

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

JANUARY 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

NEW YEAR ADDRESS

Dear Friends,

As the Almighty has spared us to see the dawn of another year it behoves His children to follow the example of Paul who on one occasion “thanked God and took courage” (Acts 28. 15). The circumstances in which he found cause for thanksgiving were not conducive to his flesh. He was a prisoner on his way to Rome, and no doubt chained to a soldier. This may not have been the way in which he anticipated the fulfilling of his earnest desire to minister at Rome, yet he says in Romans 1. 10: “If by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.” The means God ordained were as a prisoner “numbered with the transgressors.” How we often sing,

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.” (H. 320)

David expresses it thus in Psalm 77. 19: “Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known.”

When he preached his first sermon in Rome to the Jews, Paul lovingly caressed the chain which bound him to the soldier saying: “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28. 20). He wore that chain with a good conscience before God, and he also wore it in quiet, humble submission to the means God had ordained for him to come to Rome. It would be a mercy if we had the same answer of a good conscience that Paul had, and the quiet submission to the chain that sovereign providence has ordained to keep us in the way of God’s appointing. Friends, if we chafe against the chain, it is we who get harmed. How we read of the pre-eminent example of the Saviour who, “was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth” (Acts 8. 32), that those who are true spiritual Israelites might have hope. “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2. 28, 29).

Christ meekly bore the bonds which led Him to Calvary, just as Paul himself tells us in Hebrews 12. 1-3 of the joy that was set before the

Saviour in enduring the cross and despising the shame. He who gave thanks for the emblems of His own suffering in the upper room, can impart to His tried and tempted followers grace to “glorify God in the fires,” and to live with the chain of providence He has ordained.

So, when the brethren came to meet Paul, he counted his blessings, and from that gracious assessment took courage in the same spirit as David: “The LORD hath been mindful of us. He will bless us.”

Despite the shaking times, internationally, nationally, denominationally and personally, there is much for which we should thank God. In our nation, the Word of God is freely available, freedom of worship continues, and among our churches in the year that is now past, there have been several tokens of God’s favour. Help has been obtained from its only true source, God Himself. As we believe that our God is unchangeable in His glorious Godhead, purposes and love, God’s children may, as enabled by the Spirit, take courage for the unknown way that lies before them, believing that the government is on His shoulder. All the precious names that Isaiah adds to that glorious truth will be exercised on behalf of His church in 2023. “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The ever-lasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Yet there is also much to mourn over as we review the past twelve months. Internationally the scene grows darker by the day, as men in their pride and covetousness, like Ahab, desire another man’s vineyard. We feel for those who fear God, caught up in wars in Ukraine and elsewhere. We wonder how much longer our nation will be spared such suffering. In the United Kingdom, our nation continues on its downward spiral, morally, socially and economically. How true that word is: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” We mourn the loss of the late Queen Elizabeth II whose stability in changing times is only now beginning to be truly appreciated. We wish King Charles III well, but it remains to be seen how closely he will follow his mother’s example. The total disarray of our elected leaders has made our nation a laughingstock internationally. We pray that the present incumbent will bring some stability. We wonder what voice there is in that this supposed Christian country has a practising Hindu as our leader? But is that any different from the atheists that have gone before him? We are exhorted to pray for those that rule over us, which includes our prime minister. In the Book of Daniel, we read of three idolatrous kings, whose counsels were overruled for the good of God’s people and His honour and glory. Daniel courteously served them each. May it be so in our land at this time. May we also never forget the words of Daniel 2. 21: “He changeth times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.”

The unsettled state among some of the churches is a cause for concern. May the Lord yet heal the breaches which Satan has so skilfully made. Whenever God's people are on opposing sides in a matter, you can be sure that Satan is at the root of the division. It breaks the heart of the truly exercised in Zion to see these things, and more importantly how grieving it must be to the Holy Spirit.

But on the other hand, despite our manifold shortcomings, we are thankful for the additions to several churches in recent months. May the Lord continue to add unto the churches such as shall be saved.

“What though the gates of hell withstood?
Yet must this building rise;
'Tis Thy own work Almighty God,
And wondrous in our eyes.” (H. 141)

But then personally how much we each have to grieve over. The wrestling toward heaven: “against storm and wind and tide” is often hard labour. Often, like Gad, “a troop overcomes us.” What need there is for repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and to be kept.

As we view all these things, how apposite the prayer of Solomon is: “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden... Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” As the year we have entered upon takes its course, may we personally and collectively hear our Beloved say: “I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse ... My undefiled” (see Song 4. 16 and 5. 1, 2).

In 2022 we have seen the Lord come into His garden also to gather lilies to Himself. Faithful ministers, deacons and believers have been finally called out of the wild wilderness of this world, to join “the congregation that ne'er breaks up, where the Sabbath has no end.” We extend our prayerful sympathy to all that mourn and desire that He who has made the gap will fill it with His own sacred and felt presence.

We watch with prayerful interest the pastorates starting in 2023 and those churches which are actively exercised seeking a pastor. May it be seen that the Lord has given His vital approbation in these weighty matters. We feel for the churches where numbers are down to “two or three,” and those who carry the burden of the cause alone, yet not alone we trust!

Beloved friends, time is short, eternity is near. It behoves us to live as men awaiting the return of their Lord, who has said: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24. 42). “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5. 16).

May grace, mercy and peace abide with each of our readers and the churches we love for Christ's sake.

G.D. Buss

THE SON OF MAN LIFTED UP

*Sermon preached by J.K. Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Lord's day morning, January 4th, 1920*

Text: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3. 14, 15).

As a congregation we have much to be thankful for, but that which, above all else, calls for thankfulness is this Book, the Bible, God's revelation of Himself, and that in this Book which, above all other subjects, absorbs other subjects so to speak, which gives them form, beauty and glory, is that Person who speaks of Himself in the text; to Him I would direct your attention.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." This is true, namely we are hastening to the tomb; time is carrying us along; it is unperceived by us, in many cases, and especially when we are young, we do not think about the swift passage of time and how that we are being carried along, but it is so. Whether we think it or not, whether we are exercised about it or not, it is so, and the day is coming, is not very distant, when the place that knows us now will know us no more. There is an eternal life given to a determinate number of the fallen children of Adam, and there is a way to that life, and the way to it the text tells us of, and if you will give me your attention, and the Lord will grant me His help, I shall speak to you of this great matter: in the first place, sin, and in the second place speak of the great remedy.

Sin. You cannot have read your Bibles without observing that sin occupies a very large part of the sacred volume. It is so abominable to God that He continually warns against it. The commission of it is so offensive to Him that He continually shows His anger and punishes men, and in these ways a very large part of the holy Scripture is occupied with sin. We may be sure it is terrible in God's eyes, offensive above all description, when He should present it so continually and set it forth in its blackness, in its wicked and hell-deserving nature.

We have a particular instance of it in connection with the text. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." You will all remember the solemn and sad circumstances of the making of a serpent of brass by Moses and the lifting of it up in the wilderness. The children of Israel were travelling, going to the land of promise. They had just had a victory in answer to prayer, and then they had to take a further journey and they got discouraged. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." And instead of seeking the face of God for new courage

they, as all men do, as we do, they fell to murmuring, and their murmuring took a most definite and awful shape. They committed, as I judge, the greatest sin of all the sins of their journeyings, at that time. They murmured against the Lord and against Moses, and they also said that their soul loathed the light food, which was daily, in much mercy, rained upon them from heaven, the manna. Inasmuch as the manna is a very lively type of the Lord Jesus, their murmurings were against Him in reality. He was with the church in the wilderness; He preserved the church, fed her and now they murmured against Him, and this was so provoking in the eyes of God's glory that He sent fiery serpents, bid them poison them, and many of the people died.

Ah let me say here what a grievous sin is the sin of murmuring against Christ. The Apostle Paul takes it up in the Corinthians and says, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." (1 Cor. 10. 10). Murmuring against providence is dreadful, but murmuring against Christ is terrible in the extreme. Murmuring against that light food as they called it, was murmuring against the specially-instituted providence of God in raining bread from heaven for them every day.

They came to Moses being bitten, with the confession that they had sinned and with the petition that the Lord would cause the serpents to cease from among them. And Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord answered him and said, Make a serpent like the serpents that bite the people and rear it high, lift it up on a pole, and it shall come to pass when a man is bitten and he shall look to this, then he shall be healed. So Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole and set it up, and thus it came to pass that whenever a man was bitten of a serpent, he looked and saw that brazen serpent erected, set on high by Moses, and the sight brought healing to his afflicted and poisoned, affected body. This was the type and, says the Lord Jesus Christ, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" – as serpents destroyed, so shall a serpent bring deliverance and life – "so must the Son of man be lifted up," set on high, in order that poor, bitten sinners, feeling their bite and the poison injected into their souls, the poison of sin and death, coming, looking to this Lord Jesus shall find eternal life.

May God give us to feel our bite; may He give us to look to the Lord Jesus. You will not look to Him till you feel the bite and the poison, and if you feel them, then O what a mercy you will feel it to be in time that there is One lifted up to whom, guided by the Spirit, you may and shall cast a believing look and find eternal life.

In what sense are we to understand the lifting up of Christ? First the manner of the death that He died. As in this gospel, further on, Christ says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.

This He said, signifying what death He should die.” He was literally lifted up from the earth and crucified on the accursed tree. It was no common death; a death that all should view; He was made a spectacle to God and to men. It was no common death, my friends, that Christ died. It was a death with a curse in it, the death that God the Father inflicted on God the Son, Jesus Christ. It was the death inflicted by the law. Death inflicted by men, O how trifling was that comparatively, but the death inflicted by the Father, by the law, O this was death, and this is in the first place what we are to understand by this being lifted up. When faith looks at Christ dying, Christ crucified, O then life comes, liberty is given sooner or later in some measure. You must first feel the bite and the poison of sin, feel death rankling in you, feel that you are lost before you can value this uplifted Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest evils you will find in the religious world is a religion without conviction of sin, a gospel that does not displace and succeed the law. It is a fearful thing to be religious and have no conviction of sin. There may be a feeling of it, there may be a great deal of talk about it, but the conviction of it, the sound, penetrating, killing conviction of sin is wanting in many cases. May the Lord grant it may not be lacking in us. “To see sin smarts but slightly.” To see, in your mental vision, a hell that you may even conjure up into your feelings, will not save you, but to feel sin, and to feel the sorrows of death and to be compassed with the pains of hell, this, this will, if I may so speak, qualify you to look to Jesus Christ. The measure of this feeling the Lord orders in His sovereignty; the necessity of it is clearly seen in the scheme of salvation.

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Strictly there are no people righteous; there is not a righteous man on earth. So when Christ said, “I came not to call the righteous,” He must have intended this: I came not to call people who esteem themselves righteous. But sinners, who esteem themselves sinners, these I came to call, these I came to save. And in that light Hart speaks a true word when he says, “A sinner is a sacred thing, the Holy Ghost has made him so.” A sinner is a man who is wrong, a man who, knowing that he is a sinner, can make no pretension to goodness; who, seeing his sin and feeling it, is ashamed of himself. Seeing what he is capable of, he says of the worst of men, I could be that man if God did not preserve me; I could do these things if God did not prevent me. I am the man. And such a person would not like anyone to think him a Christian sometimes, and he would say, No, I have no claim on the Lord, no claim to that sacred name. I am a sinner; I am a real sinner; not a fancied one, I am a real sinner. To this man God will look, does look, and this man shall have given to him power to look to Christ lifted up, that is, Christ dying.

What does the death of Christ mean? It means that He was made a curse, being made sin. It means that He fulfilled, He magnified the law and made it honourable, and it means this. Harken, poor sinner, if your distraction will allow you; harken. It means this, that there is now a new and living way open to God, not for the righteous, but for sinners. It means that without the removal from yourself by yourself of any one single thing, any single sin, any speck and spot of guilt, there is for you, a sinner, an opened, a new and living way; that is to say, there is given liberty to a wretch to come to God.

O what would some of us do but for this truth? This is what the death of Christ signifies; and further that every poor creature in trouble, soul trouble, providential trouble, trouble of temptation, has this blessed liberty given to him to go to the God of all grace for mercy, for life, and for every good thing needed. The lifting up of Christ may and does no doubt further mean in the Spirit His exaltation after His humiliation. Because "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that, at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess." Ah what a mercy it is to have grace to bow the knee to Jesus Christ.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." O what a blessing this gospel is to many poor people. They must confess, they do confess, God gives them power to confess, and it is written, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is in heaven; He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, at the right hand of the Father, an Intercessor, ever living to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him.

I have spoken of it before, but I would just like to name it again, that salvation, the power of Christ to save, God the Holy Ghost, in that passage puts in His intercession. "He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And this is wonderful for dumb people: "Open Thy mouth for the dumb," it is said to Him in the Proverbs in the spirit of prophecy. "Open Thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction." Open Thy mouth, plead the cause of the poor and the needy.

And then you know near to that passage is this: "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish," and this is the gospel. Strong drink to revive the fainting soul; strong drink to bring that heavenly exhilaration that alone can come from the gospel. O what a Christ there is lifted up. God lifted Him up. He brought Him from the grave; He was taken up into heaven after He had shown Himself to be alive to His disciples by

many infallible proofs and there He is, ever living, ever loving, ever ruling, ever watching, ever taking care of His children, ever ready and ever willing to save and bless them, and He says to them in the Spirit, "Look unto Me ... all the ends of the earth, for I am God"; "and beside Me there is no Saviour." Why my brethren, the sight is wonderful, a risen, an exalted Saviour. One says, "Look ye saints, the sight is glorious." Some here may say, We are not saints. Then I would say, "Look ye sinners, the sight is glorious," a living, a precious Christ exalted at the Father's right hand to intercede. He is lifted up.

We might say too that Christ is intended to be lifted up in the ministry. The minister is to follow the Scriptures; the Scriptures lift Christ up so to speak; they know no other subject. This is the one great remedy that God has provided. This is the one sound He will have sounded in the pulpit, that Christ is the Friend of sinners. O the pleasure this gives to a believing heart sometimes: Christ is the Friend of sinners. The sound is a quickening sound, an encouraging sound, a drawing sound. When your ears catch it, that is the ears of your faith catch the sound, you will follow it. O that I knew this Christ. The sound will draw your heart, will draw your eyes to an uplifted Christ. Now as the Scriptures lift Him up so, so it is intended that the ministry should lift Him up. What cause of shame one has that He has been so little lifted up by one. There is no other subject worthy of mention.

You remember the Apostle Paul was so taken with this, so filled with this, that he said to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Who can tell but those who feel it, what a moving of heart there is sometimes at the sound of the gospel, that sometimes men can say as it is in our hymn-book, "Delighted, we've heard its contents" (H. 460). Here are God's mercies, God's kindness, tenderness, love, bowels of compassion, pardons innumerable, justification eternal, sanctification unalterable, heaven made sure in the Person of Christ, and the ministry is to lift Him up. Bid the bitten look unto it; life attends every look. This is a great thing. Exercised people really want this in the ministry. There is nothing else to entertain them. The ministry will tell people this is the only remedy for every case that men can come into who fear God. Temptation, the devil himself who shall be bruised shortly under the feet of the saints by God Himself. Deliverance from a backsliding state, revival when you are low, a fresh quickening when you feel dead, a new moving of the Spirit on the face of your confused souls. The only remedy preached in the Word and set forth in the ministry sent of God, the only remedy, is this the very Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the Lord grant it may be the one thing with me and that your hearts may be affected by it in the power of the Eternal Spirit.

And in the next place Christ is to be lifted up by the Holy Ghost, and this is no fancy of man but a promise of Christ's. He says, promising the Holy Ghost, as we are told in this gospel, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." He shall lift Him up; He shall make you see Him. You look sometimes within: O the confusion there is there, the sin you feel, the guilt that you sink under, the sins that you fall into, the bitter things you see, the wrong things you act in your hearts. You look there, and there is nothing but desolation. How is this desolation to be taken away? How will your waste places be repaired? The Holy Spirit alone is the One who shall do this, and He shall do this by taking of Christ's things, Person, work, death, burial, resurrection, ascension into heaven, intercession there, Christ's fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. He shall glorify Christ. Everyone who gets the view of this takes some notice of it. He may afterwards forget it, or may think it was not given to him by the Lord the Spirit, but the view given has for the time an effect. It makes the man who gets it say to himself

"Why should I, then, poison cherish?

Why despair of cure, and perish?

Look, my soul, though stung to death." (H. 876)

It thus gives a heavenly courage to a fainting sinner. It draws the heart as effectually as the summer sun draws up the virtue of the earth into the tree. It has an effect. It stops despair; it is wider than a sinner's case; it penetrates beneath his sin and sinfulness; it tells him that there is no cause of despair where Christ is, that Christ is the remedy, the Saviour, the only Saviour. "I am the LORD, and beside Me there is no saviour." The Spirit lifts Him up. O what a precious Christ He then becomes, and it is in this way that that takes place which John mentioned in respect of himself and of Christ: "He must increase, but I must decrease." I, in my legal self, in my wishes to get rid of this by my own hand, in my design to get rid of some of my sins, to make myself fit to pray, I must decrease. My reputation must go, my Pharisaism must go; I must go down into a nothingness and be a poor, wretched sinner, that Christ in His Person and in His work may increase in my esteem, in the eye of faith and in my affections.

He is to be lifted up thus. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." This would answer many a question as, for instance, one might say, I am so ignorant, how shall I know Him? There are so many false Christs, how shall I distinguish Him from any and all of them? I am so ignorant, I do not know, I am afraid. There are mock suns are there not, so called? There is only one sun to us, only one sun to our earth and when that sun arises, all the pretended lights, all the influences that come from every natural

and every other source will die away. How do we know that now at this moment our sun is shining? His rays come through the window. And how will you know if the very Christ of God shines on you? By the powerful light and influence and life and hope and peace and comfort according to the measure of the revelation you will feel. It may not reach joy; it may not reach peace; it will penetrate into your despairing feelings; it will penetrate into your limiting of the Holy One. It will tell you that there is more grace in Christ, more merit in Christ, than there is sin in you, than there is guilt in you, and it will say, Despair not. It will say this, it will preach this gospel in you.

“Let not conscience make you linger,
 Nor of fitness fondly dream;
 All the fitness He requireth,
 Is to feel your need of Him,
 This He gives you,
 ’Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.” (H. 723)

He must be lifted up. He came to be lifted up. He was humbled; He humbled Himself. Men hated and persecuted Him, but He was His Father’s only begotten Son and His Father’s dear, devoted Servant. He was the sacrifice, He was the Priest, and now, having done all His Father sent Him to do, He is lifted up. O that ministers, O that I, a poor one indeed, might have power and wisdom to lift this Christ up.

Now in the next place let us enquire into some of the particulars in respect of which He is to be lifted up. Let us not deal – if the Lord will prevent us – let us not deal in generalities; let us deal in particular things. I like points. There are many points of infinite importance to us with respect to the lifting up of Christ, and one is this: His very Person as Emmanuel is to be lifted up. Yes, He is to be seen to be “God with us.” Not a Man only; a very Man, but not only a Man; very God also; One Person. O my friends, the mystery of all the mysteries of our holy religion and the mercy of all the mercies of our holy religion you have in the Person of Jesus Christ. When faith sees Him she knows Him.

Job, speaking of his past greatness said, When the eye saw me it bore witness unto me; when the ear heard me it attended to me. I do not quote literally but that is just what he had in his heart and mind to say. He was somebody, that is, he was eminent among the people in his day. He was one to be noticed, and so I will say when Jesus is lifted up, who is like Him? There is none like Him, and faith says, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee?” Whom have I to plead? Whose blood can I mention? Whose righteousness can I speak of? Whose power can I plead with the Father? Whose grace can I look to but Thine? Whom have I in heaven to go to, to hang upon, to wait for, but Thee? Does that find an echo in you, my friends? Is He the One of all others to whom you would go? O

look to this Person. It is to be feared that the knowledge of Christ's Person has almost died away today from this land and from professors, and surely we could not retain that knowledge a minute, if we possess it even, without the Lord. May He increase it in our judgement and in our love.

"None but Jesus,
None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

None can guide them into the way everlasting; none can give them peace; none protect them from dangers; none save them from sin; none deliver from guilt, but Jesus. None present to His Father and theirs but Jesus. None can bring them honourably through their trials and make them a blessing, make pain a good thing and sickness a rich mercy, but Jesus Christ. He can do all things. Who can give us uprightness of heart but that blessed One who said, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit." O what a Christ He is! Do you wonder that they sing in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb"? Do not you sometimes try to join them, some of you, lisping as well as you can to His praise and honour, None but Jesus can save me; none but Christ can lift me out of this low place, revive me from my present darkness and death? None can bring me nigh but Christ, none make me acceptable, but Christ. None but Jesus.

He must be lifted up as to this great, wonderful matter, namely His very Person. Let me say to you once more, the Person of Christ is antecedent to all the other blessings of the gospel. He is before all; He is the substance and the fulness of all. All pardons, justification, sanctification, they all follow His Person. He is first, He is prominent, He is the Chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. He is to be lifted up as to His precious, infinite merit; His infinite merit is to be preached. All men are to hear this, that the blood of Christ can cure a sin-sick soul, can wash out the black stains of sin, can remove and kill the power and dominion of sin; infinite merit. What a gospel it is that sets forth this for sinners.

If you feel sin to be powerful, if some particular sin struggles for the mastery in you, if often it gets the mastery, if you have to say, Lord I have fallen again by my enemy and I am afraid that one day I shall fall to rise no more by this, my enemy; if you have to say this, there is One who has infinite merit to remove both the guilt and the power of that very sin. There is a gospel promise which the soul sometimes, enlightened by the Spirit, reaches after: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." But it is very discouraging to fall into it again and again and yet again; to pray to be delivered, to get a help and to think the Lord has heard you – and indeed it is so – then, after that, after you have humbled yourself, after you have felt He has

forgiven you, after that again to fall into that very sin, and it is very solemn and very painful.

What says the Lord concerning human forgiveness? How often shall I forgive my brother, if he trespass against me seven times? O no, says Christ, seventy times seven; go on forgiving. Will He say that to poor men, enjoining that on them and then do less Himself? O what a forgiving Christ He is! What merit He has to put away sin! Come, poor sinner, come away from all your discouragements and fears, come away from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards and all those vile and dreadful and dangerous places you feel so often to be in, as says Christ to His church. Come with Me, My love, come away, come from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards, come from where they lurk to destroy you, come with Me. He says, "Let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages ... there will I give thee My loves." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." I will draw their eyes to My merit, I will draw souls to Myself and I will bless and save them. Amen.

AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR THE NEW YEAR

By John W. Sperling-Tyler (1912-1989)

"And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"
(Exod. 33.14).

This is one of the exceeding great and precious promises of the covenant of grace that flow so freely to the Lord's people through Jehovah Jesus and His rich atonement, and which are applied with sovereign efficacy and power by the Holy Ghost. They are especially needed by His dear people, as they are found pilgrims, travelling through a hostile world to their eternal home. I have felt the word to be a sweet whisper of His love for us as a new year message: "And He said, My presence shall go with thee." There is no exclusion in relation to age, rank or station in life. It is applicable to little children who seek the Lord; teenagers coming up to the beginning of the responsibilities of life, and when leaving home for a career; in early married days; in the heat and burden of life; when coming down as the "strong men bow themselves" (see Eccles. 12. 3); to the lonely, afflicted, imprisoned, tormented and tried: the coverage is complete. It is not immunity from tribulation: not to be without trials or cares, but, "My presence shall go with thee."

And then rest: "And I will give thee rest" – a measure of rest in this troubled world. The saints enter into the rest of faith and eternal rest in

glory. Do you know, this is a wonderful word: "My presence." If you have ever enjoyed the presence of the Lord in your soul, you will enjoy His eternal presence in glory. The presence of the Lord sweetens the bitter cup, strengthens the feeble, ennobles the timorous, gives wisdom to the nonplussed, guides and keeps the souls of the people of God. The presence of God sanctifies His dispensations to them, and gives them abundant confirmation that they are His and that He will eternally be their God. The gracious presence of Christ in the soul conveys everything. If you have the presence of the Lord you are pardoned. You may never have heard Him say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9. 2). That makes no difference. His blessed presence is salvation.

Presence here is a special, gracious presence, as distinct from omnipresence. Wonderful this is: it is all you need. Do you need wisdom? It is in the presence of the Lord. Do you need deliverance? Deliverance is effected by the presence of the Lord. Do you need reviving? It is in the presence of the Lord. "My presence."

This is a kind word for us in the new year. The future is wisely hidden. Some things we are aware of; the Lord would not have us to enquire as to what is hidden. "I said, Thou art my God. My times are in *Thy* hand" (Psa. 31. 14, 15).

"How canst thou want if He provide,
Or lose thy way with such a Guide?" (H. 961)

Moses was concerned with this: "Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me" (Exod. 33. 12). He needed One to go with him who would never leave him nor forsake him. I put it to you: could you contemplate going alone in the journey to heaven, with all the difficulties and dangers; and Satan as your cruel foe, opposer, seducer, accuser? Could any who fear God contemplate going into the River Jordan alone? It is impossible: you need One to go with you all the way. Who would go with Moses? God's dear Son incarnate went with him. His dear Son will go with you.

My friends, in retrospect we praise and bless the Lord that His dear Son has gone with us. That is the secret. If He goes with you, you have nothing to fear; nothing to dread: you will never lack any good thing. He will cover your defenceless head with the shadow of His wing. He will guide you infallibly and He will never let you sink. O the safety, security, peace, bliss of the realisation that God's dear Son incarnate goes with us! (I mention this especially in consideration of the perils of the roads. How wonderful it is to have the dear Lord with you when you are driving and when stationary. I have often asked the Lord to take the wheel and steer me through.)

Moses sought gracious confirmation of his standing in the covenant. "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight." It is a

sweet mercy to get a blessing from the Lord that is confirmatory, so all the favours and mercies of the days of espousals are renewed in your soul, and the Lord fills you with His presence, love and grace. There are times when the Lord's people are severely tried and come into darkness of mind: they feel so destitute and they wonder. Those who have received deliverance never lose the substance of divine blessing, but they lose the comfortable enjoyment of it, and they long for the Lord to restore to them the joy of salvation.

