord had not rejected him! Already He had marked out a younger man who was to be trained by Elijah before maintaining the prophetic voice in the land himself.

Are *you* feeling weary and discouraged? The devil is always doing his utmost to render our lives ineffective for the Lord. Reflect upon the experiences of Elijah, “a man just like us”. The Lord can meet your physical and spiritual needs and recommission *you* to go forth with purpose in His service and proclaim the glorious message of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ to a lost and needy world, as commanded in Matthew 28:18-20. Whatever your circumstances, why not make the last verse of John Greenleaf Whittier’s beautiful hymn your own prayer?

“Breathe through the heats of our desire  
 Thy coolness and Thy balm;  
 Let sense be dumb — let flesh retire,  
 Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
 O still small voice of calm!”

# Created, Formed, Made (3b)

COLIN CURRY

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. . . .”*  
(Ephesians 2:10)

*“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”*  
(Galatians 4:19)

*“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform (complete) it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”*  
(Philippians 1:6)

*In Paper 3a we have considered ourselves as the objects of God’s work in new creation, and our status and blessings as those in whom this work has begun. But now we must dwell on His progressive work within us, and seek to understand His dealings with us. His aim is to form Christ in us, and we must be awake to our need of this. We must surely wish to progress in this likeness to Christ, not impeding in any way His work with us towards this end.*

*Paper 3a also looked ahead to the day when all God’s work will reach its consummation. Only a few further words on this are now included.*

## “Christ formed in you”

The work of God initiated within us at our conversion came about decisively, like light out of darkness, at God’s bidding, as in Genesis 1 (see also 2 Corinthians 4:6). But God continues what He has started. The *forming* process proceeds. Occupation by the Holy Spirit with our Lord ascended in glory, produces a transformation (see 2 Corinthians 3:18); thus occupied, believers are *being* changed — not at a single stroke, but progressively — into His likeness. We are told not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2). How easily the stamp of this world can shape us. But how well the Spirit of God can renew our minds, and our style of life, by directing our meditation towards the glories of our blessed Lord. [Note the word *formed*, the common basic word within the two words already contrasted; not conformed, but transformed].

To be shaped towards likeness to Christ is not an easy process — we can be difficult material in the hands of the One who graciously deals with us. But He persists with us — though it may involve much learning through experience, much testing, refining, purifying, disciplining, in His loving hands; so that His end for us will be accomplished. The impediments to this work of God within us have to be recognised too. The Scriptures, and in particular those parts which are corrective in their intent, do not fail to emphasise these things. They expose our self-centred and unsuitable ways, helping us to align ourselves with God's condemnation of our sinful self at the cross, and so to count these among the "old things" which have "passed away". This help is given in a manner which is entirely for our good if we pay heed to it.

The verses in 2 Corinthians 5 show that while our full destiny in new creation is ahead (when in resurrection 'mortality is swallowed up in life'), yet, here in the mortal body, *attitudes* appropriate to newly-created persons should be shown. Converted, we find ourselves in a new realm, with thoughts and judgments utterly unknown before. See how the apostle describes his aims, his concerns, and his approach to life *now* — and contrasts it with his unconverted life-style! He was now zealous (ambitious) that all that he did might be acceptable to his Lord. *God* was the initiator of this kind of life — the 'creator' of this new Paul, so unlike his predecessor Saul. *Christ*, and His surpassing love, constrained him in this kind of outlook and motivated him in its consequent activities. His life, a response to overwhelming love, reflected that same love too. The coming review (of believers), at the judgment-seat of Christ, was no mere belief with Paul. It shaped his present career. The coming awful judgment of the unsaved pressed upon him urgently. We persuade men, we beseech men, he says. The fruits of God's creative activity within us *must* surely, among other things, *burden* us with this concern — this urge which Paul expresses so compellingly here.

There is indeed much provided from God to help us in ways that are "after Christ". How right it must be to accept readily so much that is designed to foster our inward likeness to Christ — the indwelling Holy Spirit, strongly helpful in engaging us with our Lord; the guidance of Holy Scripture, all of which centres upon Christ; the ministry of the Lord's servants, building us up together in Him; Scriptural examples like Paul, as we have just considered his outlook, are also most helpful. Would it not be strange if, with the surpassing glory of Christ, above and in front of us, and with the constraining love of Christ urging and drawing us on, we should lack in desire to move this way?