Moses was concerned with the Lord's way. When he said, "Shew me now Thy way," what did he mean by it? Show me the way to Palestine? over Jordan? Probably that was included, but there is infinite depth here. It is the way to heaven, to eternal bliss. It is the way of the incarnation and suffering suretyship of Christ; His sacrificial, vicarious, expiatory death; the way of His burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

"His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till Him I view." (H. 144)

LET IT ALONE THIS YEAR ALSO

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

"Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shall cut it down" (Luke 13. 8, 9).

Do I not behold the Lord Jesus here represented in His glorious office of our High Priest and Intercessor? And is it thus that He so mercifully pleads for the unawakened and unprofitable among His people? Pause, my soul! Was it not from the effects of His intercession that the world itself was spared from instant destruction, when Adam first brake through the fence of God's law? Is it not now by the same rich grace that thousands are spared from year to year in Christ Jesus, before that they are called to the knowledge of Christ Jesus? Nay, my soul! pause once more over the view of this wonderful subject, and ask thyself – was it not from the same almighty interposition that thou wast kept from going down to the pit during the long, long period of thy unregeneracy, while thou wert wholly unconscious of it? And was it from Thy gracious intercession, blessed Jesus, that I then lived, that I am now spared, and, after all my barrenness, that another year of grace is opening before me? Oh, precious, precious Jesus, suffer me to be no longer unfruitful in Thy garden! Do, Lord, as Thou hast said. Dig about me, and pour upon me all the sweet influences of Thy Holy Spirit, which, like the rain, and the sun, and the dew of heaven, may cause me to bring

forth fruit unto God. And Lord, if so unworthy a creature may drop a petition at Thy mercy seat for others, let the coming year be productive of the same blessings to all Thy redeemed; even to my poor, unawakened relations among them; and to thousands of those who are yet in nature's darkness. O that this may be to them the acceptable year of the Lord!

GOD'S CHASTENING IN LOVE, NOT IN ANGER

Extracts from a sermon preached by C.H. Marston (1827-1870) of Devizes, Wiltshire. In his short life, Charles Henry Marston, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., M.D., M.B.H.S., lived for brief periods in several different parts of the country but lastly settled, with his family, in Devizes. Here, in Devizes, he established a homeopathic practice, and here he spent the last decade or so of his life. In 1858 he became the pastor of the church in Old Baptist Chapel, Devizes. Under a severe illness in 1869 he resigned his pastoral office, and he died aged 42 in the following year. His last letters, written in 1870, evinced much self-examination and contained some searching exhortations to others.

Text: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11. 31).

These words put before us a truth too little understood, namely, that though the Lord will chasten for sin, His only object in so doing is to make us, if His people, sensible of our sin; to make us repent of it, forsake it, and turn to Him; and that if this object may be obtained without the rod, then the rod shall not come upon us. In other words, God will not allow sin to pass unnoticed in His people, and therefore He will judge them; but if we through His grace are led to put ourselves through this process of judgment then, the end of the chastisement being obtained, the chastisement shall be prevented. The mercy and faithfulness of God are here richly made manifest. It is a great mercy for us that God will so deal with His children that they shall not perish. To be chastised is a very great mercy, seeing that it is that we may not be condemned; better to be chastised than to be let alone.

But who that knows the painfulness of chastisement, the hidings of God's face, the restrainings of His Spirit, the covering of His throne, and the apparent givings up to Satan which often constitute a part of His rod, will not feel it to be a greater mercy to have spared to him the necessity of that rod? In these words the apostle shows us how that necessity may be spared. Do not let me be misunderstood here. I do not say that trial and conflict shall be spared; chastisement is to be distinguished from these, and this broad line of demarcation may be laid between them:

chastisement has special reference to sin in us, and therefore a guilty conscience will more or less enter into it, whereas trial has reference to grace in us – as when God tried Abraham – and the same is true of conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, for, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a sore trial and he had hard conflict with the messenger of Satan; but in the infirmities here made manifest he could glory. Faithfulness to Christ will ensure trial, and conflict with Christ’s enemies. But it is faithlessness to Christ which brings upon us God’s chastening rod.

If God’s people, we must be judged in this world; our sins must be brought to light, and the matters involved in them settled in this world. The majority of people God lets alone till death, and the settling of all accounts in the final judgment; and that will be a judgment unto condemnation. But not so with His own; condemnation they shall escape, but not judgment, and this judgment is with them a continuous thing.

God’s people are brought to judge themselves and to condemn themselves; but in Jesus they find a Redeemer, [and there is] “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”



THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

Chapter 1

There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Ghost that glory that is due to His Person, and for His great work of salvation, insomuch that we have in our hearts almost lost this third Person. We give daily in our thoughts, prayers, affections and speeches, an honour to the Father and the Son; but who directs the aims of his praise (more than in that general way of benediction we use to close our services with) unto God the Holy Ghost? He is a Person in the Godhead equal with the Father and the Son; and the work He doth for us in its kind is as great as those of the Father or the Son. The Holy Ghost is indeed the last in order of the Persons, as proceeding from the other two, yet in the participation of the Godhead He is equal with them both; and in His work, though it be last done for us, He is not behind them, nor in the glory of it inferior to what they have in theirs. And indeed He would not be God, equal with the Father and the Son, if the work allotted to Him, to show He is God, were not equal unto each of theirs. And indeed, no less than *all that is done, or to be done in us, was left to the Holy Ghost’s share, for the execution of it*; and it was not left Him as the refuse, it being as necessary and as great as any of theirs. But He being

the last Person, took His own lot of the works about our salvation, which are the last, which is to apply all, and to make all actually ours, whatever the other two had done afore for us. The scope of this work is to the end you may accordingly in your hearts honour this blessed and holy Spirit. And surely if to neglect such a work of God's, as of power in the creation, justice in governing the world, mercy in bearing with sinners; if this be made so great a sin (see Rom. 1), then it must be deemed a greater diminution to the Godhead to neglect the glorifying One of these Persons, who is possessed of the whole Godhead and attributes, when He is manifested in any work most gloriously.

In prosecution of my design, to honour the Holy Ghost as you do the Father and the Son, I shall consider the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John, and make some general observations upon various passages in those chapters; and we shall see therein what a valuation the Father and the Son, the other Persons with Him, have in those chapters put upon Him and His work, and what a great and singular matter they make of His work, and what divine esteem of His Person, as by Christ's speeches scattered up and down therein appears. Though the Father Himself doth not immediately speak, yet the Son doth in His name, as well as in His own. And you may well take Their judgments, for They are sharers and with Him in point of glory about our salvation.

There are these general observations which I shall make upon the chapters:

Observation 1. First, our Saviour had abundantly in all His former sermons discoursed both His work and hand in our salvation, as also His Father's; and now at last, just when He was to go out of the world, He then, and not till then, doth more plainly and more fully discover to them this third Person, that had an after-work left to Him, who to that end was to come when He should be gone, to act visibly a new scene of works, left by the Father and Himself unto Him: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter" (John 14. 16). We may also observe how careful Christ is further to characterise this Person of the Holy Spirit, the Author of these works, and to describe who He was, and what manner of Person, that they might be sure to mind Him, and have a regard to Him, and to know whom and to what name they were to be so much beholden. Thus, verse 26: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost," says He; and verse 17: "Even the Spirit of truth"; and chapter 15. 26: "Whom I will send unto you from the Father ... which proceedeth from the Father."

Now this doth manifest Christ's tender regard to, and for the honour of this, so great a Person; and to raise up in their hearts a valuation of this Person Himself, that should be the Comforter; and to make them careful to give glory to Him, even the Holy Ghost, as a third Person, and

the Comforter. As likewise to assure them of His coming upon them, when Himself was gone; and that therefore they might honour Him in His coming, for His work, as He would have them to honour Himself for His own work, and coming in the flesh. It is as if He had said, I would not that you should attribute the comfort you shall have, or the revealing of truth to you (from which He is called “the Spirit of truth”), so unto Me or My Father alone, as to neglect or omit to give Him His peculiar honour in it; for it properly, and of due, belongs to Him. You are and shall be beholden to Me and My Father, for the sending of Him; but you are to be especially beholden to Himself, for that work He doth in you, being sent by us. Be sure therefore to take notice of Him and His Person, distinct both from me and my Father. For it is “another Comforter,” says He (verse 16) “which is the Holy Ghost” (verse 26), and therefore you ought as distinctly to glorify Him as you would do Us.

Observation 2. The second observation is concerning the particular works which Christ says are His, and for which we are to honour Him. The particular eminent work indeed on which He insists in these chapters, is that of being a Comforter to them; for the occasion of these sermons was to relieve and pacify the apostles’ minds, against His own leaving them, as they thought, desolate. But therewith He further brings in other works of His besides, and in effect that He should do all, that they had need of His help in. Thus chapter 14. 16, 17, the “Comforter ... the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him”; that is, knows Him not by experience of any saving work upon them, and so they cannot receive Him as a Comforter, because it is necessary they first receive Him as a Converter. “But ye know Him,” and have found Him to have begotten you again; “for He dwelleth in you,” hath come and taken possession of you, and acted hitherto in you all that spiritual good that hath been found in you, and thereby hath taken everlasting possession of you, as it follows: “and shall be in you,” to perfect all that is wanting, and that for ever, as verse 16.

A second work there specified is, that He should be to them a “Spirit of truth,” to lead them “into all truth,” which, as a sacred deposition, He was by them, as apostles, to leave unto the rest of the world. “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (chapter 14. 26). And not only so, but shall suggest new to you, chapter 16. 12, 13: “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak.”

A third work instanced in is, that “He will shew you things to come”; and this to that end, that ye may teach and write them to others (see chapter 15. 26, 27). He shall bear witness of Me, and you shall bear witness of Me.

A fourth work specified is, to sanctify them against sin and corruption. This work is imported in His name, "the Holy Spirit," as the other, of leading them into all truth, is signified by that other title, "the Spirit of truth"; for He is termed the Holy Spirit, because He sanctifies: "Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15. 16).

Fifthly, He shall be a Comforter to you, against all sorrows (see chapter 14. 16-18).

Sixthly, He shall assist and direct you in all your prayers, and be the Inditer of them for you; and so effectually as to obtain what you shall ask: "Verily, verily ... Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name" (chapter 16. 23, 24), for the Holy Ghost was not as yet given, as He in these chapters promiseth He should be. "But in that day," namely, when the Holy Ghost is come, "ye shall ask in My name," then (as in chapter 14. 20). "In that day," namely, when the Comforter is come, that word "in that day" refers thereunto, "Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me."

But seventhly, He mentions His works upon the world, by their ministry, unto whom they were sent. He shall be a Converter and Convincer of the world; that is, the glory of the conversion of the Gentiles is reserved for Him, by your ministry: "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me" (chapter 16. 8, 9, etc.) To which three enumerations the total of the work of conversion is reduced.

Observation 3. Observe what Christ says, I Myself must be gone, saith He, to the end it may appear that all this whole work is His, not Mine: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come" (verse 7). He will not do these works while I am here, and I have committed all to Him. As My Father hath visibly "committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5. 22, 23), "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," so here: I and My Father will send Him, having committed all these things to Him, that all men might honour the Holy Ghost, even as they honour the Father and the Son. Even as in like manner the reason why the Spirit was not sent, whilst Christ was on earth, was to show that not the Father alone sent Him, but that He came from Christ, as well as from the Father. And so Christ, He went to heaven to show that both Father and Son would send the Holy Ghost from thence: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2. 32, 33). Thus careful are every one of the Persons (in the

Trinity) to provide for the honour of each other in our hearts. And as careful should we be to give it to them accordingly. *Abridged*

(To be continued)

PSALM 51. 5 EXPLAINED

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me”
(Psa. 51. 5).

Man that was holy and happy is now fallen, and his fall should never be forgotten, but lamented, though it were with tears of blood. Man’s first sin was the spring of all our woes, the poisonous fountain from whence all our misery flowed. It brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery; a state wherein man can do nothing but sin, wherein every thought, every word, and every action is tainted with sin, wherein enmity to God and His holy nature, and rebellion against, and opposition to His righteous law universally reign and prevail. In this dismal state to which mankind are reduced by the Fall, no true holiness is attainable, for it is a state of sin; and no salvation from wrath can be had, for it is a state of misery.

The state we must be brought into, out of our sinful and miserable state under the breach of the covenant of works, if we would attain unto salvation, is the state of grace under the new covenant. Those that are delivered from their natural state, under the broken covenant, are persons effectually called by grace, and are “in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8. 1). Those that are still under the bondage of the old covenant, are out of Christ, and “having no hope” (Eph. 2. 12). This state is a very sinful and miserable state. For the power that the covenant of works has over them, is a commanding, cursing and condemning power: it commands them to yield perfect obedience, under pain of the curse, but affords no strength for performing it; and it curses and condemns them for the least failure. The source of all is the total corruption and depravity of human nature, which we derive from our first father, in whom we all sinned, and with whom we fell, in his first transgression.

In the text we have:

1. A plain confession of the being of original sin. Here is sin and iniquity, which the psalmist owns he had while yet in the womb, sin in which he was shapen, and iniquity in which he was conceived. This was not peculiar to the psalmist, but is common to all mankind sprung in an ordinary way from the first transgressor, Adam.

2. The way of the conveyance of this original sin, *viz.* by natural generation. In this way every son and daughter of Adam are infected with this leprosy.

3. The malignant efficacy it hath on men's lives: "Behold," says David, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." He points out original sin as the fountain of all his actual transgressions. For how can a corrupt fountain send out wholesome streams?

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

As the Person, work and glory of Christ are the main object, so the grand, distinctive truths of the gospel are, or should be, the main subject of the Christian ministry; for as He, who is the Bread of life, is their sum and substance, they only are the real, solid, substantial food of every believing heart. You will observe my expression – "are or should be"; for what the Christian ministry *is*, and what the Christian ministry *should be* is not exactly the same thing.

It is not for me, who am less than the least of all saints and the chief of sinners, to cast any reflection upon my brethren in the ministry; and yet I cannot help making this observation: that the grand, discriminating truths of the glorious gospel of the grace of God are not brought forward so prominently as they should be by some gracious men of God of whose spirituality, ability and usefulness we cannot doubt. Many good men in the exercise of their ministry confine themselves almost wholly to the tracing out of the first work of grace upon the heart, and to confirm and strengthen it by bringing forward the chief scriptural evidences of divine life in the soul, so as to encourage those who are full of doubt and fear as to the reality of what they would gladly hope has been wrought in them by the mighty power of God. This is good. It is an important part of the work of the ministry to comfort those who are cast down, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and to say to those who are of feeble heart, Be strong, fear not (see Isa. 35. 3, 4). Nor can there be any doubt that one gracious means of doing this is by tracing out every mark of divine life, even the feeblest and smallest that is in harmony with the Word of truth and will bear strict scrutiny, as given by God Himself for the comfort of His doubting, fearing family.

But it is a great mistake to think that this is the whole, or even the most important part of the ministry of the gospel. We certainly find something beyond this in the sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more so in the epistles of the New Testament, which though not sermons, we may well consider to be the fullest and most complete instruction which could be furnished by the Holy Ghost for the church of God. May we not also ask whether in furnishing the gospel table, meat should not be provided for men as well as milk for babes?

Are there in the congregation none but little children? Surely there are (or should be) fathers who know Him that is from the beginning, and young men who are strong, in whom the Word of God abides, and who have overcome the wicked one. Are these to be passed by, and none spoken unto but the little children, the babes in grace, the youngest and weakest of the family?

Our gracious Lord, in His farewell charge to Peter, said, “Feed My lambs”; but He also twice said to him, “Feed My sheep.” He would not be thought a good shepherd naturally who devoted all his attention to the lambs, and neglected the ewes and the wethers [neutered rams]. So should the gospel shepherd feed the whole of the flock whether young or old, for much of his business lies among the lost, the driven away, the broken, and the sick (see Ezek. 34. 4, 16). It is therefore a great mistake, and what the apostle strongly condemns, to be always “laying again the foundation of repen-tance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” We should leave the principles, or first elements, of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection – that is, to some maturity in the divine life; for otherwise that reproof is suitable to us: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Heb. 5. 12).

The Christian ministry therefore must go beyond describing the first work of grace and tracing out the signs and evidences of divine life, for this part of the ministry should be considered merely as the elements, its lowest and weakest portion, and that there is something far beyond this to make the preaching of the gospel what the Holy Ghost declares it was intended to be: “For the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” A good foundation is necessary; but we want the building to be reared as well as the good foundation to be laid.

Now this can only be done by holding forth to the church the Person and work of Christ in all their bearings and relationships, and by bringing before the people the grand, distinguishing truths of our most holy faith. Nay, in my judgment, such preaching, if it spring out of a sweet and gracious experience of the truth of God, and drop from the lips of the preacher with that unction and savour which the Lord only can bestow, is much more likely to bring doubting souls out of fear and bondage than the tracing out of evidences of the life of God within; for often in looking for those evidences, the more they look the less they find; and thus instead of looking out of themselves to the Lord of life and glory to receive of His fulness grace for grace, they are ever occupied with

self-examination – good in its way, but which often leads only to self-condemnation.

There is also another disadvantage, not to say evil, in so continually dwelling upon the first work – that it leads people to rest upon evidences instead of blessings. Now these two things are widely distinct, and should ever be kept separate. Evidences I compare to milestones or direction posts, or if you like the figure better, to stiles or gates, all which are good and needful to point out the road and securely fence it; to show how far we have come; and a stile or gate by the wayside is useful and convenient sometimes to sit down upon and rest when we are tired. But one would not like to sleep all night under a milestone or by the side of a gate, or to think, gipsy-like, that even a tent by the roadside with a little broken victuals was all that was necessary to give us food and lodging for the night. It certainly would not be the same thing as a warm, comfortable resting-place, were it but a roadside inn, where we might get food, warmth and shelter, and go on our way next morning with recruited strength.

Evidences then as evidences, be it ever borne in mind, are not and were not intended to be rest, food and shelter. They are excellent waymarks; but try to feed upon or rest for any time in them, and you will soon find them crying out, “No food, no rest here! You must go further on for food and lodging. These are only to be had in the house of blessing where Jesus Himself makes the bed, spreads the table, and entertains the guests.” Whilst then we do not despise or overlook evidences, for they are most useful in their place, let it ever be our main object and desire to obtain blessings, such as some application of the Word of truth with power to our heart, some manifestation of Jesus to our soul.

THE FRUITS OF GOD’S CHASTENING ROD

Dear friends in Christ at Mount Zion Gospel Standard Chapel, Bournemouth,

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 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 us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Last Lord’s day we had for our text Proverbs 20. 30: “The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the

belly.” The margin reads, *cleanseth...: Heb. is a purging medicine against.* I would just like to outline what I spoke from on Sunday.

In the primary sense of this verse, by “blueness,” we are speaking of bruises caused by chastening by our natural fathers for wrongdoing or indiscipline (see Heb. 12). These bruises are inflicted by the rod or by hand. The bruising here seems very severe. “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19. 18). And, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Prov. 23. 13). “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Prov. 22. 15). But the solemn truth is that it shows us the eternal consequences of our sins, which is eternal punishment in hell, when we come to die. “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Prov. 23. 14).

The physical pain in chastening with the rod for our sins and rebellion in childhood, teenage years and adulthood, remind us that living a life of sin will bring solemn, eternal consequences when we come to die. This, sadly, will be followed by eternal consequences of a conscious, painful punishment without relief: “after death the judgment.” However, there is a bruise given by the Holy Ghost in regeneration which is vital if we are to be saved from eternal death and pain.

1. Original sin. When Adam and Eve, our first parents, sinned, they bruised all mankind outwardly and inwardly in the soul. The Adam Fall left all mankind black and blue from the sole of the foot even unto the head. When sinners sin, they are bruising their own souls and hurting themselves. The sinner dead in sin and trespasses cannot see nor feel this. Many are past feeling. Without the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we are left in blind, total ignorance of our danger, and know not the harm sin is doing to us. Isaiah tells us of the bruises of sin: “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa. 1. 6). Jeremiah calls our sin *bruises* in Jeremiah 30. 12, and incurable: “For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous.” Nahum says the same: “There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit” – report – “of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?” (Nah. 3. 19).

2. When the elect sinner is first awakened, he is bruised by the law to feel his “bruise is incurable” (Jer. 30. 12), and the wounds that sin has made grievous. The law bruises him with conviction of sin and he feels himself undone. This is a necessary work within us, as “do stripes the inward parts of the belly.” It may go very deep in us and humble us before God. In our days of prosperity without grace we have many refuges to resort to. However, in the days of our first awakenings, only

one will save us, Christ. Are you a bruised sinner with the rod of the law (see hymn 101)? Have you felt Moses' rod upon you till you have been black and blue, not just outwardly, but inwardly in the depths of your soul?

“Does conscience lay a guilty charge,
And Moses much condemn,
And bring in bills exceeding large?
Let Jesus answer them.” (H. 101)

3. When Adam sinned, all mankind in original sin became black and blue bruised sinners in Adam and by Satan who bruised the fruit taken from the forbidden tree so that from the sole of their foot even unto the head we are made sinners. O the unsoundness, the wounds, the bruises, the putrifying sores: that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment (cf. Isa. 1. 6). The apostle states it like this: “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, *according to the prince of the power of the air*” – i.e. Satan – “*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” The first gospel promise shows us this in Genesis 3. 15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” See here Satan bruising and Christ bruising the serpent.

4. “Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous” (Jer. 30. 12). God shows them from Nahum 3. 19, “There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?” The bruises of Christ which He took for our healing of sin is medication and balm indeed. Consider how Christ was battered black and blue for us. Isaiah says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53. 5).

5. The Holy Ghost bruises elect sinners in regeneration with the rod of the law to make them feel their sins, their lost, ruined condition and their inability to save themselves by the works of the law. Their bruises multiply daily as they fall into sin until they are black and blue all over. However, the elect is the bread corn that God bruises (see Isa. 28. 28). Thankfully their God in mercy will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of His cart, nor bruise it with His horsemen. “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth” (Isa. 42. 3).

The Lord Jesus Christ was bruised for us. All the bruising of sin was born by those stripes which lashed His human body till Christ was

black and blue in our stead to heal our bruises. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Christ’s sufferings made atonement for our sins and reconciled us to God. How precious for you dear people of God who suffer much at the hand of Satan at this time with present sins, historic sins, that “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom. 16. 20).

Your loving, praying, caring Pastor,

Andrew G. Randalls

Bournemouth

October 28th, 2020

FRAGMENTS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH SUKEY HARLEY, OF PULVERBACH

We believe the essence of real religion, to be coveted by all who fear God, is to be found in these fragments. With Sukey, communion with Christ was her chief joy, and her chief sorrow when she felt Him to be absent.

“Mine is a life of faith. My dear Redeemer leaves me; then how I mourn and lament; I cannot rest till He return again. It is just with me, if He is absent:

‘I tire, and faint, and mope, and mourn,
And am but barren still.’ (H. 251)

The other day, O how lost I was, for He was gone. I knew not what to do; only I could not rest. I had been baking that day, and I had just put my bread into the oven, when it came on me so powerfully, “I must find my dear Lord again.” I left alone cleaning my house awhile, and took my precious book, and sat down with that diligent seeking Him in my heart; and it was not long before He came and broke in upon my soul, and then we had such sweet communion. He was with me, and I with Him. It is the life of my soul to have my blessed Saviour with me for a bit in the day. Then He goes from me, and I am left to my wicked heart and to Satan; and O the fighting that I have! But when my dear Redeemer pleases, He comes to me again. His presence drives the enemy away, and He fills my soul with love. This is the way; many times in a day I find these changes. As soon as I open my eyes in a morning, the fight begins, and I keep on at it all the day. When the Saviour is with me I feel as if I were afraid to stir, I am so afraid of His leaving me, or that I should

disturb Him like; and if I hear a footstep coming up my garden, I am quite frightened till I see whether it be one of His own dear children coming to me; then I am satisfied."

"One day I sat musing in the house a good while on the mercies I had received from my Father in heaven, how He had fed me and clothed me all my life long, and surrounded me with blessings, spiritual and temporal. But O, whilst pondering over these things, how my wicked heart began to stir, my pride, my self-righteousness, my vain thoughts; I quite abhorred myself. I find my dear Father makes me to see and feel my wickedness. He sets my secret sins before me. I have felt this; He feeds me with judgment."

"For some time after the Lord called me at the first, I was filled with only joy. I did not feel my sins as I do now. Then, after a while, what pride entered my heart, spiritual pride; just as the hymn says, so it was with me:

‘The heart uplifts with God’s own gifts,
And makes e’en grace a snare.’ (H. 287)

But He sent me that hymn to instruct me; it was like His word to me. And now when I feel that cursed pride coming into my heart, O how I do cry to Him to take it away! I am afraid of those flashy frames which I have known a good deal of in myself, and observed in others. O what work these made in my wicked, proud heart; but my dear Lord keeps me down now to see the danger of these things. I did not see it so once. I used to think these feelings were all of the Lord, and many times the devil and my wicked heart have deceived me. It seems to me as if my Saviour kept me more steadfast now, immoveable like, as the word says, and to look for His love to the end. He was the first with me; He began with these words: ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,’ and He will be the last at the hour of death. But I was not ready to die when I was ill a few weeks ago. No, I was not ready. O my dear heavenly Father, I am not ready for death now! Thou art not with me, my dear Redeemer. O call me not away at this time! When my Redeemer is with me I am ready to die; then I want to be gone; then I say, ‘Now, my dear Saviour, I can come unto Thee.’ He is my life, my hope, my joy, my all. When He is with me, I want nothing; when He is gone, I am destitute of all."

"One day, as I was standing in my house, this word came to me: ‘The Lord hears and answers prayer.’ O how I felt these words! Answered my prayers! O that I could praise, and magnify, and bless His holy name for such mercies. Another day I was surprised with these words: ‘Thou shalt see greater things than these.’ I was filled with wonder and praise. From the first of my heavenly Father’s calling me, I felt He had a peculiar people on this earth; but where they were to be

found I could not tell. I longed to find them. I thought I should see they were taught as I was. I seemed to be seeking them up and down, and I went to hear all sorts; for a while I was deceived with some of them, but afterwards I was always perplexed in my soul, and could not see the real work in them. But O my heart is knit to God's own dear children, whom the Lord has shown me are His indeed."

"I was reading in Luther on the Lord's prayer. He says, 'We are taught to say, *our* Father, because we should feel unity of heart with all the Lord's people.' When I read this, I said, 'Yes, my dear Father, I will say, *our* Father, for my heart is knit to Thy dear children; but I must say, *my* Father, too, for I know Thou art my dear, and heavenly, and blessed Father, and hast brought me into the true light and knowledge of Thy dear Son.' Yes, before He called me I kept praying a good while that He would teach me another prayer besides the one my mother taught me (that was the Lord's prayer); and He put those words into my heart, 'O Lord, bring me into the true knowledge of Thy dear Son'; and He did so."

THE METHOD OF MERCY

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

The first movings of the soul in godly sorrow gladden all heaven. It is the motion of the divine Spirit upon the troubled deep, and will ere long produce both life and peace.

Soul, dost thou feel the power of thy own corruption? Are these thy meek, yet bitter cries? O hear, and may thy God enable thee to believe the glad tidings of His own salvation!

Thou art a sinner, it is true; and thy mercy it is to see, in due measure, how great a sinner thou art. It is the first line in the large book of humiliation, which thou must be reading all thy life long. But Christ died for sinners such as thee, for all sinners that come unto God by Him, for the vilest of sinners that see the vileness of sin, and bemoan it, as thou dost. He saved Mary Magdalene the harlot, Matthew the publican, Paul the persecutor, Peter, the swearer, liar and denier of his Master, the malefactor on the cross, who had been a thief and a murderer, and ten thousand more like these; and He hath just the same power, means and mercy to save thy soul, even thine.

He saves graciously, that is, freely; because no wisdom nor worth of man have contrived, or could have obtained His greatness of salvation. It was planned in grace and performed by grace. It is all of grace, and bounty, and love, from beginning to end.

For this purpose He came into the world and took our nature upon Him. He took it in its meanest and humblest form and was content to be

born in a stable, to be brought up by a labouring man, to labour with him too, to suffer the worst evils of human life, and the sorest pains of human death, that so He might be an oblation or sacrifice in the stead of His people, and render an atonement to the justice of God for them. These sufferings and this atonement are the debt due to the law and holiness of God, without which, consistent with His attributes, He could not spare the sinner, but by which He can be both just, and yet the Justifier of him who taketh refuge in Jesus. Yea, this dear Saviour having paid the penalty due to his transgressions, God is now faithful and just to forgive him his sins, or rather more faithful and just to forgive them than He could be in laying on the punishment again, which Christ endured in that behalf.

Christ also lived upon earth to fulfil all righteousness, and He fulfilled it completely for His redeemed. He makes Himself over to them; and all He hath is theirs, through faith in Him. Thus they have a right to call Him what He is, the Lord our righteousness. God is well pleased for His righteousness' sake, and beholds every poor sinner who trusts in Christ, and lives in Him, as unblameable and unreprouvable in His own most piercing sight, yea, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This righteousness is that garment of salvation which covers them wholly, and fits them perfectly for the kingdom of heaven.

Contrite soul, believest thou this? Is this good news, the very gospel or good news, of God? Search and see. Read and pray over thy Bible, and thou wilt find that it is the very voice and will of thy Lord.

O that the fallow, the hard and barren ground of thy heart may be so broken up by His power, as to welcome this joyful news, like the thirsty soil receiving the showers from the skies!

WILLIAM MORTIMER

*Pastor of The Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, Wiltshire,
from 1852-1869*

The name Mortimer is a well-known one in Wiltshire, there being to this day many branches of this family, from which William, the subject of this chapter, came.

He spent his early years in Avebury, a small village just off the A4 between Calne and Marlborough. The Lord began to deal with his soul in a deep and searching way whilst still comparatively young. He says: "Not knowing the way of salvation through a crucified Jesus, I attended to religious duties and fancied the Lord would be pleased with them. Morning after morning, I promised myself that I would hardly speak to a person through the day, and would set a strict watch over the door of

my lips; but alas! alas! before an hour had passed, familiar things were brought to my mind, and down I went under this convincing power. No sinner can boast of what he will do, but is led to feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God. I talked of Jesus, and love to Jesus, but I knew nothing savingly. I went to church, talked about Jesus, sang about Him, and on Christmas day rang the bells the same as others, saying, "Our Saviour was born this day, and was buried, and rose again." But, when I was led by the Spirit to see the necessity of a better righteousness than my own, and was brought into such a state and condition that I saw Jesus as I never did before, I found Jesus more precious to my soul, and just the Saviour I stood in need of. Such a Saviour, before this time, I had no more conception of than the child unborn. In this state of things, I began to feel the necessity there was for such a Saviour of sinners, and I knew myself to be lost, and that nothing but free and sovereign grace could save me. These words were made a blessing to me:

"Hope in the Lord, whose mighty hand
Can all my woes remove;
For I shall yet before Him stand,
And sing redeeming love."

"For a time, these words took such hold of me that I had some strength, a little faith, a little love, a little hope, and I was led to believe that, in the Lord's own time, He would appear for my deliverance. For some five years I was following after the Lord, crying, "Lord, help me!" sometimes helped with a little help, then sinking into despondency and despair. But at last the Lord appeared for me at a time most unthought of. I went to hear a good man preach. His text was: "It is I: be not afraid." When he came to point out the characters to whom these words were spoken, he said they were His disciples. He then described these disciples of Christ. I was enabled to travel with him, and so clearly was it made out, and so blessed to my soul, that at the conclusion, I found I was a disciple. It was brought home with power and brought into my soul with the sealing testimony of the Spirit; thus it was proved to me that I was a disciple. Thus the Lord gave me pardoning grace; He manifested His love and mercy to my poor soul, and gave a sweet communication of His love, a sweet manifestation of pardoning mercy, which raised a confidence in my soul. Coming in this way, it was a real blessing. It dissolved all my thoughts, doubts, fears and scruples. By and by the enemy assailed my soul again, casting in his wicked suggestions, and I should have sunk had not the Lord sustained me in the communication of His grace according to His Word: "I will make darkness light ... and crooked things straight."

One of his contemporaries said of him: "As a minister of sterling, experimental truth, few men have, in our day, been held in higher esteem

in many parts of the country, especially in Wiltshire, in which county he more especially laboured, his frequent visits to the various churches being always pleasurably anticipated; and I am speaking the feelings of hundreds when I say it was a pleasure to have the opportunity of hearing him. He had a thorough, happy originality in expounding the text he read, and well-sustained combination of weighty, important and instructive matter throughout his discourse; and I never heard him without finding a solemn, telling mixture of doctrine, practice and experience in his sermon."

Another said: "His integrity, uprightness, and his moderation gained him the respect and esteem of his townsmen generally. His judgment and advice were much sought for by many, for he was a man of considerable observation; shrewd, sagacious, having a quick sense of most matters submitted to him. He was a faithful patron, a kind and loving friend, and a diligent pastor. His death struck a deep gloom over the whole circle with which he was connected, for he was greatly beloved by all."

On Friday, March 12th, 1869 he went to Reading to preach in the Black Horse Rooms in the evening. His text was Acts 10. 43: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." After enjoying considerable liberty in prayer, he preached for about an hour, when he suddenly said, "I feel a curious sensation come over my frame, and I must leave it just where it is, my friends," and sat down. When he was taken out of the pulpit, it was realised that he had suffered a severe stroke, his left side being completely paralysed. It was evident to him and to his friends that his work was done. Speaking to one he said, "All my times are in His hand, and this time, too." He was kept in a quiet frame of mind and spirit, leaning on the truths he had so faithfully preached to others.

Once, when a cold compress was applied to his head, he said: "Ah, that's nice." To which his attendant replied: "Better than a crown of thorns." "Ah," he said, "but if Christ had not been crowned with thorns, neither thou nor I would be crowned with glory." On another occasion, he very feelingly sang two verses of the hymn. "All hail the power of Jesus' name."

As he came near his end, he said, "Make haste, my God, make haste." He said that dying was hard work, and that it was a solemn thing to die. He was very fond of singing, but he said, "My hopes are, that I shall sing better by-and-by, in a nobler, sweeter song, before the throne, free grace and dying love."

On March 23rd, 1869, after a period of unconsciousness, he passed to his eternal rest aged sixty-eight years. His funeral took place at Old Baptist Chapel, Mr. Doe of Stadhampton officiating and preaching from Hebrews 4. 9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

After the service, he was interred in the Wood Lane cemetery. This is now closed as a burial ground, but is a rest area.

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME

Come, sinners, and sing in a sweet song of praise,
 Salvation to Jesus, the Ancient of Days,
 Whose love to His chosen, all praise to His name,
 Is to all, and through all, for ever the same.

The same when set up in Jehovah's decree,
 Before He created the earth and the sea;
 The same in His purpose, which nothing can move;
 The same in His council, the same in His love.

The same in the covenant, behold how He stands,
 Engaged to pay justice and law its demands;
 The same on the cross, when He vanquished His foes,
 The same when triumphant from death He arose.

The same when He saw thee an infant forlorn,
 Cast out in thy blood on the day thou wast born:
 The same when He clothed thee in spotless array,
 And cast all thy sins in the depth of the sea.

The same when a rebel, at war with thy Lord,
 Who would not submit to His sceptre or sword;
 The same when brought home as a trophy of grace,
 The crown on the head of the Saviour to place.

The same when in darkness as when thou canst see,
 His heart overflowing with love unto thee;
 The same when a captive or sold under sin,
 The worst of all states that thy soul can be in.

The same at the banquet, when He o'er thy head
 His banner of love everlasting shall spread;
 The same when thy sonship He proves with a rod,
 For though He chastise thee, He still is thy God.

The same when the promise thou canst not believe,
 The same in the furnace, the same in the sieve;
 The same when the tempter comes in like a flood,
 To quench all his darts in His peace-speaking blood.

The same when the Jordan of death thou shalt tread,
 Above all its billows to lift up thy head;
 Then sing, O believer, give praise to His name;
 In life, death, or dying, He's Jesus the same.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE PASSING AWAY OF MR. B.A. RAMSBOTTOM

It is with the deepest regret that we record the passing away, on January 14th, 2023, of the Lord's beloved servant, Benjamin Ashworth Ramsbottom, aged 93, the esteemed former Editor of the *Gospel Standard* for forty-five years, and equally-esteemed Pastor of the church at Bethel, Luton for fifty-five years.

For our beloved friend it can be said as Paul could say: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He has received the welcoming word, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He did not enter heaven on the merit of his service, either as preacher, editor, writer or pastor, but as a sinner saved by grace, on the merits of the Saviour, whose Person as Son of God and Man and whose finished work, he delighted to preach. Like Samuel Rutherford he would say:

"I stand upon His merit; I know no other stand.
Not e'en where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land."

His simple yet profound ministry, preaching, example and loving counsel for our churches will be sorely missed. We extend our deepest sympathy to his beloved wife and family, and the bereaved church at Bethel, Luton.

An obituary will appear, if the Lord will, later in the *Gospel Standard*.

"Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12. 1).

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1. 21) Hope is a Christian's anchor, which he casts within the veil. "Rejoicing in hope" (Rom. 12. 12). A Christian's hope is not in this life, but he "hath hope in his death" (Prov. 14. 32). The best of a saint's comfort begins when his life ends; but the wicked have all their heaven here. "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6. 24). You may make your acquittance, and write, "Received in full payment." "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" (Luke 16. 25). But a saint's happiness is in reversion. "The righteous hath hope in his death." God keeps the best wine till last. If Cato, the heathen, said, "To me to die is gain," he saw mortality to be a mercy: what, then, may a believer say! "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth" (see Eccles. 7. 1).

Thomas Watson

“FOR HE HATH WROUGHT WITH GOD THIS DAY”

(1 Sam. 14. 45)

One of the loveliest characters in Old Testament history is Jonathan, son of King Saul. His unselfish love for David, after the slaying of Goliath, even though the realisation must have begun to dawn on him that it would be David, and not he, who would be the next to sit on Israel's throne. The severe trial of that love, through his father's insane jealousy of David, has left a shining example of grace in adversity. Jonathan never failed in loyalty to his friend in the Lord, David.

On the other hand, Jonathan maintained his loyalty to his father as his son and servant, despite his father's churlish behaviour. He kept in mind the law of the Lord: "Honour thy father and thy mother." As Peter says in 1 Peter 2. 18, 19: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

Between these two loyalties, Jonathan trod a narrow and crucifying path for many years, always keeping in view his ultimate loyalty to the cause of the God of Israel, especially in fighting their inveterate enemies, the Philistines. Many of the Lord's people in different ways have found their path hedged in by divine principles which, though not contrary to each other, nevertheless bring a cross which in some cases may be lifelong. A believing wife with an unbelieving husband, or vice-versa, brings a peculiar trial.

On a completely different plane was the path of the dear Saviour, with His love to His holy and heavenly Father whose will He delighted to fulfil, and to His eternally-loved people on whose behalf that will was being performed. These two "almighty loves" held the Saviour on the cross until the great work of reconciliation and redemption had been fulfilled. Considering Him in His sufferings and sorrows has often been a source of consolation and strength to the Lord's people in narrow paths.

The context of the words in 1 Samuel 14, 45: "For he hath wrought with God this day," was that the reign of Saul was in its early years, before the fiery trial through which Jonathan was to pass had unfolded. However, signs of moral and spiritual instability were beginning to manifest themselves in Saul's behaviour even at this time.

It seems that Jonathan and his armourbearer were not with the main army of Saul at this time. No doubt moved by the Lord, and a desire that Israel should overcome their enemies, Jonathan with this young lad laid before the Lord a venture that would lead to great success that day. Desiring a token from the Lord that He would go before them he said: "It

may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.”

Asking for the token from the Lord and receiving it, Jonathan and his armourbearer ventured and a great victory ensued, when the rest of the army joined the battle and the Philistines fled before Israel. Unbeknown to Jonathan, Saul had unwisely commanded, under threat of death, that the people should eat nothing until the victory was gained. Seeing honey proceeding from a rock, he dipped his staff in and tasted the honey and was refreshed by it, to carry on the pursuit. When it came to light that he had transgressed Saul’s command, it appeared that Saul was ready to carry out the sentence, but the men around him delivered Jonathan with these words: “For he hath wrought with God this day.”

Herein lies the secret of every success in the path of a believer. When it can be said, “He hath wrought with God,” then what great things are done. When, however, the strongest believer ventures without the Lord, then he is in utter weakness. The history of Samson is a salutary example of both sides of this truth. All the worthies of faith in Hebrews 11 wrought with God, and their victories were those that God gained through them as His instruments.

David’s smooth stone and sling, under the precise hand and power of God, bring proud Goliath low. The innumerable Midianites fall before Gideon’s tiny army of three hundred men, because of “the sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.” Jacob wrestles all night with the Angel of the Covenant and defeats Esau even before the brothers meet. Many of God’s children have been enabled to wrestle with the Lord in prayer, and in so doing obtain great answers. They have “wrought with the Lord.”

“Wrestling prayer can wonders do;
Bring relief in deepest straits!
Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates.” (H. 397)

In a very different context we hear Naomi ask Ruth: “Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou?” Ruth’s answer came: “The man’s name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz” (Ruth 2. 19). How many of the Lord’s people have felt like that, when they have been to glean among the sheaves in the heavenly Boaz’s field of the Lord’s house! Likewise, the Lord’s servants desire that it may be said of their ministry: “He hath wrought with God this day.” In this context Paul reminds us: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3. 6).

The word *wrought* is a very strong word. How impotent were the mariners against the sea, on the boat in which Jonah had embarked! “Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them” (Jonah

1. 13). How true are the words, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8. 31), but if He be against us, none can resist a work that He has wrought. The false prophet Balaam was forced, no doubt against his feelings, to declare, “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Numb. 23. 23).

How sacred it is for a believer, in reviewing the work of grace and the pathway of faith and providence, to be enabled to say: “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa. 26. 12). The believer wants to know this is the case, as our Lord said: “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3. 21).

“For the wonders He hath wrought,
Let us now our praises give;
And, by sweet experience taught,
Call upon Him while we live.” (H. 397)

THE SON OF MAN LIFTED UP

*Sermon preached by J.K. Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Lord’s day evening, January 4th, 1920*

Text: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3. 14, 15).

We shall only value the mercy God gives to a person if He graciously, thoroughly convinces us in our hearts of our sin. If we are not sensible sinners we shall never be sensible of the mercy of God in Christ. We may please ourselves with religion, but

“True religion’s more than notion;
Something must be known and felt.” (H. 237)

Therefore, “happy is the man whom God correcteth,” whom He chasteneth out of His law, and chastiseth with the stripes of conviction, because such a man comes to know the solace of love in the Person and love and blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Sin known and felt makes up a heavy cross, a bitter cup, but it prepares the soul to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Therefore, if you, my dear hearers, are destitute of a sound, thorough conviction of sin, you will never want the Man Christ Jesus as He is here spoken of, or rather speaks of Himself. “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” There is none to the Father like His Son, and if we are born again there will be none like Him to us. Where the Father’s affection is, there our faith and

love will be, and we shall say at times, "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

The gospel is in this text, a very full gospel, part of which I endeavoured to express to you this morning. After speaking of what was intended by the words, "lifted up," we saw that in the first place it respects His death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." But after that it means His resurrection and ascension into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God, where He is as a High Priest ever living to make intercession for all them that come unto God by Him. It means that as there is none like Christ in the Scriptures – that the Scriptures lift Him up and it is as if He were the only Person to be noticed in the Scriptures – so in the ministry He is to be lifted up; that all true ministers are to find their chief business in preaching the Person and the work of Christ; that all other subjects which please men must be abandoned in the pulpit, have no place. May it ever be a characteristic of the ministry here, both with regard to myself and to all who shall come after me, that there shall be one subject and only one, as said the Apostle Paul, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." This is the source of life, of true experience, the source of all godliness, of all true separation from the world. May the God of all grace help one to preach Christ, to preach Him properly.

I mean not merely to utter His name, but to preach Him properly. He is to be lifted up and is lifted up and glorified by His Spirit. The promise of Christ is that the Spirit shall glorify Me for He shall receive of the things of Christ and show them to all His disciples. There Christ is high; having a name given to Him above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess, confess that He is Lord of all. Well one might now say, insofar as He is lifted up as one speaks about Him, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" What is His position here? What do you think of His groans, His bloody sweat, His vicarious death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven?

He is to be lifted up in His precious love; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge is to be known. Says the apostle to the Ephesians, I pray for you that ye may "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." You may know a little of it; even as you may take up a little water out of the sea and the sea remains full, you may know a little of the love of Christ which in its fulness passeth knowledge. The love of Christ is made known in several ways to His children and He is lifted up in that His love is thus made known at first in His incarnation and death. Love brought Him from heaven to the earth; love took Him to the cross, to the grave. The greatest love that He could show He did show in giving His

life a ransom for many. That is one way in which the love of Christ is known, set up, lifted up. All other loves die; in the face of this they fade away to nothingness. This is eternal, fixed in the decree of God upon men who should be created in time. This is stronger than death, death which He who is Love should undergo voluntarily; stronger than many waters; as a divine flame. All the waters of sorrow and of evil and of death itself could not quench this love, love beyond purchase. If a man should offer all the gold and silver of his house for this love, the price would be utterly contemned. That is one way in which the love of Christ is known, exhibited in the Scripture, set forth as the mighty moving of God to sinners.

It is known, in the next place, by the Holy Ghost taking it and shedding it abroad in the heart where it becomes a flame, an influence, a life, a peace, a comfort, a joy, lifting up the soul above all sorrow, giving it power to believe that all is well whatever remains to be endured. This, once felt, is never wholly forgotten or given up.

“If once the love of Christ we feel
Upon our hearts impressed,
The mark of that celestial seal
Can never be erased.”

(H. 344)

Confusion may erase it from your memory for a time, and temptation and guilt may make you wonder if ever you had it, but it will come again.

And in the next place the love of Christ is lifted up and made known in His rebuking and chastening the objects of His love. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” This is a very hard thing to believe when the rebukes and the chastening come, a very difficult thing to believe when only smart is inflicted, when comfort is gone and when the Lord appears to hide His face. And all this said and all this done, you can sum up in one word: “chastened.” “The Lord hath chastened me sore.” But He would not have taken the trouble to do it, if I may so speak, if He had not loved you. You would not take the trouble to chasten one in the street quarrelling in mud, in wickedness, to whom you had no relationship, for whom you had no love. But if you saw your own son behaving improperly, doing that which was a disgrace to his own name, doing that which was contrary to your commandment, to your injunction, contrary to all the interests that he himself had, what would you do to him? You would take him home, you would correct him, chastise him; not, for the time, admit him to your table, send him his food to his room and let him know that you were displeased, angry, and the chastening would not obliterate the relationship, but be an evidence of it and of the love of it. So the love of Christ; He makes it known powerfully and eventually sweetly in His chastisement. Who, having been chastened and having had some of the peaceable fruit of righteousness, would do other than

bless God for chastening! And the Son of man is lifted up in His love. "Greater love hath no man than this"; better love has no man than this. Here is the Friend who loveth at all times, who sticketh closer than a brother.

He is lifted up in His righteousness, that righteousness which is unto all and upon all that believe, which is their everlasting justification, and their title to bliss; that righteousness that makes them just as if they had done no sin. A mystery this, and one does not wonder that men should call it imputed nonsense because it is against every accepted thought, canon of morality, as men speak, that a wicked man should be forgiven, and be as if he had not been wicked, and be treated with all the love and kindness and smiles and favours and blessings that God can bestow on creatures who have no sin; that one who had alienated himself from God should be by God Himself reconciled and forgiven and taken to His bosom and treated as a dearly-beloved child; that he should be indulged with the sweetest things of heaven, and be promised heaven itself; that God should see in Him no sin, no flaw, nothing blameworthy, but He should treat him as a man who is in every way conformed to the divine will. This is what human nature, human ideas of justice and goodness can never, never receive. I do not wonder that men deny it who have no teaching, no Holy Ghost in them. I do not wonder that unenlightened men who deal with the Scriptures, and criticise the Scriptures, should deny the blessed truth of justification by the imputation to a person of the righteousness of Christ.

But O, this is the truth, or there is no heaven, for, said Christ, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And Paul was a Pharisee, as touching the law a blameless man, so he says himself in the Philippians. And yet that very righteousness, that blamelessness to which he honestly laid claim – laid claim when he was not a blind Pharisee but an enlightened Christian man, a true believer in the Son of God – then he said that he had nothing to do with that, his own righteousness; he renounced it, and that was that he might win Christ and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. Sinner, Christ and Christ alone must be your righteousness if you are to be justified and go to heaven. None of your own righteousness will do; 'tis but filthy rags; the Scripture speaks that, filthy rags; no better than the tattered rags and polluted garments of the prodigal son.

He is to be lifted up in His power. Able to save, powerful to forgive sin; that ye may know that the Son of God hath power to forgive sin. Well, if a person leaves this world without the forgiveness of sin, there is no place for him in heaven, but if a sinner receives the forgiveness of

sin, there is no place for him in hell. Heaven is his home, God is his Father, Christ is his Brother and Christ will present him to His Father. O forgiveness is great, and Christ has power to forgive sin. He is to be lifted up as being Almighty to save from all evil, to deliver from all the evil of indwelling sin. And really sometimes some of you might have thought that this was the most of all to you: would the Lord subdue your sin, indwelling sin; would He kindly do it. And if so, He must be often doing it, very often, inasmuch as indwelling sin is perpetually at work, ever lusting, moving, striving, struggling, wriggling, in its deceitfulness, in its power, in its ceaseless temptation and seeking to be both admitted and indulged. And there is only One who can save us, Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, and I would lift Him up before you if I could. Any of you to whom indwelling sin is a bitter experience, who would do good but find yourselves unable quite to do, and sometimes “almost as unwilling” (H. 235), and who then have to groan and mourn and enter into the apostle’s language in the spirit of his language when he says, “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened”; who can run well with a limping psalmist who said, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech”; to you I would lift Him up and say, Behold an Almighty Saviour.

He is to be lifted up in His promise. His promise is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and that means wherever you go, whatever you are, however you suffer, however you fail, there will be One with you. Christ was with the church in the wilderness and O, if we might but consider that that church was always grumbling, always failing. The first touch of trouble made them murmur, and the difficulties of the wilderness discouraged so that they murmured again and again, and the absence of their instructor and of him who was as God’s mouth to them, Moses, led them to such a forgetfulness of Egypt, such a forgetfulness of their deliverance, such a forgetfulness of the God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, that they made a golden calf and they sat down to feast and rose up to play, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel.” Would you have thought that that church in the wilderness, so blessed, so delivered, so fed, so led, could deal so with God? And yet His promise was with them and He was with them. He chastened them, He slew them, He turned to be their enemy, He delivered them, He helped them, He brought them into the land of promise according to His own oath and covenant. And that same Jesus is with the church in the wilderness and with the individual members of the church in the wilderness to help them.

“Dost mind the place, the spot of land,
Where Jesus did thee meet.”

How He got thy heart and hand,
Thy Husband then was sweet,"

and what thou findest Him at thy best, He's at thy worst the same, and He will ever rest in His love. He is lifted up in His promise.

And lastly on this account He is to be lifted up in His faithfulness. Faithful is He that promised, who also will do it. Whatever He said He will perform. He is the Brother that is born for adversity, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. What a mercy it is to know this Jesus Christ. What a favour ever to have seen Him by faith.

Now Christ in the next verse tells us of the great end that was to be accomplished by His lifting up. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." And this gives us the grand distinction between natural and spiritual religion, that is to say, between the church and the world, between a believer and an unbeliever. Faith is the grand distinction. If you have no faith, you will have nothing else of a spiritual kind and so, this being of such vital importance, may the Lord help us to look very particularly at it for a short time. "That whosoever believeth." First of all the character is to be noticed. "Whosoever" sets up no such qualifications as we should naturally imagine would be set up. It means whosoever of any nation, of any position, Jew, Greek, bond, free, rich, poor; whosoever of any description believeth with a vital faith in this blessed Person as lifted up, shall not perish in that condition in which he finds and feels himself. This is important. Whatever publican, harlot, wicked man, is brought to look to an uplifted Christ by saving faith, shall not perish in that sin in which he feels himself to be; shall not perish in that condemnation he realises in his conscience, shall not perish in those difficulties which entangle him, shall not perish in that ignorance which confuses him, in that death that makes him feel only just fit for perdition. 'Tis a great word, a very great word, very particular; a pointing word which points to a person.