Two passages will suffice to indicate progressive developments

happening today in the context of *believers as a whole* — i.e. in the Church. First, consider Ephesians 4:7-13. Here the ascended Christ is said to have given gifts (individual persons) to the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ. These services are proceeding (some of them), and 'every one of you' is fitted to make a modest if small contribution. The whole point of this is to secure mutual upbuilding amongst the saints *together*. The body of Christ is a living organism — its life derives from Christ, its Head. Do we recognise the need for *growth*, and mutual participation in this growth, amongst believers? Do we wish to be under ministry from the Head, as *He* supplies it? Do we ever consider that we are not entirely on the receiving end in this activity? Our part, though small, is important. The passage says that we are each given grace to act for Him in this building-up process: we must therefore seek to fit in positively with Christ's great intention — to "build *His* church". The completion of that end is very plain in the verses too. Let us be in earnest to be involved in that which Christ is *forming*!

Secondly, the marvellous passage Ephesians 5:25-27 speaks of Christ's *love* for the Church. Once, He gave *Himself* for her — her very being arises from that wondrous action. Soon, He will present her to Himself, perfect, pure and spotless — a glorious church, fit object for His special love and joyous satisfaction. But what is happening now? He is preparing her, working towards that great moment, making her suitable, free from all that is unlike Himself. *How* is He doing this? He is sanctifying her, cleansing her, with the "washing of water by the word": setting her apart, removing what is not in character with Himself, decking her with the reflection of some of His own beauties. The *formation* process is taking place, and *He* is doing it. The word, i.e. Holy Scripture, in His hands, is the agent by the Holy Spirit for this cleansing, this shaping her to please Him — and to spur us in deep responsive love to Him.

### **Closing words**

The ultimate perfect scenes will arrive. God has determined it. The bliss of those realms, whether in heaven or in earth, is briefly suggested in certain profoundly impressive words of Scripture. Amplification would be out of place and speculative; though some ministry on this, marked by humility and patent spirituality, is helpful. The writer has been enjoying, for instance, a chapter by J. G. Bellett in *The Patriarchs*, entitled 'Heaven and Earth'. There, hints ahead to the coming perfect scenes, in time and eternity, picked up from the Scriptures here and there, are given. It stirs our zeal and anticipation! "Notices of the heaven that is to be ours by-and-by, and for ever" he calls them! "The *air* of a place is more important

to us than its scenery", he says! "Heaven will be filled with a moral element or atmosphere, as well as furnished with glories". For ourselves, our immediate prospect is the redemption of our bodies, God's completion of His new creation work in us. We shall enter into the eternal home, the Father's house, to be with Him (the Son) where *He is*, for evermore!

We conclude with more words from others, better than our own in summarising and indicating the quality of what lies ahead. First, what in due course will come into being "is nothing less than a universe where every trace of evil is done away, and which is penetrated in its remotest detail with the beauty and the glory of the Father's Beloved One" (J. S. Blackburn, *Scripture Truth*, 49, p. 21).

Finally, a stanza from J. N. Darby (1867) indicates what to us will be the most stirring feature of all:

Glory supreme is there.

Glory that shines through all:

More precious still that love to share

As those that love did call.

# The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ

W. R. DRONSFIELD

## A conversation

*This paper underlines the teaching of Scripture on this important matter. Any queries or correspondence should be sent directly to the writer of the article.*

**George.** I was interested in your comment tonight on Hebrews 5:15, that it should be translated, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart". In other words that there was one exception to His temptations, He was not tempted by a sinful nature.

**John.** Clearly, whether the translation is correct or not, our blessed Lord could not be drawn away and enticed by His own lust, which James tells us is the experience of every other man (James 1:14).

George. I agree with that of course, but does this not mean that His sufferings from temptation were not so great as ours?

John. No, His sufferings from the temptations which came from without, were much greater than ours can ever be, for He was not able to compromise in the slightest. Suffering from temptation occurs when we resist it. We are liable to give way to temptation, perhaps in a small degree, and this takes the edge off the suffering. Neither do we feel the revulsion to sin which He felt in His holy soul.

George. You have now touched upon a subject that has been troubling me for some time. You say He was *not able* to compromise in the slightest. Are you sure this is correct? There are many leaders in Evangelical circles that are teaching that the Lord was able to sin, but never actually did so. But others maintain that this is fundamental error and that He *could* not sin.

John. I maintain that those who say that the Lord was peccable but not peccant — that is that He was able to sin but did not do so — are in fundamental error. He was impeccable; that is it was impossible for Him to sin.

George. What scripture have you for saying this? There are three important scriptures that speak of His sinlessness: “He *did* no sin” (1 Peter 2:22); “He *knew* no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21); and “In Him *is* no sin” (1 John 3:5). I know no scripture which says that He *could* not sin. Do you?

John. Those actual words are not in Scripture.

George. I have heard brethren say that if He had been able to sin, it would show that He had a sinful nature, which the last scripture denies. However, this argument seems to me to be unsound. Adam had a sinless, unfallen nature when he was created, but he was not impeccable as subsequent events proved. The statement that the Lord could not sin seems to me to deny His true humanity. He took an unfallen, human nature, not a superhuman one. Surely He did not take a stronger variety of manhood that was, unlike Adam, incapable of sinning.

John. You are right that He partook of flesh and blood and that He was in all things made like unto His brethren (Hebrews 2:14 & 17). But you overlook the all-important fact that the One who took human nature never ceased to be God. You cannot divide His Person. In everything which He did as Man, it was He, Himself, who did it. The Incarnation is an inscrutable mystery but scripture gives abundant witness to the truths that

we need to know about it. If the Lord had sinned as Man, it would have been God the Son who had sinned. That is obviously impossible.

George. I had not thought of that, but I still have a difficulty. It is impossible for God to be fatigued (Psalm 121:4), yet as Man the Lord was weary with His journey. Thus He could go through an experience as Man that He could not have as God. What is the difference in principle here?

John. That God should condescend to be tired and hungry in the humanity that He took, shows His infinite grace and love, but it does not offend against His righteousness and the purity of His Divine Nature. But if He had sinned as Man, God would no longer be righteous. That is an impossibility.

George. Do you then admit that He took a nature that was peccable in itself?

John. No, it cannot be said to be peccable, not because it differs from Adam's unfallen nature, but because it is joined for ever to Deity in His blessed Person. This is fundamental. Those who say that He could have sinned, may not deny His sinlessness, but they are in fundamental error as to the truth of His Person.

## An Un-named Man of God (2)

FRANK WALLACE

1 Samuel 2:27-36

*After the introductory paper in the January/February 1988 issue, this paper is the first referring to 'men of God' in Scripture who are easily overlooked because they are not identified by name.*

The end of Judges depicts a terrible condition in the favoured nation of Israel. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). As yet there was no king to rule and direct the nation according to God's Word. Self-will and disobedience reigned supreme. How refreshing to turn to the little book of Ruth and find rays of faith and energy in the persons and exercises of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz. Through their obedience to God's Word, blessing was secured for them and hope that better days were

soon to come. The book ends with a reference to David, the warrior king of Israel, a king who did God's will and restored Israel to a place of supremacy among the surrounding nations.

The opening chapters of 1 Samuel connect with the end of the book of Judges. The barren condition of Hanna; the frail, blind, and non-influential Eli; and his wicked sons Hophni and Phineas, were symptoms of Israel's decadence and unfruitfulness for God. It is important to note that the spiritual exercises of three women, Naomi, Ruth and Hanna, prepare the way for God's great servants, the prophet and judge Samuel, and the king, David. But a few years would pass before these great men of God would do God's will, so that these dark times would be broken by a dawn of revival and recovery.

Eli and his sons Hophni and Phineas were poor representatives indeed of the honoured and sacred priesthood in Israel. The tribe of Levi had been chosen by God to serve Him in His sanctuary, the Tabernacle. They had a holy service to perform, and their lives were to be consistent with their favoured position, and with the God who dwelt in that house (see Exodus 28:40,41 and Leviticus 21 and 22). Though responsible to God in a special way, they did the exact reverse of what suited Him. Eli lacked discernment, thinking the distressed Hanna was drunk. He had no moral power with his sons. He spoke to them about their evil lives and they ignored him. He did not and could not restrain them. His sons disgraced their priestly anointing by their greed, and the offerings to God were despised by the people.

What could be done in so sinful and weak a state of things? The boy Samuel was making good progress (in both God's and man's favour); but he was young and immature. In the priestly family of Eli no hope of improvement remained. Such a state could not go on unchecked if revival were to come in Israel. But, as always, God *has* a word to say amid such shocking and appalling failure.

A man of God was sent to Eli. Though not named, his description 'man of God' is enough to tell us that he had nothing in common with Eli and his wicked sons. As a man of God, he obediently discharged his responsibility in passing to Eli a message of judgment: the messenger conveyed that message faithfully. It was not *his* message. God was speaking directly to Eli through His mouthpiece here. "Thus saith Jehovah" (v. 27), "Wherefore the God of Israel saith" (v. 30). "Jehovah saith" stamps upon his message the authority of God Himself. Here is an important mark of 'a man of God'. He is never at the centre of his message — not drawing attention to himself or his service. His main concern is to make the mind of God known in an unmistakable manner.