"Whosoever" does not take in, so to speak, nations; it takes in individuals, and this is kindly intended of God because individuals find themselves exercised on the point. Individuals find themselves troubled as to whether God will have anything to do with them. Vital religion has connected with it much trouble. True conviction brings much sorrow and many questions into the mind. The teaching of the Spirit makes the persons who are the subject of that teaching say, Will the Lord have anything to do with us? Not because the Spirit teaches that doubt or works it, but because the person who is taught to know himself as a sinner finds that the sin of his nature and the sins of his thoughts, the sins of his heart, so work and so rise as to make him say, Can ever God dwell in such a heart as this?

And so this word is a pointed word. “Whosoever,” be he Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, rich or poor, believeth in Him lifted up shall not perish. God has put a great honour upon this grace of faith. He has made it a wondrous grace and given it a large place in the economy of experimental salvation; has given it a large place in the experience of His saints. I say this again, this will distinguish between you who have it and all others who have it not. It will make you like a person who, of necessity, comes out of the world and must hang about Christ and on Christ, and in your confusion, it will bring you to venture wholly on His name. And in your experience of distance from God, it will bring you to strive to enter in at the strait gate because “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life,” and in your depression, which often you may feel to be very distressing, it will bring you to cry mightily. In their distresses they cried unto the Lord, and He delivered them.

Therefore, look at this “whosoever” and look at this believing. Now faith is a knowledge, and you have the two things here. The Person believed in. The faith that comes to Him must have knowledge in it, else how should it come to Him? How should it distinguish Him from another? Christ is not One of many christs, many saviours. He is unique, alone, without another. It is said, “I am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Saviour.” He is not one of a number; He is One alone. “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” And O, you will sometimes, as led by the Spirit, get such a view of Him as will make Him, to your view, just what the sun is to your body, to your eye, to your sensation; what the sun is to the earth when he shines in his strength, and you will be a knowing person – not wise in your own sight, but a knowing person with respect to Jesus Christ. “I know whom I have believed,” will sometimes be your language, not early in your days, but later you will say it.

“That whosoever believeth.” Now if you believe in a person, it is not a blind thing; it is not blind; you do not believe indifferently and indiscriminately. When you really believe in a person, you believe something about that person; not a nebulous idea with no shape or form, but you believe something about that person. And if you believe in Christ, you believe something about Him, something distinct, as, for instance, He is a refuge. “A refuge for sinners the gospel makes known.” “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” Faith goes to Him. Here, says a living soul – you will understand this, many of you – I am in danger, danger from indwelling sin, danger from temptation. Danger, in the providence of God, surrounds me and what am I to do? I have no help in myself, and I cannot be a refuge to myself, and I have no refuge in my circumstances.

What then shall I do? Then the Holy Spirit opens up to your view this Christ, this refuge, and what do you then do? Fly to Him. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," and "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee." That is one point in believing.

Now a refuge serves as a place of safety when danger surrounds. What is the danger that we are in because of our sins? We are in danger of hell fire. Yes, fear Him that after He hath killed the body hath power to cast the soul into hell. Fear Him. And when people are thoroughly convinced of sin, then it is that they have set before them this refuge in the death of Christ, in the infinite merit of Christ, and their trust is there alone. You rely on that, O believer, don't you? In prayer how often you may have said to the Lord you have no refuge, no plea, no covering, no defence, no security, but what the blood of Christ affords. Says Christ, such a believer shall not perish. The guilt that frightens and depresses, the sin that terrifies and distracts, you shall not perish in. The law that curses, the curse of that law shall not fall on you. Faith in the bleeding Lamb will give liberty, deliverance from that curse. What a mercy this is then, to have living faith, a knowing faith, a discerning faith, a faith that peers, and looks and looks again and sees into divine mysteries, divine mercies, and faith that says to Christ, "Intreat me not to leave Thee, or to return from following after Thee." O let me come, enable me to come, and when I come, enable me to remain, to abide.

"But have eternal life." How contrary this is to the experience of some people, gracious people, at different times, when instead of having life they feel death – death in everything, death in their praying, death when they read the Scriptures, death on all their exercises. A sort of deathly feeling comes over them, a clammy experience as if in a short time the religion, such as it is, which they have will die away. Says Christ these believers shall have eternal life, shall outlive their troubles, shall outlive their sins. What a prospect this is, O believer, what a prospect this is! You, you are to outlive your troubles, outlive your sins. You are to outlive all the temptations that come, all the difficulties that arise, all the burdens that you have to bear. And this is Christ's word, not to be broken: He "should not perish, but have eternal life." We are not eternal creatures; as here we are mortal. Therefore, to experience this we must die, and this turns that which naturally is an evil into good. This turns that from which we all shrink, namely death, into a blessing and as people draw near and yet nearer to their end, and God helps them and favours them, the thought of their mortality coming to an end is by no means terrible to them, but rather attractive. They can say, I would not live away, and when they come to the end can say, It is better to die than to live.

It is a great matter. If you have eternal life through faith, you are going to heaven. The earth is not eternal, our bodies are mortal, our circumstances are ever changing. Change, God has stamped on all things here. Death is on all things here. A full stop is to be put to our life. And yet “eternal life,” so it means heaven; it means being where the Lord is for ever; it means worshipping in the temple not built with hands, walking in the light of a sun that is not made and that does not go down, drinking at fountains of living waters that are ever there, ever flowing, ever filling all who get at them with eternal bliss, with unending satisfaction.

“Should ... have eternal life.” This life is good enough for some of you, isn’t it? You do not want another life. If it were put to you personally, some of you would say, No, we do not think of another life, we only think of this: “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” This is what you think about, this is the concern you have. And what is the end of it to be? Well, if you die in the same state of mind, you will not cease to be, but you will live another life, and you will live endlessly and terribly and in punishment; live for ever and ever, so to speak, in all the sins you have committed, and be punished for all the ungodly speeches you have uttered, and all the ungodly thoughts you have ever nursed, and all the things you have done, and these will be brought up against you in the judgment, and then the last word you will hear from God will be the first you ever heard and a terrible word it is: “Depart from Me, ye cursed” – what a solemn thing – “into everlasting fire.”

But that poor sinner who now may be feeling, What shall I do, what am I to do? I am a poor miserable sinner. I mope, I groan, I try to pray; I cease praying, I read and understand nothing. I hear and nothing comes to me. What is to become of me? Well, answer this if you can. What do you do sometimes? Well, you may say, I do try whenever I get any little sense on my mind of the Lord Jesus, I try to run to Him and ask Him to bless me, to save me, to do me good. Well, I would say to you, you go on like that. When you can pray to Him, when you can cast a believing look on Him, just go. Make all your wishes known, confess every known and felt sin, and wait at His blessed footstool, and the day is coming when you will say, “I have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth.” And when you so find Him, then you may be able also to say, “I found Him, and I would not let Him go.”

“That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Amen.

A NEW TESTAMENT COMMAND FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH

*Address given at Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham,
on Wednesday, October 19th, 2022.*

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Text: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11. 23, 24).

It is particularly that expression: “This is My body, which is broken for you.”

The Old Testament has innumerable ordinances, ceremonies and sacrifices that had to be attended to throughout the long generations before our Saviour came. But when the dear Redeemer came as, blessed be God He did, as sent by the Father, all those ordinances, ceremonies and sacrifices passed away because He fulfilled in every jot and tittle all that they spoke of concerning Himself. In the New Testament church, He has left only two ordinances. The one precedes the other in the order of God's church: firstly, the ordinance of believer's baptism, and the other, the ordinance of the Lord's supper. These two ordinances, like the Old Testament ordinances, are to point us to Christ. They are to show us something about Him that we might otherwise miss. What we have before us this evening is something very precious about the body broken for poor sinners.

Notice first of all how the apostle puts the crown where it belongs. It was not an ordinance Paul ordained. It was not an ordinance that he imagined or brought into the church. It was something that Paul was commanded of which to remind the church. As an apostle, he was the Lord's mouthpiece in that. You will notice he puts the crown where it belongs. The Lord Jesus took the bread. The Lord Jesus gave thanks. The Lord Jesus broke the bread. And the Lord Jesus said: “Take, eat.” In other words, the whole ordinance speaks to us of the pre-eminence of the Saviour: what *He* has done – not what we have done – what *He* has done. It is very sad that this ordinance has been abused in many ways. It has been wrongly interpreted, and the false church of Rome has built on a completely wrong interpretation of what our text means. But, in shying away from that false interpretation, we must not go to the other extreme and just think lightly of what is set before us tonight. Paul, writing elsewhere to the Corinthians, says that this ordinance is the communion of the body of Christ and the communion of the blood of Christ. In other words, if by living faith we understand what this means, then there is a communication into the heart of the benefits of what it represents. It is a great mercy when we, not just those of us who sit

around the Lord's table month by month, as many of us do, but also those who long to sit around that table, can enter into this word, *communion*, and find a blessed communication of what this means; this gospel set before us tonight.

There are just two things I want to bring before you this evening. One is what this word tells us of the sufferings of Christ, and secondly, what it tells us of the word that we read of in John 1. For those two things are represented in this holy ordinance, that is none the less for sinners. Let us go back to what we read just now. "That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread." That, dear friends, is significant of what He did when He left His radiant throne on high and came into this sin-cursed earth. He took a body to Himself: a holy body, a holy soul and holy flesh. We read: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." God the Father prepared a holy body for His Son to dwell in, in which the fulness of the Holy Ghost dwelt without measure. And in that blessed temple of His body has been fulfilled all that justice could ever require, that mercy might flow. "He ... took bread." And the taking of the bread in the context this evening reminds us of that wonderful condescension: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Secondly, He gave thanks. This is a tremendous thing, dear friends. You say: "Why should He give thanks?" Blessed be God, He viewed what lay before Him and what lay beyond it. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He gave thanks in blessed anticipation of the holy success of His one offering. He gave thanks.

Thirdly, "He brake it." "He brake it." Now, we know that He was soon to be nailed to a cross. We know that soldiers were soon to pierce His holy hands and feet and would crown His holy head with thorns. We know that when He yielded up His holy soul into the hands of His heavenly Father, that there was to be a piercing of His side, and forthwith there was to come out blood and water. Dear friends, "He brake it." It was not done without His divine permission. And indeed, in a most mysterious way, He was behind all that took place concerning His sufferings. We must believe that. It was no accident. It was no chance. It was an ordained path by His heavenly Father; a cup for Him to drink and a path for Him to walk. "He brake it."

And then He said: "Take, eat." What is He saying here? Here is food for hungry souls. "This is My body, which is broken for you." Of course, we do not believe in any sense that the bread becomes anything else than what it was and is. We do not adore the elements. We do not worship them. That is totally contrary to what is meant here. But, on the

other hand, there is something very precious and significant about this expression: "This is My body." This is the food for dying souls – the flesh and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." We will come back to that in a moment, God willing. But here He says, "Take, eat." He says that to poor sinners, needy sinners. He says it to those who have been taught to hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who have no hope but in a precious Christ, those who can say from the very bottom of their heart:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
All other ground is sinking sand." (see H. 1106)

Those who do not put trust in their own faith, but where faith leads them to: Christ. Friends, we are too often trying to put trust in our own faith. True faith leads you to put your absolute, unconditional trust in Christ. That is where faith anchors. And although we are thankful when our faith is lively – would to God it were more lively – we must not put our anchor there. Our Anchor is Christ, the glorious Emmanuel, "God with us." What He has done in His flesh, the life He lived, the death He died, the conquest over the grave that He made and what He now does at the right hand of His heavenly Father, interceding – here is our hope! We dare not rest anywhere else but on Christ.

He says, "This is My body, which is broken for you." He adds to it a command to those who have been taught to rest nowhere else but in Christ: "This do in remembrance of Me" – not in remembrance of your sins. He could have said that, because it was our sins that nailed Him to the cross. But no. "This do in remembrance of Me." Dear friends, there is nothing more ordained by God than this. A sight of Christ and Him crucified is the antidote to indwelling sin, to guilt on the conscience and to all the devil's assaults and attacks. Oh, that is what we would see more of!

"Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze." (H. 158)

Would to God we gazed there more often! Our poor, wretched, wandering eyes! May we look unto Jesus. "This do in remembrance of Me."

Now the other way of looking at it. This is why I read John 1. "In the beginning was the Word." "And the Word was made flesh." Going on from that blessed thought, the Word of God (the written Word) – all

the precious truths in it cannot be separated from the Incarnate Word. Thus we may look at it. On the road to Emmaus, the Lord Jesus Christ broke the bread of His Word, as it were, when He opened the disciples' understanding. He fed them by it. They partook of the truth, the living truth. And when God the Holy Ghost leads us into the truth and gives us an appetite for it, and from time to time satisfies our poor souls, this is immortal food. What did we sing just now?

“For he that eats immortal food,
Immortally must live.” (H. 828)

So, I put it to you, dear friends: how many of you have eaten immortal food? How many of you can say concerning the Word of God that it has been made spirit and life to you? How many of you can say that it has been broken, as it were, in the dear hands of the Saviour so that you might partake of it and have been refreshed, revived and renewed by it? This is communion. This is fellowship. This is the life of God in the soul. “This is My body, which is broken for you.” Think of it – the cost of it! One precious promise from the dear Saviour’s lips, one sweet invitation, one touch of love, one holy command: it all comes from this broken body. And I may say that is why God’s visits are rare, as we look at it. One of the reasons is that we might prize them more.

“More frequent let Thy visits be,
Or let them longer last.” (H. 251)

Dear friends, it is a great question: have we that hunger and thirst after this holy body and all it represents, all that was done by Him whose body it is, and all that He has done in leaving a precious gospel for such wretches as we are?

“When He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” And there are three inferences. First of all, if ever you have tasted, handled and felt the Word of God in this respect, then it came from only one source: Christ, by His Holy Spirit. Put the crown where it belongs.

Secondly, those who receive this living Bread are pardoned sinners. They receive it because of that precious blood that has been shed and that life that was laid down. It is the fruit of it. It is the outworking of the travail of the soul of the dear Saviour that His dear sheep might be fed. This is the mark.

And the third thing is that there is a command here, isn’t there? For those who feed on this living Bread there is a command: “This do in remembrance of Me.” I have never been one, throughout my forty-three years of preaching here, to over-preach the ordinances in a way carnally to force them upon people’s consciences; that does not work. But on the

other hand, we must never forget that the Word of God is very plain here. It is left on record very clearly for those who partake of living Bread and know a little of what I have spoken of, for those who have known the sanctifying power of it. For all that hate themselves as sinners but love a precious Christ as their only hope, to them He says, "This do in remembrance of Me." And when you think about it, dear friend, you want Him to remember you, don't you? That is your great anxiety. You want to hear Him say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Then surely, surely, in the heart of every living child of God, there should be this exercise: to remember Him.

May God add His blessing. Amen.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE AS THE PERFECT PREACHER

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them" (Matt. 5. 1, 2).

The blessed evangelist Matthew, the penman of this sacred history, was at first by profession a publican or gatherer of toll; and Christ, having called him from the custom-house, made him a gatherer of souls. This holy man in the first chapter sets down Christ's birth and genealogy. In the second, His dignity – a star ushers in the wise men to Him and as a king He is presented with gold and frankincense and myrrh (verses 9-11). In the third chapter the evangelist records His baptism; in the fourth, His temptations; in the fifth, His preaching, which chapter is like a rich mine. Every vein has some gold in it.

There are four things in this chapter which offer themselves to our view:

1. The Preacher.
2. The pulpit.
3. The occasion.
4. The sermon

The preacher: Christ and His qualifications

1. The Preacher. *Jesus Christ*. The best of preachers. "He went up." He in whom there was a combination of virtues, a constellation of beauties. He whose lips were not only sweet as the honeycomb, but did drop as the honeycomb. His words, an oracle; His works, a miracle; His life, a pattern; His death, a sacrifice. "He went up into a mountain ... and taught." Jesus Christ was every way ennobled and qualified for the work of the ministry.

i. Christ was an *intelligent* Preacher. He had the Spirit without measure (see John 3. 34) and knew how to speak a word in due season, when to humble, when to comfort. We cannot know all the faces of our hearers. Christ knew the hearts of His hearers. He understood what doctrine would best suit them, as the husbandman can tell what sort of grain is proper for such-and-such a soil.

ii. Christ was a *powerful* Preacher. He spake with authority (see Matt. 7. 29). He could set men's sins before them and show them their very hearts. "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did" (John 4. 29). That is the best glass, not which is most richly set with pearl, but which shows the truest face. Christ was a Preacher to the conscience. He breathed as much zeal as eloquence. He often touched upon the heart-strings. What is said of Luther is more truly applicable to Christ. He spake "as if He had been within a man." He could drive the wedge of His doctrine in the most knotty piece. He was able with His two-edged sword to pierce an heart of stone. "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7. 46).

iii. Christ was a *successful* Preacher. He had the art of converting souls. "Many believed on Him" (John 10. 42), yea, persons of rank and quality. "Among the chief rulers also many believed" (John 12. 42). He who had "grace poured into His lips" (see Psa. 45. 2), could pour grace into His hearers' hearts. He had the key of David in His hand, and when He pleased did open the hearts of men, and make way both for Himself and His doctrine to enter. If He did blow the trumpet, His very enemies would come under His banner. Upon His summons none dare but surrender.

iv. Christ was a *lawful* Preacher. As He had His unction from His Father, so His mission. "The Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me" (John 8. 18). Christ, in whom were all perfections concentrated, yet would be solemnly sealed and inaugurated into His ministerial as well as mediatory office. If Jesus Christ would not enter upon the work of the ministry without a commission, how absurdly impudent are they who without any warrant dare invade this holy function! There must be a lawful admission of men into the ministry. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5. 4). Our Lord Christ, as He gave apostles and prophets who were extraordinary ministers, so pastors and teachers who were initiated and made in an ordinary way (see Eph. 4. 11); and He will have a ministry perpetuated. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28. 20). Sure, there is as much need of ordination now as in Christ's time and in the time of the apostles, there being then extraordinary gifts in the church which are now ceased.

The ministry does not "lie in common"

But why should not the ministry lie in common? "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses?" (Numb. 12. 2). Why should not one preach as well as another? I answer: Because God (who is the God of order) has made the work of the ministry a select, distinct office from any other. As in the body natural the members have a distinct office, the eye is to see, the hand to work; you may as well say, why should not the hand see as well as the eye? Because God has made the distinction. He has put the seeing faculty into the one and not the other. So here, God has made a distinction between the work of the ministry and other work.

Where is this distinction? We find in Scripture a distinction between pastor and people. "The elders" – or ministers – "I exhort.... Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5. 1, 2). If anyone may preach, by the same rule all may, and then what will become of the apostle's distinction? Where will the flock of God be if all be pastors?

God has cut out the minister his work which is proper for him and does not belong to any other. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine ... give thyself wholly to them," or, as it is in the Greek, "Be thou wholly in them" (1 Tim. 4. 13-15). This charge is peculiar to the minister and does not concern any other. It is not spoken to the tradesman that he should give himself wholly to doctrine and exhortation. No, let him look to his shop. It is not spoken to the ploughman that he should give himself wholly to preaching. No, let him give himself to his plough. It is the minister's charge. The apostle speaks to Timothy and, in him, to the rest who had the hands of the presbytery laid on them. And, "Study to shew thyself approved ... a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2. 15). This is spoken peculiarly to the minister. Everyone that can read the Word aright cannot divide the Word aright. So that the work of the ministry does not lie in common; it is a select, peculiar work. As none might touch the ark but the priests, none may touch this temple-office but such as are called to it.

But if a man has gifts, is not this sufficient? I answer, No! As grace is not sufficient to make a minister, so neither are gifts. The Scripture puts a difference between gifting and sending. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10. 15). If gifts were enough to constitute a minister, the apostle should have said, "How shall they preach except they be gifted?" but he says, "except they be sent?" As in other callings, gifts do not make a magistrate. The attorney that pleads at the bar may have as good gifts as the judge that sits upon the bench, but he must have a commission before he sit as judge. If it be thus in matters civil, much more in ecclesiastical and sacred, which are, as Bucer [German theologian of the Reformation period] says, "Things of the

highest importance.” Those therefore that usurp the ministerial work without any special designation and appointment discover more pride than zeal. They act out of their sphere and are guilty of theft. They steal upon a people, and, as they come without a call, so they stay without a blessing. “I sent them not ... therefore they shall not profit this people at all” (Jer. 23. 32). And so much for the first, the preacher.

The pulpit

2. *The pulpit* where Christ preached. “He went up into a mountain.” The law was first given on the mount, and here Christ expounds it on the mount. This mount, as is supposed by Jerome [one of the greatest scholars of the early Christian church (d. A.D. 420)] and others of the learned, was Mount Tabor. It was a convenient place to speak in, being seated above the people, and in regard of the great confluence of hearers.

3. *The occasion* of Christ’s ascending the mount: “Seeing the multitude.”

The occasion

The people thronged to hear Christ, and He would not dismiss the congregation without a sermon, but “seeing the multitude He went up.” Jesus Christ came from heaven as a factor [commissioned (by the Father) to perform a work] for souls. He lay leiger [to take up residence, as an ambassador “lies leiger” abroad for his country] here awhile; preaching was His business. The people could not be so desirous to hear as He was to preach. He who treated faint bodies with compassion (see Matt. 15. 32), much more pitied dead souls. It was His “meat and drink” to do His Father’s will (see John 4. 34). “And seeing the multitude,” He goes up into the mount and preaches. This He did not only for the consolation of His hearers, but for the imitation of His ministers.

Ministers should embrace opportunities of service

From whence observe that Christ’s ministers according to Christ’s pattern must embrace every opportunity of doing good to souls. Praying and preaching and studying must be our work. “Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4. 2). Peter, seeing the multitude, lets down the net and, at one draught, catches three thousand souls (see Acts 2. 41). How zealously industrious have God’s champions been in former ages in fulfilling the work of their ministry, as we read of Chrysostom [Bishop of Constantinople (died A.D. 407)], Augustine [Bishop of Hippo Regis, North Africa, (died A.D. 430)], Basil the Great [one of the three Cappadocian “fathers”; Bishop of Caesarea (died A.D. 379), Calvin, Bucer and others, who for the work of Christ “were nigh unto death.” The reasons why the ministers of Christ (according to His pattern) should be ambitiously desirous of all opportunities for soul-service are:

i. *Their commission:* God has entrusted them as ambassadors (see 2 Cor. 5. 20). Now you know an ambassador waits for a day of audience, and as soon as a day is granted, he faithfully and impartially delivers the mind of his prince. Thus Christ's ministers, having a commission delegated to them to negotiate for souls, should be glad when there is a day of audience, that they may impart the mind and will of Christ to His people.

ii. *Their titles:* Ministers are called God's sowers (see 1 Cor. 9. 11). Therefore they must upon all occasions be scattering the blessed seed of the Word. The sower must go forth and sow; yea, though the seed fall upon stones, as usually it does, yet we must disseminate and scatter the seed of the Word upon stony hearts, because "even of these stones God is able to raise up children" to Himself.

Ministers are called stars. Therefore they must shine by word and doctrine in the firmament of the church. Thus our Lord Christ has set them a pattern in the text: "Seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain." Here was a light set upon an hill, the bright morning star shining to all that were round about. Christ calls His ministers "the light of the world" (Matt. 5. 14). Therefore they must be always giving forth their lustre. Their light must not go out till it be in the socket [that is, until life itself ends], or till violent death as an extinguisher put it out.

iii. *Christ's ministers must catch at all occasions of doing good to others,* in regard of the work which they are about, and that is saving of souls. What a precious thing is a soul! Christ takes, as it were, a pair of scales in His hands and He puts the world in one scale and the soul in the other, and the soul outweighs (see Matt. 16. 26). The soul is of a noble origin, of a quick operation; 'tis a flower of eternity; here, in the bud; in heaven, fully ripe and blown. The soul is one of the richest pieces of embroidery that ever God made, the understanding bespangled with light, the will invested with liberty, the affections like musical instruments tuned with the finger of the Holy Ghost. The soul is Christ's partner, the angels' familiar. Now if the souls of men are of so noble an extract and made capable of glory, O how zealously industrious should Christ's ministers be to save these souls! If Christ spent His blood for souls, well may we spend our sweat. It was Augustine's prayer that Christ might find him at His coming either praying or preaching. What a sad sight is it to see precious souls as so many pearls and diamonds cast into the dead sea of hell!

iv. The ministers of Christ, "seeing the multitude," must "*ascend the mount,*" because there are so many emissaries of Satan who lie at the catch to subvert souls. How the old serpent casts out of his mouth floods of water after the woman to drown her! (see Rev. 12. 15). What floods of heresy have been poured out in city and country, which have

overflowed the banks not only of religion but civility. Ignatius calls error “the invention of the devil,” and Bernard calls it “a sweet poison.” Men’s ears, like sponges, have sucked in this poison. Never were the devil’s commodities more vendible in England than now. A fine tongue can put off bad wares. The Jesuit can silver over his lies, and dress error in truth’s coat. A weak brain is soon intoxicated. When flattery and subtlety meet with the simple, they easily become a prey. The Romish whore entices many to drink down the poison of her idolatry and filthiness, because it is given in “a golden cup” (Rev. 17. 4). If all who have the plague of the head should die, it would much increase the bill of mortality. Now if there be so many emissaries of Satan abroad, who labour to make proselytes to the church of Rome, how it concerns them whom God has put into the work of the ministry to bestir themselves and lay hold on all opportunities, that by their spiritual antidotes they may convert sinners from the error of their way and save their souls from death (see Jas. 5. 20). Ministers must not only be “pastores,” but “proeliatores” [fighters, warriors.] In one hand they must hold the bread of life and “feed the flock of God”; in the other hand, they must hold the sword of the Spirit and fight against those errors which carry damnation in their front.

v. *The ministers of Christ should wait for all opportunities of soul-service*, because the preaching of the Word meets so many adverse forces that hinder the progress and success of it. Never did a pilot meet with so many Euroclydons and cross-winds in a voyage, as the spiritual pilots of God’s church do when they are transporting souls to heaven.

Some hearers have bad memories (see Jas. 1. 25). Their memories are like leaking vessels. All the precious wine of holy doctrine that is poured in runs out immediately. Ministers cannot by study find a truth so fast as others can lose it. If the meat does not stay in the stomach, it can never breed good blood. If a truth delivered does not stay in the memory, we can never be, as the apostle says, “nourished up in the words of faith” (1 Tim. 4. 6). How often does the devil, that fowl of the air, pick up the good seed that is sown! If people suffer at the hands of thieves, they tell everyone and make their complaint they have been robbed; but there is a worse thief they are not aware of! How many sermons has the devil stolen from them! How many truths have they been robbed of, which might have been so many deathbed cordials! Now if the Word preached slides so fast out of the memory, ministers had need the oftener to go up the preaching mount, that at last some truth may abide and be as “a nail fastened by the masters of assemblies.”

The ears of many of our hearers are stopped with earth. I mean the cares of the world, that the Word preached will not enter, according to that in the parable, “Hearing they hear not” (Matt. 13. 13). We read of

Saul, his eyes were open, yet "he saw no man" (Acts 9. 8). A strange paradox! And is it not as strange that men's ears should be open, yet "in hearing hear not"? They mind not what is said: "They sit before thee as My people ... but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. 33. 31). Many sit and stare the minister in the face, yet scarce know a word he says. They are thinking of their wares and drugs and are often casting up accounts in the church. If a man be in a mill, though you speak never so loud to him, he does not hear you for the noise of the mill. We preach to men about matters of salvation, but the mill of worldly business makes such a noise that they cannot hear; "in hearing they hear not." It being thus, ministers who are called "sons of thunder" had need often ascend the mount and "lift up thy voice like a trumpet" (Isa. 58. 1) that the deaf ear may be syringed and unstopped, and may hear "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2. 7).

Others, as they have earth in their ears, so they have a stone in their hearts. They make "their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law" (Zech. 7. 12). The ministers of Christ therefore must be frequently brandishing the sword of the Spirit and striking at men's sins, that, if possible, they may at last pierce the heart of stone. When the earth is scorched with the sun, it is so hard and crusted together, that a shower of rain will not soften it. There must be shower after shower before it will be either moist or fertile. Such an hardened piece is the heart of man naturally. It is so stiffened with the scorplings of lust, that there must be "precept upon precept" (Isa. 28. 10). Our doctrine must "distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32. 2).

vi. *Christ's ministers, according to the example of their Lord and Master, should take all occasions of doing good, not only in regard of God's glory, but their own comfort.* What triumph is it, and cause of gladness, when a minister can say on his deathbed, "Lord, I have done the work which Thou gavest me to do," I have been trading for souls! When a minister comes to the mount of glory, the heavenly mount, it will be a great comfort to him that he has been so often upon the preaching mount. Certainly if the angels in heaven rejoice at the conversion of a sinner (see Luke 15. 7, 10), how shall that minister rejoice in heaven over every soul that he has been instrumental to convert! As it shall add a member to Christ's body, so a jewel to a minister's crown. "They that are wise," or as the original carries it, "They that are teachers shall shine" – not as lamps or tapers, but – "as stars"; not as planets, but as fixed stars in the firmament of glory for ever (see Dan. 12. 3).

And though "Israel be not gathered," yet shall God's ministers "be glorious in the eyes of the Lord" (Isa. 49. 5). God will reward them not according to their success, but their diligence. When they are a "savour

of death” to men, yet they are a “sweet savour” to God. In an orchard the labourer that fells a tree is rewarded as well as he that plants a tree. The surgeon’s bill is paid though the patient die.

A SALUTARY WARNING

My dear Friend

My mind has lately been filled with fears and solemnly exercised about the “perilous times” which I fear are coming upon us. I fear the decay of *vital godliness*, the waxing cold of the love of many to the solemn truth of God, the sliding of others into an easy kind of religion, hearers rounding off the rugged and offensive corners of truth, and preachers smoothing and wrapping things up so as to please the people, escape the cross, and spare their flesh.

I have thought much of our late dear friend Mr. Tiptaft, and fear he will prove a greater loss to the church than at first supposed. I have asked: “Why did the Lord remove him?” Is it that the drowsy, slumbering church might yet go more fast to sleep? He was one of the most faithful, searching men we knew. By his whole life and conversation, solemnly warning against self-deception and soul-deception, he blew, as it were, an alarm in Zion.

J. Tanner

Eastbourne, Sussex
September 17th, 1866

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE

By John Hervey Gosden (1882-1964)

If Adam’s guilt is transmitted to the human race, and all are born in sin and are dead to God by nature (see Eph. 2. 1), is it not a grievous error to suggest that by a general exhortation men can be awakened from that sleep of death, and of themselves savingly repent and believe the gospel? As good Berridge says:

“None can raise to life the dead
But He who raised Himself indeed,
And for dead sinners died.”

While we definitely believe that it is the duty of man to believe all God has declared, and that unbelief is guilt, we consider it seriously erroneous to call upon all persons indiscriminately to perform such spiritual acts as repentance and faith as if they possessed in themselves an inherent power

of spiritual life. In the fervency of a minister's appeal, much depends on the spirit and the emphasis; but all vitality depends on the Holy Ghost. Vital power does accompany the preaching of the gospel, both in conviction and killing, in making alive and delivering; and it is an unspeakable honour to be the instrument of conveying the gospel ministerially to poor, lost sinners. But as we have so frequently pointed out, there is a vast difference between *preaching* the gospel in a mixed congregation, and *offering* Christ and salvation *indiscriminately* to all. Some who came to John's baptism were met with a solemn rebuff: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3. 7, 8). Owen most truly says, Faith without repentance issues in presumption; repentance [that is, conviction] without faith issues in despair.

Isaiah asks, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" plainly implying that faith results from divine revelation. It was surely something more than response to mere human exhortation to believe that enabled Peter to declare his faith in such emphatic terms: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Saviour Himself declared whence that faith came: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16. 17).

We conclude with the simple statement that whereas we believe it to be every man's duty to credit God's Word both as to the law's demands and the record God has given of His Son, yet to address assemblies in such a way as to suggest that every person is capable of exercising saving faith and producing evangelical repentance is but to mock men. But solemnly to tell sinners that they have broken the holy law of God which therefore condemns them, and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins; to testify that Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth in Him, that in Him there is full pardon and plenteous redemption, and that God honourably justifies the ungodly who believe in Christ; to declare that however deeply convinced of sin, Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come by Him to God, and that He will in no wise cast out any who come; to proclaim to all who deeply feel their ignorance that there is an infallible Teacher, the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has promised shall be given to all who ask Him of the Father (see Luke 11. 13), to guide them into all truth (see John 16. 13) this we believe is to preach according to the tenor of the Word of God.

But though faith "cometh by hearing," it does not necessarily come to all who hear. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed"

(Acts 13. 48). Application is the sovereign prerogative of the Holy Ghost. The great apostle, perceiving that in preaching Christ he was the savour of life unto life to those who were saved and the savour of death unto death to those who were lost, exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How much more reason have we to confess our insufficiency! Our mercy will be ever to prove with Paul that "our sufficiency is of God." This will not impair the earnestness of our appeals to the unconverted, but it will temper our addresses with a sobriety becoming the solemnity of the eternal issues involved.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 20)

Chapter 2

Some further observations concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost

We are told repeatedly that a signal coming should be appointed to Him, to the performance of His work, as well as unto Christ to perform His. This coming of His you have again and again in John 14-16, in these words, "When He is come," and such like. Which imported that, although He was given to work regeneration in men afore, even under the Old Testament (as Nehemiah 9. 20, "He gave them His good Spirit," and many other places, show), that yet to let all the world of believers take notice of His coming, and His work, He must have a coming in state, in a solemn and visible manner, accompanied with visible effects, as well as Christ had, and whereof all the Jews should be, and were witnesses (see Acts chapters 2, 4). And it was also apparent throughout the primitive times, in outward signs and miracles, extraordinary gifts and conversions. And as Christ, though He was under the Old Testament present with that church and with the fathers: "This is He that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers" (Acts 7. 37, 38), yet had a visible coming in flesh to manifest His Person; that it was He who had done all those works then, and came now to work more, and far greater works: so there was a visible coming of the Holy Ghost, both in the appearance of Him as a dove, descending on Christ at first, and afterwards in the resemblance of cloven tongues.

And this His coming was as clearly prophesied of, and solemn promise made thereof, under the Old Testament, as there was of Christ's coming in the flesh. Which did so much heighten and raise up the expectations of all believers then about Him; as that whereby, so great a

change should be made in the church and world in the last days. This the Apostle Peter commemorates and applies upon the Spirit's visible coming upon Himself and the rest of His fellows: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2. 16-18). Yea, this coming of the Spirit I may farther call the great promise of the New Testament. For as Christ's coming was the great promise of the Old Testament, so the sending of the Spirit is entitled the "promise of the Father" in the New: "And behold I send the promise of My Father upon you" (Luke 24. 49), And He is so styled, not only in that He had been promised in the Old Testament by the prophets (as in Joel 2. 28, 29), and in multitude of other prophecies of old; but because that Christ Himself did now anew (as it were) speak it as His promise, and the Father's; and that upon this authority, that this Spirit proceeded from Him, as well as from the Father, and that He was first to receive Him, and then shed Him forth on us, that so it might be made good, that "all the promises are yea and amen in Him"; seeing this promise of the Spirit is given upon Christ's account, as He is the Son (according to that, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts," Gal. 3. 18, 14 compared), and also because now under the New Testament this promise was to be fulfilled in such a manner and measure as was never under the Old and so it becomes a promise proper to the New, that next great promise, which was to succeed that of Christ Himself, the promise of promises; the sole great promise now left to be given.

God the Father had but two grand gifts to bestow; and when once they should be given out of Him, He had left them nothing that was great (comparatively) to give, for they contained all good in them; and these two gifts were His Son, who was His promise in the Old Testament, and His Spirit, the promise of the New. And the Father doth honour Himself to us by this title, that He is the Promiser and Giver of the Spirit; and Christ Himself, now when He is come, takes the honour too in saying, "Behold I send Him" (see Luke 24. 49), and, "Whom the Father will send in My name" (John 14. 26). And it is evident that our Saviour, in calling Him "the promise of My Father," which was spoken by Him after His resurrection (Luke 24. 49), doth refer to His own words and sermons uttered afore His resurrection, in fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, rather than to the prophets primarily in His intention: "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ... ye have heard of Me" (Acts 1. 4).

Again, Christ had John the Baptist, who “began the gospel,” to foretell His manifestation in the flesh, and to prepare the way for this Lord. And besides Him, His angels did it. But the Holy Ghost hath Christ Himself to foretell His coming upon flesh: and that to prepare the hearts of men for Him whenever He should come.

And, lastly, on purpose to honour His visible coming, He had answerably an extraordinary work left to Him, upon that His visible coming: the conversion of the whole Gentile world; and the raising and building of the churches of the New Testament was reserved of His glory. His visible coming at Pentecost was the visible consecration and dedication of that great temple, the mystical body of Christ, to be reared under the gospel, the several members of which body are called “the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3. 16), as that appearance at Christ’s baptism was the consecration of the head. Of this work of the Spirit, that of the psalmist, though spoken literally of the first creation, may yet be used in allusion, and is mystically applied by some of the fathers thereunto: “Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth” (Psa. 104. 30). The whole earth was decked and adorned with a new array, when the Spirit of God moved upon that chaos; and the whole face of the world was in that age of the gospel’s promulgation no other than a chaos, void and without all form. “All nations had walked in their own ways,” but the Spirit was sent forth, and lo this barren wilderness became a fruitful field all the world over.

The feast of Pentecost was under the old law the feast of the first fruits (see Lev. 23. 10). Thus it was in the type, and the apostles on that day received for the church of the New Testament “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8. 23). And the sickle was then first put in, in the conversion of the three thousand out of all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, or mixed, “Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost”; so to begin that great harvest, whereof these were the first fruits which consecrated the rest (as the first fruits did under the law) in after ages to come, as Christ told them that their fruit should remain (see John 15. 16). And this coming of the Holy Ghost then, and converting such as were inhabitants out of all nations, was by Christ designed to be the pattern of the conversion of all nations: “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1. 8); charging them to stay at Jerusalem, and not to stir one foot out from thence, but “wait for the promise of the Father” (verse 4). For it would have been a vain attempt to have endeavoured to convert the world until the Holy Ghost had come upon them; and hence it was that this His visible coming was reckoned by the chief apostle the first era, the beginning of the gospel, as the beginning of the creation

described by Moses is of the world: "The Holy Ghost fell upon them" – Gentiles – "as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11. 15), which refers to that at Pentecost.

And this yet further answers the type, for the first giving of the law by Moses was on that day, the day of Pentecost; and so this coming of the Spirit that day was justly reckoned the beginning of the gospel, although the account of the Christian world begins with the nativity of Christ. The grace vouchsafed to the apostle for his poor instrumentality therein, he owns, whilst he yet gives the glory of it to the Holy Ghost; which you may find in Romans 15. 15, 16: "Because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."

The Gentiles, you know, before had ever been esteemed unclean, and upon that account unmeet to be an offering unto God, as the law shows; and that vision of all sorts of unclean beasts made to Peter in the sheet (see Acts 10). But these were all purified by the Holy Ghost's converting of them, that thereby all difference was taken away and so much as those that were not to be conversed with by a Jew, were now offered up as a sacrifice to God. Thus, "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15. 8, 9). *Abridged*

(To be continued)

JEHOVAH JIREH

By John Kershaw (1792-1870)

"The Lord will provide" (see Gen. 22. 14).

The following circumstances will demonstrate this fact. Many years ago, being engaged to supply at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, when I arrived at my lodgings I found a letter waiting for me, requesting me to go down to Chatham to preach the Word of life, giving me directions to go by the steamer to Gravesend, and from thence to Rochester by an omnibus; and that when I arrived at the inn where it stopped, I was to enquire for old Mr. Taylor, the barber, in College Yard.

From these directions I found the old man's house, it being near at hand. He gave me instructions where I was to make my home during my stay amongst them. From several years' acquaintance with him, I found him to be a humble, God-fearing person, well known to the late William Huntington, who would always have him to shave him when he visited

Chatham, and each time gave him half-a-crown. The good old man related to me, at different times, several of the Lord's gracious and providential dealings with him, which greatly interested me, proving that "Jehovah Jireh will provide."

The following is an instance. That dear and esteemed man of God, the late William Tiptaft, like myself, was for several years one of the regular supplies at Zoar Chapel. He also received an invitation to preach the gospel at Chatham, to go by the packet [a small mail boat] and omnibus, and call at Mr. Taylor's, College Yard. When it was made known at Chatham that he was coming, a friend of Mr. Tiptaft's, who had lived in Berkshire, but was then residing at Chatham, wrote to invite him to make his house his home when he came. With this request he complied. He left London by the steamer. As they went down the river, the question arose in his mind: "Shall I first go to my friend, with whom I am to stay, and after dinner go to Mr. Taylor's, or shall I go to the latter first?" The conflict and exercise of his mind for some time was so great that he felt certain something of importance would be the result, and he besought the Lord to decide the matter for him.

Before he left the steamer, he felt his mind settled to call at Mr. Taylor's before proceeding to his friend's. When he entered the house, he made himself known, and the dear old man, much agitated, said, "I am glad to see you; but sorry you have called at this time. I have been fearing the arrival of the omnibus, as I did not wish you to witness my present distress. These two men you see here are bailiffs, whom my landlord has put into the house for rent. I have lived in the house more than twenty years, and have always been enabled to pay my rent until this year, and what I owe is ten pounds, due six weeks since."

Mr. Tiptaft at once saw the reason he was to call at College Yard first, and that the Lord meant him to pay the rent. He enquired if the landlord lived near, and, being informed he lived in the town, he sent one of the bailiffs for him. When he came, Mr. Tiptaft said to him, "You are distressing these old people for rent who have lived in the house more than twenty years, and have paid their rent up until the last year; and as it has only been due six weeks, it appears to me harsh and unfeeling to come upon them so hastily." He replied, "Sir, it may appear so to you; but I have my family to maintain out of my rents, and if my tenants cannot pay me, I must have them out, and get others who can."

Mr. Tiptaft requested him to remove the men, promising, on his return to Abingdon, to remit the ten pounds. The landlord replied, "I cannot remove them on the word of a stranger. You may, or you may not send me the money." Mr. Tiptaft then asked him if he knew Mr. —, mentioning his friend from Berkshire. He replied, he did, and considered him highly respectable. He was requested to see him, and state to him

the circumstance, and Mr. Tiptaft's promise to remit the money. He did so, and shortly returned, telling Mr. Tiptaft he had seen his friend, who said, "If Mr. Tiptaft fails, you may look to me for the money." "That is enough for me, and I will dismiss the men."

The dear old couple, like Manoah and his wife, looked on with wonder, that the very man whom he was afraid of seeing should be the honoured instrument of his deliverance, and could joyfully sing with the poet:

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform." (H. 320)

The first time I went to London after these things had taken place, I received another letter to go to Chatham, and to call at Taylor's in such a street. I was surprised to find he had left the house where he had followed his calling for so long a time, and when I arrived, enquired the reason, and received from him the information above stated. He also told me that before Mr. Tiptaft left Chatham, he had consulted with some of the friends, and they came to the conclusion that Taylor had better leave the house as, through advanced age, he would be unable to meet the rent, and would be again in the same difficulty; and it would be better to have a smaller place, with less rent; so he removed.

Another year rolled round, when I had to pay my annual visit to the metropolis, and received my usual letter to go to Chatham, requesting me to call at old Taylor's, College Yard. At this I was greatly surprised, wondering how it could be that he was again in the old house. When I got there, I enquired the cause from my poor brother. He replied, "You know all about my having to leave." I replied, "I do." "Well," said he, "the Lord is very good to us. Before we left this place it had got into a very dilapidated state, and you know we could not pay the rent, much more repair it, and the Lord very kindly removed us out of the way to the house you saw us in last year. When we were gone, the landlord gave it a thorough repair, making it as you now see it, which, had it been done while we were in, would have much inconvenienced us with work people and other things. Several months after it was completed, my late landlord called upon me quite unexpectedly, and enquired if my present house or the house in College Yard was the better for my business. I replied, 'The house in College Yard by far is the better.' He then told me that after I left his house he had it put into good repair, and put a notice in the window, 'This house to be let,' but never had a person to enquire the rent; 'so I am come to tell you that if you will go back you shall have it for the same rent as you pay for this; and if you are never able to pay me any rent, I will never send any more bailiffs to trouble you.'"

As the dear man related these things to me, his countenance shone, while he blessed and praised the Lord for His great goodness to such poor, unworthy creatures. How true it is,

“The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.” (H. 320)

SEALED

One by one the offerings came
To the temple, in the sinner’s name;
One by one did the thoughtful priest
Keenly examine each offered beast.

Here is a heifer with cast of eye;
Not accepted; he puts it by;
One has a tuft of matted hair;
Not accepted; a blemish there.

Little our congregations know
Of the wearisome services long ago;
Back to the herd, and back to the fold,
For a *perfect* victim, went those of old.

Glad at heart when the priest’s keen eye
Nor blot nor blemish could descry;
The long anxiety was healed;
And the victim, doomed for death, was sealed.

Sinner, waiting at mercy’s gate,
Empty handed and desolate;
Born in sin and deserving hell,
Wherefore should thy sorrows swell?

Art thou looking with eager eye
To the spotless Lamb of Mount Calvary?
Take *Him* with you and *you* are healed;
“*Him* hath God the Father sealed.”

Sin on the sinless One was laid;
Once and for ever the price He paid;
And Jehovah sets, with a father’s care,
His seal on the sinner hiding there.

M. A. Chaplin (1844-1922)

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Westminster Catechism

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

“SHOUT; FOR THE LORD HATH GIVEN YOU THE CITY”
(Josh. 6. 16)

The faith of Joshua and Israel in the fall of Jericho is among the cloud of witnesses, which Paul mentions in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews 11. 30: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” There are several very instructive features in which the faith of Joshua is to be commended.

It was not long after the death of Moses that Joshua was faced with his first test of faith in crossing the Jordan, whose banks had overflowed as was customary at that season, when the Lord magnified him in the sight of Israel by dividing Jordan so that they went over dry-shod. But a fresh test of faith immediately confronts Joshua and Israel: Jericho with its forty-foot-thick walls, and also an experienced army of warriors.

No doubt it was this that exercised the mind of Joshua when he stood outside Jericho (see Josh. 5. 13). Suddenly there appears a Man with His sword drawn, ready for action. That this is one of the pre-incarnation visits of the Son of God to His people is soon evident to Joshua. He prostrates himself before the glorious Person who describes Himself as the Captain of the host of the Lord. Did He mean the host of Israelites encamped nearby, or did He mean the innumerable company of angels that He has at His call? We can be sure that the second Person of the Trinity was in complete control over both hosts.

After telling him to remove his shoes, as he stood on holy ground, this sacred Person gave Joshua the necessary instructions for the fall of Jericho.

We notice firstly, the *humility* of Joshua’s faith. He lay at the feet of the Lord, aware of his unworthiness in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. Humility and an exercised faith go hand in hand. Where humility is lacking, there is a solemn danger of presumption.

We notice secondly, the *obedience* of Joshua’s faith. The commands he received, though contrary to any wisdom of man, were accepted without question. It is said of the angels in heaven that they obey the Lord without asking any questions! On this occasion Joshua asked no questions but recognised the divine authority and wisdom of the One with whom he was conversing. “Too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.”

We notice thirdly, the *patience* of Joshua's faith. For no less than thirteen times the armies of Israel were to process silently around Jericho's walls over a period of seven days, before any deliverance was wrought. How often we need the words in James 1. 4: "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10. 36). "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21. 19).

We notice fourthly, the *witness* of Joshua's faith. As the men of Jericho watched from their walls, perhaps in scorn, they were not left without witness, nor without warning that judgment was at the door. It demonstrates the longsuffering of God and that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (see Ezek. 33. 11).

We notice fifthly, the *triumph* of Joshua's faith when the Lord gave the signal to shout, and the walls fell, and Jericho was overcome. The power in the shout lay with God. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psa. 62. 11). "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4. 6).

We notice sixthly, the *integrity* of Joshua's faith. Rahab and her household were not forgotten. The scarlet cord's witness was not overlooked. True faith, being the operation of the Holy Spirit, will make a man honest and diligent in his dealings with others. How sad it is when those who talk much about their faith and its strength yet belie their words by their unseemly walk. Such bring reproach on the God whose name they profess. Joshua is one of few men in the Scriptures of whom no faults are recorded – a faint yet true type of his infinitely-greater namesake, the Lord Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2. 22).

We notice seventhly, the *judgment* of Joshua's faith. In a similar vein to Elijah, who prayed for the withholding of rain and dew as a curse upon the disobedient, so Joshua adjured that anyone who sought to begin the rebuilding of Jericho would not live to see it completed. This was solemnly fulfilled as recorded in 1 Kings 16. 34 when a man called Hiel assayed to rebuild the cursed city. In this Joshua was God's mouthpiece.

This remarkable incident reminds us of four further "shouts" to which the Word of God refers.

The Israelites' shout was futile when the ark of the covenant was taken without God's permission on to the battlefield in the time of Eli's wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Though the earth rang again with the shout, God was not in it, and the Word of God records the solemn defeat Israel suffered through disobedience (see 1 Sam. 4).

What a different shout, however, when the dear Saviour cried, “It is finished” (see Luke 23. 46 and John 19. 30). Then an earthquake shook the ground, hell trembled, and heaven rejoiced. Likewise, what a shout we read of in prophecy, when our Lord ascended on high: “God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psa. 47. 5).

But then the whole creation waits for the final shout when we read: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which 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 Thess. 4. 16, 17). That sacred and momentous day will be a glorious day to all who by God’s grace, as Joshua did, possess like precious faith. But how solemn, even more so than it was to the men of Jericho, shall it be to those who die without Christ and faith in His finished work.

WHAT IS THE CHAFF TO THE WHEAT?

Sermon preached by Vernon Farley at Scaynes Hill on Lord’s day morning, August 20th 1961

Text: “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream: and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD (Jer. 23. 28).

This solemn word has been laid on the mind. One would have desired something more palatable, more congenial with one’s feelings. But this clause is in the front: “He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully.” So we must attempt to do it.

“What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” The Holy Spirit, in order to drive home various truths, uses different expressions and similitudes. Up and down the Word of God we have them in abundance. God has divided up the sons of men into two families: the righteous and the wicked; the sheep and the goats; believers and unbelievers; the lost and the saved; the wise virgins, foolish virgins; and many other similitudes. The one in the text: the chaff and the wheat. The chaff, emblem of that which is light and perishing; the wheat, the symbol of the valuable, precious and durable. A searching subject will not hurt us, will not harm us at all. Honest souls, exercised people, will wish to bring their case to the charter of God’s Word.

Now this question is put in the form of a comparison. “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” It will lead us to some very searching considerations. Let us open it up this way. First, the chaff has

a relation to the wheat; it has many things in common with the wheat. You will follow me when I say, it springs from the same root, it dwells in the same place, it is watered by the same rain from heaven, it dwells under the light of the same sun. Apply this to the righteous and the wicked, the chaff and the wheat; they have things in common. Have we not all one Father, one Creator? Yes. Have we not all one father, our first parent? Yes, all spring from the same root, watered from heaven; the sun shines upon both. Says Jesus, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." They both enjoy it, the just and the unjust. They dwell together for very long periods, it may be, and frequent the same country, the same town or village, the same family, the same situation. It may be they attend the same sanctuary. In that particular sense the rain, the privileges of the gospel, fall upon both; the blessings of a gospel day are enjoyed by both – things in common.