One of the best illustrations of this is the epistle to the Hebrews. There is no reference to its writer — no introduction by an apostle or another person. Why? Because God is speaking, and needs (here) no-one to introduce Him to the readers. His Word comes with its own power and authority. Notice how often ‘speaking’ is mentioned in the Hebrews epistle. It all takes character from its opening words.

The message of this man of God declared judgment on Hophni and Phineas (v. 34), and upon Eli’s house (v. 31). All this was fulfilled to the letter. Hophni and Phineas were killed by the Philistines. Abiathar, the last of Eli’s house, is excluded from the office of priest by Solomon, and Zadok, a faithful priest to David and Solomon is promoted to the important office of chief priest (1 Kings 2:27,35). Verses 34, 35 of the man of God’s message were fulfilled. What he said came to pass, as it *must*, since God had said it.

We shall never know who this man of God was. His name is not important but his message is. This example is needed. Those responsible to represent God must ensure that they clearly convey the mind of God when acting in this way. A knowledge of God’s Word is essential for this important service, as also is the wisdom to act, or not to act, as the situation requires.

Lot was not a man of God. He was self-centred, and his words were of no avail to his sons-in-law. His message of judgment was true, but he personally had made his home in a sinful city. He was part of the city that was condemned by God. The lesson is obvious. A man of God must be consistent in his life if his message is to have its proper effect for God. Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians has an important message. “For our glad tidings were *not with you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, even as you know what we were among you for your sakes*” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

---

Fervently; Acceptably; Reverently.

*“See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”*

(1 Peter 1:22)

*“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”*

(Hebrews 12:28)

# A Much Maligned Coin

*This paper is reprinted from the very first volume of 'Scripture Truth' (1909), it has no other identification than the label 'Contributed'. Though betraying its age, its message (calling for unstinted, true devotion to our Lord) is right up-to-date, and certainly is needed.*

*"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow has cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for they did all cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark 12:41-44)*

How often one has heard of a fat hand drawing out of a well-lined purse a small piece of silver in response to some request for help, and a voice saying in easy complacent tones, "I cannot give as much as I should like, but I can give the widow's mite".

The Bible never speaks of "the widow's mite". Anyone who talks of "the widow's mite" misses the point of the Lord's commendation of her action altogether. The Bible speaks of "the widow's mites". Don't forget there were *two* of them, and they went together, and are never spoken of separately.

Suppose a Christian has £10,000. He gives a guinea for some object, and calls it "the widow's mite". But the Lord measured the widow's action, not by what she gave, *but by what she had left*. A Christian, who gives a guinea and had £10,000 to start with, is not perceptibly the poorer by his offering. The widow gave her all, and "the widow's mites" in his case would mean £10,000.

I confess that the widow puts me utterly to shame. Her faith and devotedness were sublime. No wonder her action is recounted by no less a teller of the tale than the Lord Jesus Christ, and twice recorded by God the Holy Ghost.

I could not have the meanness and hypocrisy ever to say that I gave "the widow's mite", let alone the unscripturalness of the expression.

If I had naught but a farthing in my pocket, and wanted to put something into the collecting box, I should have to put the farthing in,

or nothing at all, for a farthing in this country is the smallest coin and is not divisible. But in the widow's case her farthing was not only divisible, but actually lay in her hand in the form of two mites. She was generous indeed if she had given "the widow's mite" — half her possessions, fifty per cent of her property. She had the choice and she took it — she gave them both — she gave her all.

The Lord of life and glory sat over against the treasury. The rich came and threw in much and had much left for themselves. The widow came — the strong arm that had once supported her was gone: she had none but Jehovah to look to, but she knew He was sufficient — and she threw in *all her living*.

Those two mites were morally weighty. Adjust the scales; place on one side all the gold and silver of the rich; pile up their offerings. Place on the other scale those two small coins. They are pathetic in their smallness; they won't do much for the upkeep of the gorgeous temple. The piled up gold and silver look comfortable and powerful.

But let the Lord lift the scales. See! the mites weigh heavy, and the gold and silver are light. Hear the verdict: "This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they that have cast into the treasury." How was that? The gold and silver were little more than gold and silver. The two mites had added to them the consuming devotedness of a heart caring only for God's glory. Hence their moral weight.