Again, the chaff and the wheat, as they grow together, they are buffeted by the same winds and the storms of heaven; they are subjected, it may be, to the ravages of pests, the animals that may invade the cornfield. There you see again the things which the righteous and the wicked have in common. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." It is not a strange thing at all for people to be in trouble, trial, affliction, adversity, commotion. These things are common to both.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." Here are great similarities on the outside, but O the vast, eternal difference in the issue, in the ultimate! There are the similarities existing between the chaff and the wheat. It will remind you of the parable of the tares and the wheat. "Let both grow together." Let both grow together. Solemn thought, is it not? "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He knows where they are. We are not judges, it is not entrusted to us, but we know this: there are two families in the earth, and there is a dividing line which runs through them – the children of God, and the children of the wicked one.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." Now a further comparison may follow in this particular. The chaff may seem to have some advantages over the wheat. What is that? say you. The chaff, the straw, the stem, grows quicker than the wheat; it is more bulky than the wheat. Do you see the meaning of it? The ungodly, the wicked, the unjust, often seem for a season to have the advantage over the wheat, the godly, in two ways: first, providentially, in the earth. It is a cause of a trial, irritation and vexation at times. It was to Asaph, "As for me ... my steps had well nigh slipped." Why was this? "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" – at the rate they prospered; they grew up fast, their strength was firm, their eyes stood out with fatness, they seemed to race on. Here am I, chastened every

morning, plagued every night. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." Have you passed that way? Whereas it frequently happens that the godly, they feel to be fools in this world, indeed they are called so. "The wayfaring men, though fools." "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." It is so for the most part. Says Jesus, "They have their reward." They have it now. The greatest concerns in this world are run by them chiefly. They prosper, they add field to field, house to house, have all that heart can wish oftentimes. They want still to extend, gather in more of the thick clay. "He has set the world in their heart." And oftentimes a child of God is in a low place, specially in providence. He feels it; he feels to be a poor failure. And O how the wicked prosper. Job saw it; it puzzled him; it tried him.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD" There is this hasty growth, but riches eventually flee away, take to themselves wings and flee away. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," is a text the world does not like to hear about. If it was possible, he would take it with him. But no; in the columns of the papers we read, they left it. They had ultimately to part with it. Nevertheless, in nature the chaff grows rapidly, quickly; then in bulk, which would imply the same thing, their wealth, their substance.

There is another aspect of it: religion. There is the professing person who is without the root of the matter, in a religious profession. The Word of God is most searching and close on the point, so we have expressions like this: "The hasty fruit before the summer." The hasty fruit. We have the man who built his house upon the sand, in contrast to the one who had to dig, who built upon the rock. Doubtless his house went up quickly. "The form of godliness," without "the power thereof." The parable of the sower, we read of one part of it, it sprung up quickly. Why? It had no depth of earth. So here, the true children of God have been pained, and perhaps mortified; they see professors grow so quickly, their religion so bulky, but they are obliged to learn here a little, and there a little, line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept. But here are professors who grow up in a night, they can talk, they know, they can argue, they have got assurance – yes, they can preach, talk of great things. They have the advantage it seems for the time over the one with the broken and contrite heart, which God will not despise.

Look at the two in the temple. The Pharisee grew up to great heights, quickly, O so full of his own goodness, but like the wicked spreading himself like a green bay tree. Here you see for a season an empty professor may make a loud noise, spread his wings and branches. But, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Why, it seems for a time to excel. It would much depress the child of God if this was not true: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong"; "The lame take the prey," at length.

Talk of speed in profession! I was thinking of those two runners who wanted to run to take tidings to poor David after the battle. Ahimaaz was the first. "Let me run," he said, "and tell David." "How canst thou run? thou hast no tidings ready." He stood by. Cush was to run; he had the tidings. But Ahimaaz was impetuous. He must run; he had no tidings. So it is that false professors have sometimes outrun the true. O beware of this hasty growth, hasty fruit before the summer, rushing into divine things, a letter knowledge of the truth and doctrines, without those good things laid up in the heart. "What is the chaff to the wheat" in the ultimate issue?

Here again is another branch of the subject, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." Well, it is exceedingly useful to the wheat, exceedingly useful. You will understand me this way, you country people. The chaff is the stalk. Well now, this stalk carries the wheat, supports the wheat, bears it up. Then chaff goes further: it protects the wheat, ripens it; is around the grain of the wheat; it is highly serviceable to the wheat. Now just follow me: the wheat stalk, the chaff, is serviceable, for it conveys the moisture up to the wheat head, helps to sustain and support it, bears it up to the sun, and exposes it to the general rays of the sun. Just to quote and refer you to one or two scriptural examples. There is Pharaoh that knew Joseph. See how that man was chaff. He knew not the Lord. See how he was used to nourish the people of God, how he was used in the hand of the Lord to care for, to protect and exalt Joseph. I said to you, the chaff bears the wheat up, exalts it. So Pharaoh brought Joseph up out of the prison, set him next to his throne. Presently, indirectly he is used to nourish the children of Israel, when he gave Joseph the message for his father and his sons to come down, "regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." The chaff nourished the wheat in a wonderful way.

Again in Exodus, when there was another Pharaoh, there is Moses laid in the little ark in the stream. Pharaoh's daughter saw it. Moses' sister standing by offered her a nurse. "Take this child away, and nurse it for me." So Moses began his course. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" It is a source of nourishment, support and exaltation at times. You see it further on in the history. Behold Cyrus the king, who knew not God. He has an impulse. God has spoken to him: "I have girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." He is the instrument to bear up God's children back from their captivity, resettle them in their own land, and see to it they are settled. The wonder-working hand of God!

See it in Nehemiah's case. Now in his captivity he is in great trouble because of the wasting of his own land and the city. He came before the king with a sorrowful countenance. "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?" Poor Nehemiah trembled a little for his

safety, no doubt. "Then prayed I unto the Lord." Yes, there went up a cry that God would give him favour in the sight of the man. And how wonderfully did that man give him money and matter to go away and build again the walls of Jerusalem.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." One more instance, in the case of Esther. A wicked plan is put on foot to destroy her people; she is in great trouble. Then there came a sleepless night for the king. "That night could not the king sleep." Records were brought. Mordecai had made known a plot against the king's life. Said he to Haman, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" I told you the chaff bears up the wheat, bears it up. And so at length Mordecai and the whole nation of the Jews are delivered from that awful plot of the wicked Haman. And there are many, many instances in the history of the church of God collectively and individually. The ravens are sent to feed the prophet. "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." How many hands, maybe, how much skill of worldly people is engaged sometimes to print the holy Bible, and good books, to disseminate the truth, to feed the flock of God instrumentally, and they know Him not. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." Very serviceable at times.

What of the Gibeonites in Joshua's day? It was said of them, they were "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the congregation of Israel. Does it not strike you solemnly, wonderfully, and with heart searching? It reminds me of the scaffolding that surrounds the building, most serviceable to it while the building is in process, it stays there until the building is finished – then what? It is taken down and separated.

The chaff is exceedingly useful to the wheat. It is vastly inferior. They are not my definitions; it is in keeping with the Word of God. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth." "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." O what solemn comparisons these are! The chaff is vastly inferior to the wheat, and it is a value that God has set, a distinction He has made. Let us look at this chaff in the light of inferiority, and you will find the difference. If you were to pull off the outer layers of the stalk one by one, what would you come to? Nothing; it is hollow, it is empty. The chaff is light. The chaff is brittle. The chaff is unstable. The chaff is temporary. Do you see how those definitions are solemnly applicable to the wicked, to the unjust, to the dead professor? There is hollowness, there is lightness, there is brittleness, there is unstableness, there is a temporariness. And so we read that the wicked are "like the chaff which the wind driveth away," and like the chaff which the wind drives away under the corn floor, which people do not miss.

“The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.” Examine this in the light of those thoughts, the hollowness. Take the profane world, the song of the drunkard, the mirth of fools, how empty – how unsatisfying, how grievous to listen to, hollow, empty noise, crackling of thorns under a pot is the merriment, and the chatter, and the course of the profane world, it is light. And says the psalmist, “Surely men of low degree are vanity.” This is the profane, men of low degree. Men of high degree, the professor, they are lighter than vanity. Surely all men are lighter than vanity when laid in the balance. And I would not overlook one thing: there are hundreds and thousands of useful, excellent people in the world. They are upright, they are decent, law abiding, but in that verse the psalmist covers them, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, men of low degree, men of high degree, when you weigh up all they say and do, it is outside the realm of grace, and the solemn circumference of their speech and actions are this world which passeth away. Surely all flesh is grass, like the flower of grass it passeth away – hollow, light, brittle. “Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide”; “The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge,” says the prophet. He had evidently found it out.

Then apply it to the profane, the pleasure-loving world. How light, how frivolous, inferior in every sense of the word are its aims; its pleasures and its resources are inferior. Listen: “Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.” But the sorrow of the world – its very sorrow – worketh death. “They are altogether lighter than vanity.” And if your soul is made serious, and you are deeply impressed with the value of it, the importance of salvation, and the transitory nature of all things you see and hear here below, you understand what I mean by comparing them with the chaff, which is hollow, and light, and brittle, and unstable. What said Jacob of Reuben? “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” None can excel unless they are made gracious. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.”

But this will also apply to the religious professor. Up and down the land, up and down the world there are great lights in religion; there is a hollowness, great noise, a form of godliness without the power thereof. Paul sets it up in 1 Corinthians 13: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” What is that? Empty, an empty sound. It is to be dreaded. Light, frivolous conversation – have you not observed it with professors? What a lot of it there is. It is not the amount of things. The sad lack of solemnity and weight, and solidity, the worldly atmosphere, the pleasures which creep in, worldly conformity. They are “weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” The godly soul weighs these things

up with a certainty that is self-condemning. "Judge not that ye be not judged," but if you are looking for companions, if you desire communion with the saints, you will often be disappointed because there is hollowness, lightness, brittleness, there is a temporariness, there is unstableness so common and prevalent in our day.

So you do not meet with Jonathans very often, or Davids, and most have to walk solitarily and alone. Not often do we read or hear what we read of in Malachi: "Then that they feared the LORD spake often one to another ... and a book of remembrance was written," because you see, there is short weight, a bed too narrow. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Vastly inferior.

Then there is one more aspect of the case, as I have led you so far. First there were the things in common; second, the chaff would appear to have the advantage; third, the chaff was exceedingly useful; fourth, it was vastly inferior. What remains? Finally the chaff is eternally separated. He shall send forth the angels to gather the wheat into His garner. There is the threshing floor, there is the winnowing, there is the separation, there is the fire which "shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And although these two classes have walked together so much in this vale of tears, and have been to each other related in so many things, and serviceable to each other in so many ways, there comes a parting of the ways, and they part never to meet again. The chaff is taken away for inferior use at the best. We read, "The lion shall eat straw like the ox." The straw is mostly trodden underfoot, the chaff is blown away into oblivion; no one knows where it is; it is not missed or desired.

Then there is this: the chaff shall be burned up in the fire, and says the Lord Jesus three times in short succession, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The eternal difference! "The LORD hath set apart him that is godly for Himself." "The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel," between the sacred and profane. And that which is superior is gathered, it is the thing the husbandman had his eye upon at the outset when he sowed his corn; he was not sowing for chaff, he was sowing for wheat. And that which represents the excellent part of the simile: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for My servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

And what shall we say to these things? The wheat signifies the chosen part, God's elect, He has set apart for Himself in the covenant of grace. He has set them apart and given them an excellent name: a peculiar people, an holy nation. He calls them, My jewels, My sheep, My wheat. He has given them a glorious name. He has given them a

blessed character. They are “children that will not lie.” They are an holy people, a redeemed people. They will be a glorified people. He has given them a blessed character. He has given to them blessed experience, superior; it is the better part. “The LORD’S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” And here the wheat has no merit; they have nothing to glory in. No, says Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

Now I hope you and I may lay these things to heart. What is the application of them? It is this: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” The application is this: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The application is this: do not take things at a glance; do not be satisfied with light things, a name to live, resting in tradition, a little reformation, a little polishing up of the outside. “What is the chaff to the wheat?” O to have the secret, real things, union with Christ. Above all things I would mention, see to it that your religion produces conformity to the image of His Son. If not, where are we? If our religion and our fruits are foreign to the spirit and example of the Redeemer, where are we? The good tree will bring forth good fruit, will it not? “Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Amen.

HONOURING THE LORD

My dear and esteemed Brother,

My poor, unprofitable life is a life of God’s mercies to the chief of sinners. At times I mourn and grieve because I am not more like the Lord, that I live so little to His glory and in His fear. I find it no easy matter to be a Christian indeed, and to walk in some little measure as becometh the gospel and my profession of the truth and name of Jesus. Indeed, I feel as though I had scarcely begun to walk, or to live, in any humble degree, a life of faith upon the Son of God.

Last Lord’s day I baptized at Cheltenham, in the open air, in a reservoir in a nursery, a man seventy-five years of age, quite infirm, and his wife, seventy-two; also a man of grace and of good report with those that are without, and whose profession has been one of weight in the world. I felt it good to hear the dear man, in simplicity and humility, tell at the water side how the Lord called him by His grace, led him, appeared for him, and brought him, sweetly constrained, to follow his despised Lord in an ordinance and command, also despised by some, and

neglected by others. I thought there was more weight and substance in what he said than in all mine, and I felt indeed unworthy to baptize such a disciple; only he spoke of me as being (though unworthy) an instrument in the Lord's hands of bringing him to walk in obedience to his Lord's commands. For this cause he particularly wished me to baptize him, whom at the water he called "his dear and beloved friend." He was greatly favoured in soul when he went before the church: he spoke for an hour. And it was a time of favour to himself and to them, not soon to be forgotten; thus proving the Lord's words, "In keeping of them" – His commandments – "there is great reward"; also, "Them that honour Me I will honour."

The servant who *knew* his Lord's will and *did it not* was commanded to be beaten with many stripes. Many times has my mind been going out to Wait Hill, longing to see one whom I so dearly love and highly esteem walking in the same steps and by the same rule. And several times have I thought how pleased I should be if my dear friend were constrained to come also and be baptized with the others. May the Lord be with you and lift up the light of His countenance upon you.

J. Tanner

Cirencester, Gloucestershire
June 14th, 1861

THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER

Substance of a sermon preached by James Stevens in July 1966

Text: "And the government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9. 6).

A feelingly-poor, ignorant, hell-deserving sinner feels within his spirit that unless the zeal, the ardour of the Lord of hosts performs within him, he can never truly comprehend, rejoice, receive and believe the wondrous height, depth, length and breadth of the glorious truths couched in these few words. Moreover, he has got to learn, and does learn, by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, that mortal man receives nothing of the power and kingdom of God by a lifetime's study, or endeavour, or self-sacrifice; because his mind is darkened, and apt to be filled with a multitude of perplexing thoughts, fears, cares, dangers, distresses, passions and lusts; all making various impressions on the minds of men, filling them with disorder, darkness and confusion. Only when the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shines forth in the soul by the zeal of the Lord of hosts is he filled in his thoughts and contemplations on this glorious Object; only by the Lord the Spirit is the

soul brought into, and kept in, a holy, serene, spiritual frame; for to be spiritually minded is life and peace; and this He doeth by taking off our hearts from all undue regard to the things here below. In comparison what are they to the great worth, beauty and glory of everlasting truths?

A poor sinner solemnly feels that there is a deficiency, an imperfection within him which makes him feel very often a stranger unto a heavenly life and to living beneath the spiritual refreshings and satisfactions that the gospel has for believers. Do we indeed, that is, truly, prove that the grace of God is a necessary preparation for glory and a God-given faith for sight? When the soul is not previously seasoned with grace and faith, it is not capable of glory or divine vision. When the Lord gives a fixed, firm, faithful meditation on the glory of Christ, the soul will find rest, satisfaction and true pleasure; therefore it is good to be exercised, and that continually.

Now shall I say that the beginning, the first glorious awakening to these words was when the soul was first killed by the eternal God to all false, fleshly hopes by creature merit of gaining favour of forgiveness and acceptance with Him, so that his mouth was closed. By the powerful application of God's holy law he received the knowledge of sin; and we know "that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." "There shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." I would here mention, and especially to our young friends, watch to this point: May the God of all grace begin a gracious work in your hearts before you begin in profession with a gracious God by your works; the latter will leave you short of the essential reality in a real and true profession; the first will cause you to watch to His great work of a good, solid and true foundation laid in your hearts which, when the rain descends and the floods come and the winds blow, will stand because it was founded upon a rock, a tried stone, the Rock of Ages.

To return. When the poor, hell-deserving sinner stands in this solemn place, his mouth stopped of all argument, all replying against a holy God, in this very place, the place of impossibility that ever he can be saved, the Holy Spirit reveals to him that God made a way whereby the verily guilty can approach to Him through the mercy seat, for He delighteth in mercy, which is evidenced in a revealed Christ. Here then is the first awakening that in this glorious God-Man Mediator all fulness dwells; and from this spot, and only through the zeal of the Lord of hosts – which you will prove later on – you will discover that it pleased the Father that this should be so; and this fulness you will learn is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Out of this ineffable fulness – I repeat, ineffable

because it is inexpressible in words – you will seek to draw virtue, efficacy, excellency, and divine authority; and being the recipient of this by divine grace, you will be caused to live a life now of prayer, watching, waiting, begging, hoping, sometimes feelingly strengthened through a felt sense of the mercy of God in a blessed Jesus. You will implore, that is, supplicate earnestly with longing entreaty of the dear Spirit that He would personally magnify to you His glorious office, and take again of that fulness manifested in the glorious Head of the church. When through free and sovereign grace He should grant your request and answer your petition, your language will be in gracious unison with the living church of God: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.”

As you receive the sweet savour of this unity, you will observe that its most distinctive qualities, its taste, its flavour, its character, will be divine; and everything outside of this in your own heart you will learn is the exact opposite, of a different nature entirely, a different character altogether. To imbibe, drink in, to absorb that spirit will sever you from Christ and the sweet and blessed unity of the Spirit, from the love of God, and from the united harmony of the church of the living God. Did He not say, “Now therefore if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine”? To foster your own spirit then will cost you dear, for you will lose the sweet belief that God’s people will be your people and their God your God; if in membership with a church, your spirit will be at variance with the church’s living Head; if in office in the church and fostering a spirit exactly opposite to your Lord, you will not be apt to teach, because you will not be patient, not prayerfully watching that you should not be lifted up with pride, and thus fall into the condemnation of the devil.

You will notice, especially if you have received the savour of divine unity flowing into your soul through the love of the Father in giving His Son to be a propitiation for your sins, that only by and through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost is a man purged that he should be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use; that only by Him one is given a single eye to His honour and glory that you might serve God with a pure conscience. When discord and the spirit of anarchy prevail through the churches, it is because the spirit of its members is at variance with the church’s living Head; they take the government of the church upon themselves, they forget their glorious Leader, and also what it cost Him to obtain the victory over His and the church’s enemies. Any soul who takes the government upon themselves unwittingly (that is, without knowledge of consciousness of it), must

suffer loss, in some cases it appears almost irreparable damage; but a long-suffering Jehovah mentions in Leviticus that provision was made for restoration by blood under the types of the ceremonial law, exemplifying by example the great propitiation.

Who can comprehend the enormous pressure, that great weight which was placed upon His shoulder, which He so willingly carried? When on earth, walking in obedience to His Father's commands, whose eye was always upon Him when enduring temptations, when hungering, when thirsting, when performing miracles, when visiting certain places to administer comfort to certain poor, afflicted sinners; in all His journeyings I believe His eye was to Calvary. He knew of it when in glory with His Father from the eternal, everlasting covenant of the blessed Three-in-One, and now could testify of it: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" What was this great weight, this intense burden, but the sins of the whole elect of God? They, the elect, could never come to God but through this one pure sacrifice, this propitiation whereby they should be reconciled to God; moreover, it was the only acceptable sacrifice the eternal Spirit will ever make known to the elect vessels of mercy for sins past, for sins present, and for sins to come.

These elect vessels of mercy are brought through trials, tribulations, anguish, felt desertion, the chastenings of the Almighty, the hidings of His face; and brought to know experimentally that though the ministration of condemnation was glorious, yet it had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. Then they are led by the Lord the Spirit to know that though the chief priests and Pharisees gave command that the sepulchre be made fast and secure, sealing the stone and setting a watch, all that was as nothing to God, who commanded the earthquake; to know that His angel would descend from heaven to roll back the stone from the door, so that the keepers did shake and become as dead men; to know that our glorious Leader should return triumphant and victorious, and after He had met them at the place appointed He blessed them, and was parted from them and carried up into heaven to sit on the right hand of God.

As that dear, eternal Spirit makes known by divine manifestation His exaltation, and that He ever liveth to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him, then through the grace of God they will be anxiously, carefully, yea affectionately jealous for His honour, that not only themselves, but that none throughout the churches will take the government, which the Father placed upon His shoulder, upon their own shoulders in thought, word or deed, because everything of God was invested in Him. Here is His office, His authority, His dignity, His rank,

His nobility. Every time in membership, in office, and at whatever time, the church attempts anything or everything in their own spirit, their own judgmental knowledge, they despise (which is, to tread upon) the revealed mind of the Father, and belittle the glorious office of our exalted Jesus, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, which is to call the Word and work of God an unholy thing.

The state of some of our churches today is through this very thing, their own spirit. The Lord hath not changed, He is of one mind, all things consist by Him. Moreover they forget that great weight which He had to bear, and how through His long-suffering mercy He bore with our mis-doings, our misbehaviour, our many offences; and it is questionable if some who make a profession are sensibly aware of the poignancy of His grief because they lack His true Spirit to feel it. Those who did receive it have forgotten the sweet hallowedness of that unity which came to them through the sacred unction of the Holy One, and now through ignorance and unbelief they know not the voice of their own carnal actions, which is this: "We will not have this Man to rule and reign over us." They certainly make mention of His name, "but not in truth, nor in righteousness."

If you love Him, and His name to you is Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, your heart and prayers will be up to Him for His church, and to beg of Him for His name's sake that He will not take His glory from us, but that the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Though feelingly poor and destitute, and a feelingly-bigger sinner as the years increase, and your own weakness evidenced in your poor heart between a heart-searching God and your own soul, let me inform you, if you are thus favoured to feel your state, and mourn and grieve at these abominations within, and then He should let down one small morsel, one little, given evidence of the unction of the Holy One into your soul, you will receive strength divine; and also have a sure evidence from whence your strength cometh, for all power is given unto Him, in heaven and in earth. May I, may you, may the whole church of God prove the solemn yet glorious truth of His own words: "Without Me ye can do nothing." Amen.



If you have assurance, be careful you do not lose it. Keep assurance by prayer: "O continue Thy lovingkindness." Keep assurance by humility. Pride estranges God from the soul. When you are high in assurance, be low in humility. Paul had assurance, and he baptized himself with the name, "Chief of sinners."

Thomas Watson

THE EXERCISE OF TRUE WORSHIP

(Author unknown)

When I attend in the house of the Lord upon the ministry of His servants, is it my one desire to hear the words of eternal life? Or is it the excitement of feeling, the indulgence of fancy, the quickening of intellect, the lulling of conscience, or, worst of all, the mere observation of custom that brings me to the sanctuary?

Alas! Conscience may be soothed by many a flattering word, intellect may be exercised by many a subtle speculation, imagination may revel in many a pleasant fantasy, yea, and the affections may be roused by many a pathetic appeal to the heart to which not one word of eternal life has found a saving entrance.

O for such a heart as the Holy Ghost alone can give! – an honest, a good heart; a heart cleared from the thorns and briars of known and prohibited sin; a heart ploughed up by the deep furrows of conviction, a heart softened by the dews and rain of heaven’s good spirit. For into such hearts the Word will find entrance, even though it come not with excellency of speech and man’s wisdom; and finding entrance it will give long life even for evermore.

THE BELIEVER’S PRAYER FOR SAFETY

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually” (Psa. 119. 117).

Such is my sense of need and peril, that my only refuge lies in “continuing instant in prayer.” I must therefore send up one cry after another into my Father’s ear for the support of His upholding grace. For not only the consciousness of my weakness, but the danger of the slippery path before me, reminds me that the safety of every moment depends upon the upholding power of my faithful God. The ways of temptation are so many and imperceptible – the influence of it so appalling – the entrance into it so deceitful, so specious, so insensible – my own weakness and unwatchfulness so unspeakable – that I can do nothing but go on my way, praying at every step: “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Often indeed can I remember – when “my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped,” that, when I have said, “My foot slippeth,” I have been enabled to record, “Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.”

How beautiful is the description of this experience in the picture given of the church of old: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" This state of dependence appears to have been familiar to the psalmist, and aptly delineates his affectionate, though conflicting, confidence in his God: "My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." The recollection of the care of his God, from the earliest moments of his life, supplied encouragement for his present faith, and matter for unceasing praise. "By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee." We cannot wonder, then, that this confidence should sustain his soul in the contemplation of the remaining steps of his pilgrimage, and his prospects for eternity: "Nevertheless," saith he, "I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." And indeed the more lively my spiritual apprehensions are, the more conscious I shall be that the Lord is, by the operations of His grace as well as of His providence, "compassing my path and my lying down"; "lest any hurt me, keeping me night and day."

If it be enquired how the Lord "holds up" His people in this slippery path, the answer is, of the fulness of Jesus they all receive, and grace for grace, so that "the life which they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God." And therefore if I am upheld, it is by the indwelling of the Spirit, who supplies from His infinite Fountain of life all the strength and support I need throughout my dangerous way. By His divine influence, the dispensations of providence also become the appointed means of drawing and keeping me near to my God. If therefore prosperity is endangering my soul, and strengthening my worldly bonds, may I not trust to the ever-watchful kindness of the Lord, to keep me low, and not to suffer me to be at ease in my forgetfulness? If the pleasures of sense, if the esteem of the world, or the good report of the church, are bringing a bewitching snare upon my soul, my God will lead me into the pathway of the cross – in the "valley of humiliation."

But how clearly is the secret of an unsteady walk traced to a neglect of leaning upon an almighty arm! And how fearfully is the danger of self-confidence unveiled! If I am standing by my own strength, very soon shall I be made to feel that I cannot stand at all. No "mountain" seemed to "stand stronger" than Solomon's. Yet when he became the very "fool" that he describes – "trusting in his own heart" – how quickly was it moved!

Peter thought in the foolishness of his heart, that he could have walked upon the water unsupported by the arm of his Lord; but a

moment's sense of weakness and danger brought him to his right mind: "And, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Well would it have been for him, if his deliverance at that moment of peril had effectually rebuked his presumption. We should not then have heard from the same lips that language of most unwarranted self-confidence, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I"; "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." Poor, deluded disciple! Thou art on the brink of a grievous fall! Yet was he "held up" from utterly sinking. "I have prayed for thee," said the gracious Saviour, "that thy faith fail not." And thus "held up" by the same faithful intercession of my powerful Friend (whose prayers are not weak as mine, nor will He fail or be discouraged by my continual backslidings) I too – though in the atmosphere of danger, in the slippery path of temptation – "shall be safe" – safe from an ensnaring world, safe from a treacherous heart, safe in life, safe in death, safe in eternity. Thus does an interest in the covenant encourage – not presumption – but faith, in all its exercises of humility, watchfulness, diligence and prayer; and in this appointed way does the Lord securely "keep the feet of His saints."

Let me not then forget, either my continual liability to fall, if left to myself, or the faithful engagements of my covenant God, to "keep me from falling." While I recollect for my comfort, that I "stand by faith," still is the exhortation most needful: "Be not highminded, but fear." "By faith I stand," as it concerns God; by fear as regards myself. As light is composed of neither brilliant nor sombre rays, but of the combination of both in simultaneous action, so is every Christian grace combined with its opposite, "that it may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Hope, therefore, combined with fear, issues in that genuine, evangelical confidence, in which alone I can walk safely and closely with God. Let then the self-confident learn to distrust themselves, and the fearful be encouraged to trust their Saviour: and in each let the recollection of grace and help vouchsafed "in time of need" lead to the steadfast resolution: "I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually." However self-denying they may be in their requirements, however opposed in their tendency to "the desires of the flesh and of the mind," I take God as the Surety of my performance of them; and I desire to love them as the rule of my daily conduct, and as forming the very element of heavenly happiness to my soul.

It is observable, that in the covenant of grace the mind is still spoken of to be renewed before the heart (see Jer. 31. 33). For it is by understanding that grace slips down into the affections.

George Swinnock

THE COVENANT OF GRACE, THE FOUNDATION OF ALL SAVING MERCY

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

1. It is the foundation of the first saving mercy that a poor sinner meets with; and that is the first grace given to the dead soul, viz. spiritual life, the new heart, the first resurrection, by which the soul is enabled to believe and embrace Jesus Christ: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. 36. 26). This is saving mercy: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3. 5). Upon what bottom can this stone in the building be laid, but on the covenant betwixt the Father and Christ? No doing of the sinner can be pretended here, for life and salvation, since the sinner is really dead spiritually, and can do nothing; but it is a performing of the promise of the covenant to Christ: "Even when we were dead in sins," He "hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2. 5).

2. It is the foundation of the middle saving mercies. Look to the soul's actual believing; it is the budding of a promise, a branch of that covenant; "None can keep alive his own soul.... They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness" (Psa. 22. 29, 31). Compare John 6. 37: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Justification is the fruit that grows upon it. "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many" (Isa. 53. 11). So is sanctification; they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1. 2), in virtue of that covenant, as they were corrupted and defiled in Adam by virtue of the breach of the first covenant, compare Ezekiel 36. 25: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." This is an absolute promise with respect to the sinner. All their obedience itself, and persevering in holy obedience, are fruits of the covenant: "I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (verse 27). "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32. 40); and so belong to the promise of it, and are no part of the proper condition of it, which must go before partaking of the fruits of it.

3. It is the foundation of the crowning mercy, eternal life in heaven: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1. 2). To whom could this be promised before the world began, but to the Son of God in the eternal compact? So that the sinner comes to be partaker of it in Him, as he is of death in Adam: "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17. 2). Hence,

notwithstanding of all the good works of the saints, wrought all their life long, they receive eternal life as freely, and as much a gift, as if they had done nothing: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6. 23). Hence they who have done most for God, are as deep in the debt of free grace for their crown, as the thief on the cross, who believed in Christ and then expired. For all is made over to the several persons of the seed, upon one bottom of the covenant, the proper condition of which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

To confirm it, consider,

1. The justice of God could not admit of mercy to lost sinners, but upon the ground of this covenant; whereby the repairing of the honour of the law by obedience and suffering was sufficiently provided for (see Psa. 40. 6, 7). The first covenant being broken, the breakers must "die without mercy" (see Heb. 10. 28), unless salvation to them be brought about by another covenant, that shall repair the breach; which could be no other but that made with the chosen One.

2. All saving relation betwixt Christ and us is founded on that covenant. Christ obeyed and died; but what benefit have the fallen angels thereby? They are left hopeless for all that, and must encounter with unatoned justice. Why? Not that Christ's doing and dying was not able to save them; the blood of infinite value can have no bounds set to its sufficiency: but because their names were not in that covenant, it had no relation to them, but to lost sinners of Adam's race: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2. 16).

3. The very design of making that covenant was, that it might be the channel of saving mercy, in which the whole rich flood of it might run, for the quickening, purifying, blessing, fructifying and perfecting of an elect world, lying under the bands of death and the curse by the breach of the first covenant. "Mercy shall be built up for ever" (Psa. 89. 2), compared with the text, "I have made a covenant with My chosen" (verse 3). It was the Father's design; and it was the Son's design. Men are apt to devise unto themselves other channels of mercy; but this being the only channel designed by infinite wisdom, here the sinful creature will find saving mercy flowing freely, but all other channels he will find quite dry.

4. It has been the ground of all the saints' expectations and hopes of mercy in all ages. It was first published in the promise made to Adam: The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent (see Gen. 3. 15); and that was the stay of the souls of the faithful till Abraham's time. Then it was more clearly discovered in the promise given to him: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22. 18). The ceremonial law, and the prophecies of Christ, pointed it out very

fully. And thus believers under the Old Testament built their faith of mercy on it. And since that time it has been most clearly and full discovered in the gospel; and so the New Testament church have raised their faith of mercy on it.

THE PLUMBLINE

By Edward Carr (1851-1920)

“Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline” (Amos 7. 8).

The Lord granted to Amos a revelation of Himself, and enabled him to see exactly what was in His hand. “Behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand” (verse 7). Now, we cannot tell what is in the Lord’s hand until He Himself shows us (see verse 4). It is important to notice the place where the Lord revealed Himself. He stood upon a wall made by a plumbline; and therefore perfectly upright, according to His own rule. It was not “daubed ... with untempered mortar” (Ezek. 13. 10), nor was it out of square. It was rightly built, and the Lord was there testing it with His line, and vouchsafing His presence in a way of judgment.

A plumbline is a cord with a weight at the end to keep it taut, used by builders as a rule by which to test the uprightness of their work. To this end it must needs be applied. A broken line is of no use at all, and a knotted one with joins is a very imperfect instrument. If the builder of a wall neglects the plumbline, he will most likely be out of the perpendicular, and if unskilful the result will be an unsightly and useless “bowing wall” (Psa. 62. 3), just ready to topple over.

In the application of this instructive figure to spiritual things, we may consider, first, the line; and then secondly, its use.

The Line

The Lord declares, “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet” (Isa. 28. 17); in order that “refuges of lies” may be made manifest, and walls “daubed with untempered mortar” be swept away. The plumbline in the Lord’s hands, which He Himself applies, is:

1. His Word, as used by His Spirit for trial and testing. The doctrine of the Word is the line by which our views of the truth must be tested, and if any opinion does not lie straight with this, it is erroneous. The experience described in the Word is the line by which our state in the sight of God must be put to the proof. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise (see 2 Cor. 10. 12). The comparison must be with the line of experience laid down in the Word; and whatever does not

accord therewith stands only in the flesh. In the same way, the precepts of the Word are the tests of our practice, whether it is upright or not. An upright walk corresponds to the precepts of the gospel.

2. The example of the Lord Jesus is the plumbline. The question is a close one: Are we following His steps (see 1 Pet. 2. 21) as true disciples? If we consider His sufferings, we find the bitterest drop in His cup of sorrow was the hidings of His Father's face. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27. 46). Is it not so with us? If we are made partakers of His sufferings, we shall be of His consolations also (see 2 Cor. 1. 7). His consolations consisted in doing His Father's will, in secret prayer, and in watching the fulfilment of His word. This is the path all saints have trodden. Of those gone to glory the poet sings:

"They marked the footsteps that He trod,
(His zeal inspired their breast);
And following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest." (H. 477)

The Word of the Father, the example of the Son, are accompanied with that inward fruit of the Spirit:

3. The fear of the Lord, which is the plumbline "set in the midst of Israel" by the Lord Himself. It is a "fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. 13. 14). The fear of the Lord creates a tender conscience, which feels acute sorrow for the least deviation from the right and straight course, as that deviation is made known by the application of the plumbline; which is thus the three-fold cord, not quickly broken (see Eccles. 4. 12).

Its Use

When this line is applied by the Lord to our feelings, it shows which are spiritual, and which are only natural. For want of this application by the Holy Spirit of the plumbline of God's Word, many put darkness for light, flesh for spirit, and consider that carnal feelings are evidences of divine life. The rule, however, still is: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8. 20). Again, our prayers are only right as they lie straight with God's Word; then are they indited by the Spirit, and acceptable to God. The Holy Spirit never teaches us to pray for what is not in accordance with His holy will, expressed in His holy Word.

If there is a daily application of this plumbline to our spirits, they will be tried whether they are of God (see 1 John 4. 1). We often err in spirit (see Isa. 29. 24), and it is the being brought to books which makes us come to understanding. Then convinced of our error (and helplessness to rectify it), we turn to Him with the humble prayer: "Renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51. 10). His Word, the example of Christ, and the

fear of the Lord produce deep “searchings of heart” (Judg. 5. 16), as to motives and thoughts, intents and purposes. This threefold line, well weighted with God-sent affliction and trial, is the test of the consistency of our life. “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa. 84. 11). It is easy for people to deceive themselves on this point. Many Pharisees, priding themselves most highly on their love to the truth, are those whose walk and conduct is most dishonouring to God, and least accords with the path laid down in the Word of God, although simple souls may be deceived. Such walk in pride, and pride is always accompanied (more or less), by hatred of others. This is the exact contrary of the humility and love which God requires and gives. The Lord uses the right material in building up His people on their most holy faith (see Jude 20), and then the wall is rightly built, and stands this test of uprightness, namely, the walk corresponding to the profession.

By the same rule, likewise, testimony has to be tried. Divergencies from the straight line of the divine Word must not be accepted, even though these divergencies may correspond very well with that kind of traditional experience, which abounds in periods of spiritual declension, when people copy the form of sound expressions from one another, for lack of a true experience of the power of vital godliness. This frequently leads to a resting in false comfort, which, like an ill-built wall, is neither stable nor even. The consolations of our God alone stand the searching test of the plumbline.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 61)

CHAPTER 3

Of the works of the Holy Ghost upon Christ the Saviour.

The summing up of the works of the Holy Spirit, and laying them altogether in one heap, that we find scattered up and down in the Scriptures, would, if we were able to recollect them all, and every particular, arise to a very great bulk. I shall reduce them which I have gleaned as most eminent onto these three heads,

- I. What work and use He is, and was of, to Christ our Head.
- II. What to the church, taken collectively.
- III. What to every saint.

And in the filling up of these, I shall not mention anything that but what the Scriptures do expressly attribute to Him.

I shall first describe His operations upon Christ our Head.

1. It was the Holy Ghost that formed His flesh in the womb: it is said that Mary “was found with Child of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1. 18), and, “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (verse 20).

2. It was the Holy Ghost had the honour of the consecration of Him to be the Christ, and that by anointing Him “without” or “above measure,” as John the Baptist witnessed (see John 3. 34). It was with power and all grace that He was anointed: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11. 2). What is Messiah, but the Most Holy One anointed? Now, with what oil was Jesus anointed, and so made Christ? “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10. 38). The Holy Ghost is that oil He is anointed with above His fellows; and He hath His name of Christ, which is the chief name of His Person, from the Holy Ghost, as He hath that of Jesus for saving us, which is His work. Christ, the anointed, is the name that speaks all His offices. Kings, priests and prophets, who were only His shadows, were anointed. And it is made the true, proper sign and token of His Person’s being the Son of God, that the Holy Ghost came visibly on Him, and abode upon Him: “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God” (John 1. 32-34), with which compare John 7. 38, 39: “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He 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)”; whereupon, “Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ” (verses 40, 41). This descending visibly of the Spirit (which was done first to Him), was the highest evidence of these that could be, excepting only that of the Father: “This is My beloved Son.” The Baptist makes these His highest characters, that it was He baptized with the Holy Ghost as with fire; and that He received the Spirit without measure, though He was personally full of grace and truth Himself, as He was the Son of God.

3. It was the Holy Ghost anointed Him to all His offices, as first to be a Prophet and Preacher of the gospel, which was first spoken by the Lord (see Heb. 2). Thus, Luke 4. 18 (and some think it was His first text), “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath ... sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and

recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." The Spirit was He that made Him a Preacher of the gospel, to utter things which man never did, and to speak in such a manner as man never did. And this is evident by the context in that Luke 4, for it was His first sermon after His baptism, when the Holy Ghost had anew fallen on Him, and he had returned "full of the Holy Ghost," as Luke 4. 1; and again in verse 14 He returned (or went) "in the power of the Spirit" into Galilee, His ordinary standing diocese for His ordinary preaching, as the evangelists show.

4. The Holy Ghost anointed Him with power to do all His miracles, and all the good He did; so in Acts 10. 38, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power: going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; whom it is expressly said He cast out "by the Spirit" (Matt. 12. 28).

5. When Christ was dead, who was it raised Him up from the grave? Which work was so great a work, as God Himself accounts it as a new begetting, or making Him anew, of His Son Christ: "He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts 13. 33), God rejoiceth, as having then recovered His Son, that was as it were lost in the likeness of sinful flesh. Now, who was the immediate cause of this new advancement, whereby He was born into the other world? The Holy Ghost: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8. 11). God by His Spirit raiseth up both Christ and us.

6. When He ascended, who filled Him with that glory? The Holy Ghost: He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (see Psa. 45. 7), which oil is said to be the Holy Ghost (see Acts 10. 38).

7. It was the Holy Ghost that solemnly anointed Him as King in heaven: "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2. 33), etc. Peter's inference from this is, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (verse 36).

8. It was and is the Holy Ghost that proclaims Him Christ in men's hearts. He sets the crown upon Him there also, as well as in heaven, in so much that no man could ever come to acknowledge Him the Christ but from the Spirit: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12. 3). So as whatever right He had in His Person, or by His Father's designation (of which in Acts 2. 36, Rom. 14. 9), yet it is the Spirit that publicly proclaimed Him such, brought Him in all His subjects; or, to use Christ's own words, "He shall glorify Me: for He

shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16. 14). All this He hath done to and for Christ our Head.

Abridged

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Reluctant Queen and Other Reformation Women, by Elaine Snuggs; 240 pages; paperback; price £12.99; published by and obtainable from Christian Focus Publications at www.christianfocus.com or bookshops.

This is an excellent, well-researched and easily-read book, relating the lives of four prominent women who defended and in various ways suffered for the cause of the Reformation which took root in the reign of Henry VIII. It gives a fresh insight to the struggles of those women as they were prepared to stand against error at this time of immense change. This book is highly recommended and a profitable read for all true Protestants!

Why We’re Protestant – The Five Solas of the Reformation and Why They Matter, by Nate Pikowicz; 152 pages; paperback; price £10.99; published by Christian Focus Publications (as above).

In many ways this is an excellent and much-needed defence and exposition of the principles that guided the Protestant Reformation, and a valuable resource to those who wish to understand why our worthy forefathers refused to compromise, in the face of bitter opposition, on Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone and For the Glory of God Alone. It is sad, however, to see inferior, less reliable and erroneous versions of the Bible quoted (ESB, NASB, NIV) while the most reliable and faithful King James Authorised version is neglected.

Martin Luther on Law and Gospel, by Henry Sant; hardback; 115 pages; price £9.95 plus £2 postage; published by and obtainable from The Huntingtonian Press, 72A Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Hants., SO30 1EB.

It is a remarkable fact that Martin Luther, so recently delivered from the bondage of the Roman Catholic church, should see and expound so clearly the vital difference between law and gospel.

The volume consists of an address given by the author to The Sovereign Grace Union on March 15th, 2022, on the subject that the title suggests. Tracing and quoting extensively from Luther’s works, Henry Sant brings out the difference between the law (the covenant of works) and the gospel (the covenant of grace). Like the Apostle Paul, Luther could say, “For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The second part is devoted to extracts from Luther’s works on the subject.

This treatise is recommended to all true believers, but especially to such as need to be established in this vital doctrine. The quote on page 49 is particularly apposite. “To sum up all in one sentence, he who knows how to distinguish the gospel from the law, should thank God, and know that he is a sound theologian.”

Pursuing Holiness; The Message of 1 Peter, by Hugh M. Cartwright; hardback; 253 pages; price £16 plus postage; obtainable from the publisher, Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN; www.ettrickpress.co.uk

Having personally appreciated the ministry of the late Hugh Cartwright of Edinburgh, it is a pleasure to review this further volume from his pulpit.

The book consists of concise, though fully-explanatory, notes taken of his prayer meeting addresses, at which he expounded consecutively the first Epistle of Peter during his pastorate at Gilmour Place Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh. These could well be read as prayer meeting addresses where there is no minister.

An interesting and profitable account of the life of Hugh and his wife Mina, by Catherine Hyde, prefaces the expositions.

This book is warmly commended. "He being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11. 4).

OBITUARY

Harry Alexander Wallis, formerly from Zion, Prestwood, and Ebenezer, Luton, and a loved and faithful minister of the gospel, passed to his eternal rest on Monday, November 7th, 2022, aged 96 years.

The following account is taken from his writings:

I was born in 1926 and brought up to attend Sunday School and chapel among various people, but by the time the war came in 1939 we attended nowhere, and Sunday was as any other day to us in the family, often spent in the garden. I left school when sixteen years of age, and started work with my father in a factory that manufactured electrical instruments. As the days off were staggered so that work could continue seven days a week, I was often found working on the Sunday.

A few days after my eighteenth birthday, I received my calling-up papers for the Royal Navy, and after a course of four months was sent out to Australia and eventually joined the submarine depot ship HMS Adamant in Sydney. I had left England, a land of rationing and austerity, and had come to a land of plenty. There seemed to be nothing wanting to satisfy the desires of nature – an abundance of food, lovely warm weather and sandy beaches and a people who at that time were very friendly towards us.

I remember spending an evening at the largest fun fair I had ever seen but O, how different I felt soon after this. Though, as I have said, among everything to satisfy the carnal mind, yet such darkness came over me that I could find no enjoyment in these things at all. I was so unhappy and miserable. Something very strange had come upon me, and I knew not what it was; there seemed such an emptiness in my life. After a while in this state of mind, I was sitting at a table in the Fleet Club,

Sydney; no doubt my looks betrayed the state of my mind, when another man in the navy came up to me, who seemed to understand my case, and after some conversation, persuaded me to go with him to a meeting. I must add here that during the war the Australian Military Services formed a section called “Everyman’s” to deal with the religious requirements of the men. It was to one of these meetings that I was taken, and it was here that I came into contact with the “free-willers” – Baptists, Methodists, Brethren, Presbyterians, Salvation Army and such like. I was carried away with all their Christian love and fellowship, lively meetings and evangelism. It was like life from the dead to me, and I soon became one of them, “joining myself to Christ,” and singing their hymns of great assurance and confidence, and going about bearing witness to Christ. Nevertheless amidst it all, I began to be troubled about sin – my sin, indwelling sin – and at the end of the day it would trouble me, and though supported by my new friends to renewed efforts in good works and “witness for Christ,” yet I could not so easily rejoice as they did, feeling to be short of the mark.

After some time, we had to leave Sydney and go south to Jervis Bay for submarine exercises. This bay was a very lovely place. I only went ashore once as there was just nothing to go for. We were here for six weeks, so that I was completely cut off from my former friends and this fellowship. I began to see the emptiness of my former profession – my religion was buoyed up with religious activity and now that was removed, I seemed to have nothing. About this time, I found in the ship’s chapel part of John Wesley’s diary. How pleased I was; it seemed like a light in a dark place. But how disappointed I was and disillusioned too, for though I tried to walk out John Wesley’s holiness and sanctification, I utterly failed. At the end of the six weeks, we returned to Sydney, but when I went to the meeting place it was closed. As the war was over, “Everyman’s” had been disbanded and I might say – so had my religion. I wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way and found no city to dwell in.

Eventually, after many changing scenes, I came back to England and was eventually discharged. I went to see my uncle, who, no doubt, having some idea of the state of my mind, invited me to go with him to Prestwood Chapel. This was my first visit to a Gospel Standard chapel, and I believe the first time I had heard the truth, and though I was in much weakness of mind and ignorance, yet I felt it was the truth. It was God’s work and not man’s work. I was drawn to the little cause at Prestwood and was found there as often as the doors were open. Although still sitting under the truth and acquainted with the searching sermons of Mr. J.C. Philpot and others, yet I can see as I look back that I was settling down on the letter of the truth, having some knowledge and double views of it in my mind only.

In 1950 war broke out in Korea. This raised many fears in the nation, but O, what solemn fears it brought into my heart. It seemed to me that the end of all things had come, and I was in no way prepared to meet God. How real eternity was to me then and what terrible fears I had because I knew that I could not stand before a holy God. Though, as I have said, I knew the truth in my mind, now I knew nothing but this: that I was without hope and without God in the world. I was just a poor, lost sinner, and what a solemn place to be in. Those who have been there will know that terrible prison house. It was here that my mouth was closed, and I was brought in guilty before God.

After some months in this dark and dreadful place, Mr. John Gosden was engaged to preach at Prestwood, but when I got there, it was another man whom I had never seen before. He preached from that word in Hebrews 12. 5, 6: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." What a good word that was to me! I could see and believe that all I was passing through was that "chastening of the Lord," and I was raised to a sweet hope in His mercy and delivered out of my prison house. The preacher was Mr. John Tyler of the Dicker, who in those early days was God's servant to me.

I was brought to wait on God and what sweet days they were. There was that simple trust in the Lord and an ear to hear what He would say unto me as I went to His house. And He did speak by the mouth of His servants, so that I was encouraged still to wait and to cleave to Him, amidst all my many fears and castings down. A good hearing time was at The Dicker, when Mr. Tyler preached from Isaiah 42. 16: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." It was God's precious word to me, and I believe I have had to walk it out ever since.

Now to come to the year 1957. I went to the Lord's house and the minister was Mr. J. Tomkins and his text Luke 15. 2: "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." I believe I supped with Him that night, O I did indeed! How precious Christ was to me as we sang hymn 405, especially as we came to verse 6:

"This sacred tie forbids their fears,
For all He is or has is theirs."

I was brought into the sweet liberty of the gospel and longed to walk in the ordinances of His house. In due time I was baptized by Mr. R.J. Morris and received into the church by Mr. Tomkins, and entered into the

truth of Psalm 133: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” They were good days, and though I knew what persecution was then, yet it brought me to cleave closely to the Lord and to experience blessed communion with Him.

“Many days have passed since then;
 Many changes I have seen;
 Yet have been upheld till now;
 Who could hold me up but Thou?” (H. 376)

I desire to say, in my little measure, with the apostle: “Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.”

An account of my exercises concerning the ministry

It was in my early days when I had a strong impression upon my mind that I should one day preach the gospel. Rightly or wrongly, it abode upon my mind, and through many years and changes it has remained, though at times the exercise and desire would be very strong, while at other times little more than a thought. Many times have I tried to put it from my mind, when conscious of a sense of my insufficiency and lack of grace and also the solemnity of it.

However, I would never completely cast the thought out of my mind and I have well found that if the truth was made precious to me and the gospel touched my heart, the ministry would come before my mind with strong desires to preach that gospel.

I pass over many years to come to more recent times and deeper exercises.

Early in 1977 I was ill and could not go to work for six weeks. It was a very solemn time with me. I was brought into deep and solemn exercise when reading Ezekiel chapter 33. It speaks of the Word of the Lord to the watchman. He is to speak faithfully to the people; to warn them and to blow the trumpet when the sword cometh upon the land; to show the people their iniquities. If the watchman does not speak faithfully to the people, their blood would be required of him. I shrank from such a word. It entered into my heart with much power, condemnation and reproof. All my comforts fled in a moment, and I was brought into great darkness of mind. Such was my state of mind, I thought I should never see the light again. They were heavy days indeed. But after some time, one of the Lord’s servants came and preached from, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,” which gave me a little hope that I should see better days. Then later another came and preached from, “Thou hast known my soul in adversity,” which word greatly relieved me.

Nevertheless, that solemn word in Ezekiel never really left me. I was afraid to read it for a long time lest that condemnation should come

into my heart again. However, I felt that somehow that word would be fulfilled and that I should have to warn the people.

About the middle of 1979, I was again much exercised about the ministry and was reading at that time an account of Mr. Walter Gibb of Tenterden and of his exercises respecting the ministry, which found an echo in my own heart, especially when he said that Ezekiel chapter 33 had been much on his mind.

On the following Sunday Mr. Haddow, our pastor, was preaching, and before he came to his text, he spoke much on Matthew 20 verses 1-7 and especially that word, "Go ye also into the vineyard," particularly as it referred to the ministry. He also spoke of the watchman in Ezekiel. It seemed to speak to me very pointedly, so that my exercises concerning the ministry increased greatly.

In July 1983, Mr. Haddow preached from Matthew 10. 8: "Freely ye have received, freely give." He spoke first as it has reference to the ministry as in verse 7: "And as ye go, preach." On the following Sunday, Mr. Haddow took for his text Isaiah 32. 3, 4: "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." He also quoted Exodus 4. 10-12. Such pointed references to the ministry I could not ignore, and though it seemed such a clear direction, I knew not what to do.