We plead not for money, but for *devotedness*. Were there more devotedness there would be no lack of anything. The Lord's interests would not languish. It is not for nothing that we have the twice recorded story of the poor widow.

Most Christians spend pounds over their own pleasure, and pence over God's interests. And yet the Saviour gave *HIS all*. Have you ever noticed the setting of that well-known verse, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9)? It comes in as a great surprise. The apostle Paul is anxious that the Corinthian believers, living in Corinth, a city of opulence, ease, and wealth, with all their enervating influence, should not be behind the Macedonian churches, who, "in a great trial of affliction", out of "the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality". In verse 9 he lifts the whole question of giving on to an extraordinarily high platform by appealing to their affections, and reminding them of the grace of Christ, who, rich beyond all mere creature wealth, became poor, that we through His poverty might be eternally rich.

What an example to move our hearts! May His devotedness to God

and to us stir up an answering devotedness to Him. "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord."

Only a few months ago was this illustrated beautifully by a lady from Scotland. She sent an offering for the Lord's work consisting of two rings, two gold rings, two chains, a chain and pendant, a chain and locket, eleven brooches, a pair of tortoise-shell earrings, a single earring, two pins and an ornament. When sending them she described them as "*a few remnants of the old leaven for the blessed Lord Jesus Christ*".

What made her do this? One can read between the lines of her simple description. The warmth with which she called the Lord "blessed", and the way she reverently and lovingly gave Him His full title, bespoke a heart won, captured, devoted. She described the jewellery, once used for decking her person and drawing attention to herself, as "old leaven", showing she had judged superfluity of finery was not becoming to a Christian, and she made friends with "the mammon of unrighteousness" in a very happy and practical way.

---

*"O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh languisheth for thee, in a dry and weary land without water."*  
*(Psalm 63:1)*

David wrote this Psalm in the wilderness of Judah, a land literally dry and weary, a land that yielded no refreshment as that for which the heart of man thirsts. His lonely experiences in scenes so barren of comfort and prosperity were intended by God to teach him that the world is a barren wilderness, spiritually speaking, in which no true blessing can be found to refresh the heart of one who has known the sweetness of the grace of God. He must seek his refreshment outside of it all, and in the living God.

Through such things the believer learns that God is not far off, as though He were merely an impersonal Creator of the universe, having little interest in His creatures. He learns to know God as his own God, and his heart is moved to seek Him early, with no delay; for the very time of felt deprivation is the time that the sweetness of the presence of God should be cultivated. On such occasions of being alone with God the thirsting soul will find delight in the comfort of fellowship with God.

Too frequently believers allow themselves to be discouraged and downcast by the wilderness life. They may feel the lack of fellowship of others who love the Lord: they think they need the exhilaration of exciting circumstances. Yet the Lord may have put them in totally different circumstances, intending to have them learn their need of the precious fellowship of His own love and goodness.

If then in faith we cry out for the living God, languishing for Him as

in a dry and weary land without water, the results will be far better than we had ever expected. Our inmost soul will be refreshed and filled with goodness.

**L. M. Grant:** from **The Lord is Near** Calendar.

---

### **Companionship** (John 11:35)

Hymn 329 in 'Spiritual Songs' is noted as Anonymous in the Index, but the same words are found in 'Hymns of Ter Steegen and others' under the above heading. They are attributed there to 'P.B.'. Though this does not identify the writer, the background to the Ter Steegen hymns provides a clue to the circumstances of acute pressure out of which these deep appreciations of the Lord Jesus were born. This, and the previous quotation, may encourage readers who tread the lonely paths of weariness and isolation.

*We thank Thee, Lord, for weary days  
When desert springs were dry,  
And first we knew what depth of need  
Thy love could satisfy.*

*Days when beneath the desert sun,  
Along the toilsome road,  
O'er roughest ways we walked with One,  
That One the Son of God.*

*We thank Thee for that rest in Him  
The weary only know —  
The perfect, wondrous sympathy  
We needs must learn below:*

*The sweet companionship of One  
Who once the desert trod;  
The glorious fellowship with One  
Upon the throne of God;*

*The joy no desolations here  
Can reach, or cloud, or dim —  
The present Lord, the living God,  
And we alone with Him.*

*We know Him as we could not know  
In Heaven's golden years;  
We there shall see His glorious Face,  
But Mary saw His tears.*

*The touch that heals the broken heart  
Is never felt above;  
The Angels know His blessedness,  
His way-worn saints His love.*