Now I come to a solemn chastening of the Lord. Some friends sent me a book by Thomas Boston entitled, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. I was reading the book early one morning when the word entered into my heart with solemn power. As I was reading of the misery of man's natural state and its awful condition in the Fall – under the wrath of God – that wrath of a holy God seemed to draw near to me, and I trembled within. I could see as I had never seen before that I could never stand before Him. I could see that I must have the righteousness of Christ – must have it, else I would perish for ever. How I was brought in a moment, off a bed of ease. How I prayed that the Lord would search my heart and deliver from every false hope and make known the righteousness of Christ and seal it on my heart.

How I now longed to warn my fellow men of their perilous condition and tell them that they must have a better righteousness than their own, that without the righteousness of Christ, they would surely fall under the awful wrath of God. I told the Lord that if He would be with me, I was willing to go forth in His name.

Mr. Henry Mercer came here to preach and I went to see him in the afternoon, and he spoke to me of his exercises about the ministry over many years – that for fifteen years he had been in bondage, but now the Lord had appeared for him. I was much impressed and not a little encouraged in my own soul by what he had to say.

About this time, I was reading *Zion's Witness* of a man who was one of Mr. J.C. Philpot's deacons at Oakham. I came to these words: "Having been deeply exercised for some years with thoughts about the ministry, I opened my mind to my pastor, Mr. Philpot." I was much struck with the passage and after much exercise of mind, I felt that I must do the same.

THE SABBATH

This is the day the *Lord* hath made –
 Made for Himself and made for man;
 Over and over I have said,
 "None but a God had formed such plan;
 One day in seven,
 To think of heaven.
 And worship Him as we only can!"

This is the day the Lord hath made –
 Made and guarded and owned and blessed;
 If the dear old Book were a fable, how
 Did the people come by a day of rest?
 One day in seven,
 To think of heaven,
 For the wealthy and the weariest.

This is the day the Lord hath made,
 But the world grows tired of godly things,
 And down the river the dreamers glide,
 And over the common the golf ball swings.
 One day in seven,
 To think of heaven,
 Is out of the wild world's reckonings.

This is the day the Lord hath made,
 And heaven is a long-drawn Sabbath day.
 Say, ye who revel in Sabbath trade,
 Or Sabbath feasting, or Sabbath play,
 Would heaven be
 Any joy to *thee*
 With a Sabbath as long as eternity?

M.A. Chaplin (1844-1922)

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Westminster Catechism

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

APRIL 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

**“WHAT SHALL BE DONE UNTO THE MAN WHOM THE
KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR?”**

In the end of Haman we have one of the clearest illustrations of the proverb, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16. 18). His rise to power, his bitter hatred of the Jews, and the great lengths he was permitted to go in his evil, are graphically recorded in the Book of Esther. Satan was undoubtedly using Haman as his agent in seeking to destroy the Jewish people and render null and void the covenant promise given to Abraham and David that Christ would come. It is most comforting to read how perfect was God’s work in overthrowing this evil intent. How true are the words: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8. 31). How solemnly true it is to read how Haman, like all who will end in eternal perdition, sealed his own destruction. There is no injustice with God!

In the context of Esther 6. 6, the king Ahasuerus had belatedly recognised the great service Mordecai had done in exposing a treasonable plot against himself, and determined to honour him for this service. Haman, when asked this question, rashly jumped to the conclusion that it was himself the king had in mind. How great was his humiliation when he was told to lead Mordecai through the streets of Shushan on the king’s horse, clothed with the king’s royal apparel and the royal crown, proclaiming, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.” We are told of the chagrin of Haman, but we are not told of what Mordecai felt as he was led through the streets. Knowing him to be a godly man, we can rightly assume that while he would not despise the king’s appreciation, the honours he sought were from a heavenly King, more lasting than the temporary accolades he received that day.

“No; they will tread, while here below,
The path their Master trod;
Content all honour to forego,
But that which comes from God.” (H. 1013)

In this account, and in the deeper truth that lies beneath, we see the truth of that discriminating word in 1 Samuel 2. 30: “For them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” By God’s grace Mordecai lived a God-honouring life, while

Haman despised the same God and solemnly proved that such who live and die in that spirit are left to everlasting dishonour.

Consider how Mordecai honoured God in three ways.

1. He honoured the earthly king as we are exhorted to in 1 Peter 2. 17: “Fear God. Honour the king.” Notice the fear of God must come first! Even though Ahasuerus was evidently a weak man, and at times irrational, yet Mordecai honoured God by respecting the office to which the king had been called. From such respect came his actions in revealing the treasonable plot of assassination.

2. He honoured God by seeking the answer of a good conscience before Him, even though his kindness was not rewarded. He patiently bowed under this dispensation until the Lord brought forth “his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noonday” (see Psa. 37. 6).

3. He refused in accordance with Exodus 20. 3 to give the idolatrous honour that Haman demanded, even though it made him a “gazingstock” to others (see Heb. 10. 33).

It is the privilege that every child of God should seek: to honour Him in all we say, and all we do. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2. 6).

But there is yet a much deeper vein of thought when we consider the Lord Jesus Christ, and how this word is perfectly fulfilled in Him, in a way to which none other can possibly attain. Leaving aside any earthly king, we consider God the Father, whom His dear Son delighted to honour, and who delighted to honour Him.

1. What a great honour was bestowed upon the Son of God, that He should be entrusted with the salvation of the whole election of grace (see Heb. 2. 11). What absolute confidence the Father had in His Son that He would accomplish this great work. At His baptism, His transfiguration, and when the voice of the Father came from heaven. “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Even the name Christ bore, JESUS, had in it an assurance. “He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21). How wonderfully Christ fulfils all that the name declares.

2. Christ honoured the holy moral law, fulfilled all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, and delighted to do and to fulfil His Father’s business throughout His earthly life.

3. Christ honoured the just demands of offended majesty by enduring in His own body and soul the punishment for the sins of His people, and by that one offering satisfied for ever divine justice on the behalf of His believing children.

4. Christ honoured His Father by humbling Himself as His Servant even to the cross. Being reviled He reviled not again. Suffering the

cruel and unjust treatment meted out to Him by sinners, He threatened not again (see 1 Pet. 2. 22, 23).

And now God has honoured Him. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2. 9-11).

Christ was honoured when He died in peace, committing His holy soul into the hands of His heavenly Father. He was honoured in His grave where His incorruptible body lay, watched over by a guard of angels, and by an unwitting guard of Roman soldiers. He was honoured when He came forth from the tomb in His risen glory, the empty tomb bearing its own witness to the satisfaction of God the Father and divine justice to His finished work. He was honoured when He left this earthly scene and ascended on high, leading captivity captive, when the gates lifted up as prophesied in Psalm 24 and the King of Glory came in. He was honoured when He was received to the right hand of the throne of God on high. He is honoured when every petition His church puts up in His name is answered for His name's sake. He will be honoured when He comes again to gather in one all His everlastingly-loved saints and carry them to glory, to the eternal happiness of those who died in faith, and solemnly to the eternal misery of those who gave Him no honour in their lives.

Flowing from these sacred truths is the source of all the honour believers give to Him who is worthy of their best esteem. Their faith and repentance honour Him; their hope in His mercy honours Him. Their love (though so often dimly expressed) yet still honours Him. He is honoured when His children "go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (see Heb. 13. 13). It honours Him when by His constraining love, saved sinners openly confess their Lord and Master.

And yet despite all this, His children feel ashamed of how far short they come in honouring Him. It comes so far short of what He is worthy of and that they have nothing to boast of in this respect. They read of the spitting, reviling and crucifying of their beloved Master. They have no stones to throw at the generation who so basely despised Him. "There," say they, "but for the grace of God go we."

And yet nothing humbles them more than when He honours the grace He has given them. How humbled were both Joseph and David when they reached the respective fulfilment of the promises they had been given. They, like all God's children, had to say: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Psa. 115. 1).

To the Lord's people the honour of being clothed in His righteousness, washed in His blood, and saved by His grace is all they desire. The wonder of it all is summed up in the Saviour's high-priestly prayer in John 17: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are One"; and, "Father, 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: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17. 22, 24).

May we disdain all earthly honours and seek the answer to the psalmist's prayer: "Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation; that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance" (Psa. 106. 4, 5).

"AND SITTING DOWN THEY WATCHED HIM THERE"

*Sermon preached by C.A. Wood, at Tamworth Road Chapel, Croydon,
on Lord's day evening, September 29th, 1991*

Text: "And sitting down they watched Him there" (Matt. 27. 36).

This refers to the soldiers who had crucified the Lord of life and glory. These men, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not rend it." They would not divide that coat into four parts, but "cast lots for it, whose it shall be." This was in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy and scripture, named in the twenty-second Psalm, where we read this: "They pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture."

These soldiers then, "sitting down they watched Him there." Many today look, as it were, upon the crucified One. Many today look at Jesus Christ with utmost scorn and derision. Their very attitude, their very life, cries out as the multitude of old, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him." They cry out, as it were, in their life, "Not this Man, but Barabbas."

There are those that look upon Jesus, and upon that death on Calvary's cross. They see, and rightly so, in His life, a wonderful example, a pattern. They acknowledge how good His teaching is, but in looking upon the Lord Jesus, as it were sitting and watching Him there, they do not do so under a solemn, personal sense of their sin, and they have no felt need of Jesus as a Saviour, no plea for mercy, no looking to

that precious, sin-atonng blood. But there are those who by faith are found sitting down to watch Him, and look upon Him hanging upon that cross, and hope their sin was pardoned by this dear Saviour. “They shall look upon Me whom they pierced.”

I pray that the Lord may this evening favour us with a sacred, spiritual meditation. We do not literally sit at that sacred place, but faith views it, looks to the Saviour, cleaves to that dear Redeemer. As we take these sacred steps in our meditation at this evening hour, we would go to that place that is called Calvary.

I remember some time ago thinking of the wonders of creation, thinking of the countless number of trees that have grown, and are growing, on the face of the earth, and yet *one* of those trees, *one* day was cut down and formed the wood upon which the Creator, the eternal Son of God, was crucified. We stand there. We would watch as those cruel soldiers take those dreadful nails and,

“Those kind hands that did such good,
They nailed them to a cross of wood.”

I must confess I love simple, spiritual truths and meditations that touch my poor heart, and it seems it needs a lot to touch my heart these days, and perhaps some of you older friends find it is so with you. Again, I thought of those hands. Never, never, on this earth were there hands like the hands of Jesus Christ. They were sinless, but they were all-powerful, and those hands that touched the leper, those hands that lifted a sinking Peter, those hands that healed, those hands that broke the bread, those hands that blessed the little children, those feet that walked this earth, went about doing good, must needs go through Samaria, must go over to Gadara, walked with the waves beneath His feet – those dear hands, those dear feet, nailed to the cross! We watched Him there.

Yes, my soul, hear afresh the words that fell from the Saviour’s lips: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” – breathing forgiveness, and setting us such an example. Words so often quoted by your poor pastor, but how needful to be reminded of them: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” I believe this: if pardon and forgiveness are tasted from the Saviour, it will make us willing to forgive all. An unforgiving spirit, my friend, will bring starvation to our souls. We need much grace, but I believe a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, in this way, will affect very deeply our spirit.

They crucified Him. Then look, my soul! There were two others, the worst criminals they could find in the whole land. They set Jesus in the midst. O! that is what man thinks of Jesus Christ. “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

We watch the soldiers casting lots, as I have said. We see man today, gambling. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

“Sitting down they watched Him there.” They watched as both transgressors reviled the Saviour, but as they watched, and as we look, we behold the scene of matchless grace. We come to the words of the hymn: “Amazing grace.” Suddenly a change is wrought. The work of grace is begun. Real conviction of sin. “We indeed justly.” “We receive the due reward of our deeds.” But then: “This Man” – this Man numbered in our midst, this One that we have been reviling; we receive the punishment due, but this Man, this Man that is scorned, this Man that is ridiculed, this Man that is set at nought – “hath done nothing amiss.”

And then (O wondrous grace!) you have heard it many times. My young people, have you heard about the dying thief, *but what is that to you?* I do not feel that I shall err (and God forbid that I *should err*) if I point you to Calvary in this way tonight, that we are all one or the other of those malefactors. And which are *you!* And where do you stand? Where *do* you stand? Have you ever prayed to Jesus? Ever sought the Saviour? Ever felt the need of forgiveness? Or are you like the other? You might say, “Yes, but I have never *reviled* Jesus Christ.” No, that is a mercy, but I am going to ask you, have you ever sought the Saviour? Have you, by the grace of God, ever come to Jesus as a poor, guilty, lost and ruined sinner? Has this prayer ever been squeezed out of your heart, and constantly so: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom”?

“And sitting down they watched Him there.” “What?” those passers-by might say, “what is that thief saying? That this One we despise, this Man that we set at nought, has a kingdom and will receive vile criminals like him, that one day they will be in glory with Jesus?” Yes! Jesus died for sinners! Look, and hear afresh the words of the gospel: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Always, that word is true. There is room for you, and room for me, if we just come as he did. He will not pass us by, He will not cast us out. “This Man receiveth sinners.”

And Jesus said, “Verily” – what a word! It is *sealed* as a word of assurance and promise in His own most precious blood, shed on that cross – “Verily, I say unto thee” – mark, friend, it is personal, it is Jesus and the sinner, it is Jesus and you, Jesus and your soul, Jesus and your sin. Now, think of your sin, outside, away from the blood of Jesus Christ, nothing to cleanse it. Think of that eternal punishment, of banishment from God. But O, think of this so-great salvation. Meditate

with wonder and awe upon the words of the Saviour: “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” In glory!

“Thou shalt see My glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of My throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me?” (H. 968)

“And sitting down they watched Him there.” As we have read, the chief priests, mocking with the elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.” Words of derision, just as they spoke with derision, “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” But they were words of wondrous truth. “He saved others.” He *did*, and still does, and *will* do till the end of time. But, “Himself He cannot save.” He *will* drink that cup. He *will* die in the sinner’s place. He *will* endure the wrath of heaven. The word of divine justice is to “smite the Shepherd.”

“Himself He cannot save.’
Insulting foe, ’tis true;
The words a gracious meaning have,
Though meant in scorn by you.

“Himself He cannot save.’
This is His highest praise.
Himself for others’ sake He gave,
And suffers in their place.” (H. 1012)

“And sitting down, they watched Him there.” “My Jesus, my Saviour.” Can we say it? Do we long to say it? “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners”

Look, poor sinner, at those for whom Jesus died. They were sinners, and are sinners, and to think that Jesus should love them, and die for them, and lay down His life.

“But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.” (H. 1012)

“And sitting down they watched Him there.” In our meditation this evening, we take yet another step. At the cross of Jesus, Mary, His mother, and John, the beloved disciple, stood watching. It reminds me of the words of prophecy by Simeon of old, who, when they took the Child Jesus to do according to the law, he took up the Child and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people.” Prophetically he said, “Yea, a sword shall

pierce through thy own soul also.” I want to set before you something that is very precious and an example for us. In the suffering Saviour there was the thought of love and care for His earthly mother. He committed her into the care of the beloved disciple. I name this because when we have entered into our *little* trials compared with His, so often we have no time to think of anybody else. Shame on us! Self-pity fills our breast. But sitting down we watch Him there. The example! God grant us grace to think of others and, as far as we can, to minister to others in their need.

I come now to the three hours of darkness. The sun is darkened. It speaks with a solemn voice. The sun, in all its glory, is veiled. It seems to speak of the threatening powers of darkness, the battle, and the victory of the Saviour over the powers of darkness, over sin and Satan and all evil. But it also sets forth – and I want to be careful – I was going to say, hell. In this way, that Jesus on the cross drank the cup of wrath, the punishment due to His people. The hidings of His Father’s face! Sacred, solemn mystery! O sacred, solemn mystery!

Friend, it is real! We have no conception of what that was: all that the Lord Jesus suffered here on this earth, and all that He passed through. He had often been in communion with His Father. There was the prayer, for example, in the seventeenth chapter of John, the sacred language of the dear Son of God, speaking to His Father in heaven. No barrier whatsoever. But now that voice that had said more than once, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” now that voice is silent. He trod the winepress alone; He bears the punishment, and the agonised cry is; “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Hard to bear that the world had set Him at nought. Hard to bear the cruelty of those soldiers, casting lots. Hard to bear that the scribes and the rulers and the priests that passed by said, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it again in three days, save Thyself. If ...” – another of those “ifs.” The devil brought them. These men brought them. “If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Those passing by saying, “He saved others: Himself He cannot save.” The disciples all forsaking Him and fleeing. Certainly there was John. Certainly there were those dear, devoted women that stood weeping, watching afar off. Hearts breaking with love to the dear Saviour and devotion to their Lord. These that had ministered to the Lord out of their substance, their hearts filled with love; and what a sacred privilege to minister to Jesus Christ! “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” But I say, “Why hast Thou, My Father, holy Father, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?” Friend, this was His path, and this His victory.

“Sitting down they watched Him there.” As that victory is gained, as the atonement is made, the Lord Jesus Christ, with a loud voice – for

it was not the voice of defeat, dejection or despair, and it was not the voice of weakness; it was the voice of victory, it was the voice of triumph – said, “It is finished.” As we sit and watch Him, think of that little word, “It.” So great salvation! Plenteous redemption! Every scripture fulfilled! Every type and shadow setting forth the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled in His death! “These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled.”

“Sitting down they watched Him there.” As He cried, “It is finished,” and, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,” so the veil of the temple was rent in two. A way into the holiest is made, to the throne of grace; the rocks rent, and the saints rising from the dead.

There was one of the soldiers at the death of Christ, the centurion, who was so affected that he said, “Truly this was the Son of God.” How this is denied today, denied in so many so-called religious circles! But He that hung on the cross was *indeed* the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father.

Just one more thought in our meditation tonight. I trust it has been a little preparation for the communion service. “Remember Me,” said Jesus. We have been thinking of these soldiers at the death of Christ. As we read in the gospel according to John, “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken.” We just cannot consider the agony and the awfulness of crucifixion. It was such a dreadful death that no main part of the body really, shall I say, hurried death at all. It was agonising. It was the most lingering death, and the way that they brought it to an end was to break the legs of the sufferer. And here they come, those soldiers.

We read, they “brake the legs of the first, and of the other,” and when they came to Jesus “they brake not His legs.” Why? They saw that He was dead already, but there was a scripture, although the soldiers would not know anything about it: “A bone of Him shall not be broken.” But one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced the side of Christ and, as we read in the Word of God, “Forthwith came there out blood and water.” From the sinless One, from the Lamb of God, from Jesus the Saviour, the open fountain, the blood that cleanseth from all sin, the water that washes away all defilement.

“Rock of ages, cleft for me;
 Let me hide myself in Thee;
 Let the water and the blood,
 From Thy riven side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure;
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power.” (H. 143)

Do you love Him, poor sinner? There are some here that love Him ever so dearly. Some *long* to love Him. And some may be honest, and say, "Well, I do not think I do." I pray God the time will come when, under the Spirit's teaching, you will be led to this dear Saviour. As we are led to see a little of what He has done for us, what can we say?

"What glad return can I impart
For favours so divine?
O take my all, this worthless heart,
And make it wholly Thine." (H. 95)

THE MIRACLE OF THE SPEAKING WOOD!

By John G. Paton (1824-1907)

John Paton, the well-known missionary to the New Hebrides, relates the following moving incident in his autobiography, which led to the beginning of the translating of the Scriptures in Tanna.

One incident at that time was very memorable, and God turned it to good account for higher ends. I often tell it as the "the miracle of the speaking wood." While working at the house, I required some nails and tools. Lifting a piece of planed wood, I pencilled a few words on it, and requested our old chief to carry it to Mrs. Paton, and she would send what I wanted. In blank wonder, he innocently stared at me, and said, "But what do you want?"

I replied, "The wood will tell her." He looked rather angry, thinking I had befooled him, and retorted, "Whoever heard of wood speaking?"

By hard pleading I succeeded in persuading him to go. He was amazed to see her looking at the wood and then fetching the needed articles. He brought back the bit of wood, and eagerly made signs for an explanation. Chiefly in broken Tannese, I read to him the words, and informed him that in the same way God spoke to us through His Book. The will of God was written there, and by and by, when he learned to read, he would hear God speaking to him from its page, as Mrs. Paton heard me from a piece of wood.

A great desire was thus awakened in the poor man's soul to see the very Word of God printed in his own language. He helped me to learn words and master ideas with growing enthusiasm. And when my work of translating portions of Holy Scripture began, his delight was unbounded, and his help invaluable. The miracle of the speaking page was not less wonderful than that of the speaking wood!

JEHOVAH-ROPHI

From the diary of Ruth Bryan (1805-1860)

September 16th, 1855: I have had a sweet meditation on the miracles of our Lord. I saw how in the first Adam every part and power were broken by the Fall – and this is shown by the blind eyes, deaf ears, lame feet, withered hand, palsied limbs, maddened brain, leprous flesh, etc., which were brought to the second Adam; “and He healed them all,” for He was in all senses the Restorer of the breach, and was manifested in flesh for this very purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. These diseases of the different parts of the body which He healed, seem to show what I feel spiritually – even so maimed and broken, that I cannot use this body for His service as I would; and I feel sweetly encouraged to bring each diseased part (every one is diseased) to Him, that, having quickened me from the dead, He would so dwell in me that my members shall be instruments of righteousness, and by His own healing power overcome the dry and barren land; that while sin dwells within, it may in no part reign over me; and that while in each member I feel, “Without Thee I can do *nothing*,” I may, by the Spirit’s enabling, come to Him by faith, and find also, “I can do *all things* through Christ, which strengtheneth me.” I have heard it said that our dear Lord living so many years in seclusion, shows the hidden life of the believer. This is very sweet to me, and I see that those works which are manifest must, if they are worth anything, flow from that hidden life, and the power of God therein.

A SHORT BUT AN EFFECTUAL PRAYER

By B.A. Ramsbottom

This instructive piece was written by our esteemed former Editor in 2011.

“O LORD ... turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2 Sam. 15. 31).

Only a short prayer – but what an answer! It turned the whole course of Absalom’s rebellion, the whole course of the battle, victory instead of defeat. Because the Lord immediately answered the prayer.

This was one of the saddest days in King David’s life. His son Absalom, whom he dearly loved, had rebelled against him. Not only so, but he was seeking to take his life. It seemed that his sorrows could not go any deeper. But he had a beloved friend Ahithophel, an eminent man. It was said that his counsel, his advice in Israel, was counted as the counsel of God Himself. And David loved him. He said, We took sweet

counsel as we went up to the house of God together. Now this seemed to be the crushing blow, the final blow: “And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.”

Immediately David prayed. That is a mark of grace. With everyone at times some terrible shock comes. But what is our reaction? With the world it is often an oath or a curse or some complaint. But David said, “Lord.” He took the sinners’ safe and sure retreat. He turned away from everyone and everything in his sorrows, and he turned to the Lord alone. “O Lord ... turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

But it was not only the bitter grief and disappointment in finding that Ahithophel was a fickle, unfaithful friend, but also Ahithophel was his chief adviser. It was almost like losing his prime minister or his minister of war. It was a wonderful acquisition for Absalom. Surely this was now the end.

“And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” It was a very short prayer, but it altered everything. It received an immediate answer. Ahithophel came with wonderful counsel, wonderful advice to Absalom, but Absalom rejected it! And Ahithophel went away, set his house in order and then took his own life.

If this means anything at all, it teaches us the value of prayer and the power of prayer. It was a short, simple prayer, a very direct prayer, and it was wonderfully answered.

“And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” And the Lord did. But this was a different prayer from most. Shall we call it a negative prayer? It was a prayer *against* someone. It was a prayer that God would overturn someone. This teaches us that such prayers are not wrong; often they are very much right. In this evil day it is right that we should pray *against* so many of the evils in the land – the God dishonouring laws, the wrong decisions, the persecution of Christians, etc. O Lord, overturn them; O Lord, destroy them – for the glory of Thy name, for Thy people’s good. The Lord was not offended with a prayer like this. He answered it. Perhaps Satan will tempt you and tell you there is not much love in such prayers. Well, we cannot say there was much love in this prayer. But there is such a thing when the hosts of hell turn against the people of God, against the Lord Jesus and His purposes, when it is right for God’s people to pray against these things, that the Lord will overturn them.

“O Lord ... turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” This is what the apostle meant when he said, “Pray without ceasing.” We cannot always be at home, on our knees, pouring out our hearts to God. But “pray without ceasing” throughout the day when things come. Much of the prayer-life of God’s people is in these sudden short prayers, and they are real prayers. Something comes suddenly. You say, “Lord, help

me,” and your prayer is heard in heaven. Or someone asks you an important question. You pray, “Lord, guide me.” Or you feel your weakness before Satan’s temptations, and you cry, “Lord, give me strength.” Ralph Erskine spoke of these fleeting glimpses toward heaven throughout the day, and their value. They keep your soul in health. They keep your soul prosperous. And in them is much real prayer, prayer that honours the Lord, prayer that depends on Him, prayer that the Lord answers.

“And David said, O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” There is encouragement here for those who feel they have not much ability in prayer. They have the desire, the thoughts, the burden, but they have not got the words. Well, David did not bother so much about the words here. He just threw them out, but they entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth and brought answers of peace.

“Pray, if thou canst or canst not speak;
But pray with faith in Jesus’ name.” (H. 882)

Various ones cross our minds – one of the children, a person in trouble, a young one seeking the Saviour, another in darkness and bondage. May we be helped to look up and say, “Lord, bless him.” “Lord, do be with him.”

“And prayer indited by the Lord,
The Lord will surely hear.” (H. 725)

These things are recorded in Scripture for our teaching, help and encouragement, and not least as we journey on in the pathway of prayer.

CHRIST – GOD AND MAN

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

In our meditations on the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer we must never, even in thought, separate His human nature from His divine. Even when His sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from His pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for His human soul, after He had once become incarnate in the womb of the virgin, never was parted from His Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it.

It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of His divine. In the virgin’s womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate’s judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb,

Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the loaves and the fishes; but it was God-Man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children (see Matt. 15. 38). The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who came on the waves to the ship (see Matt. 14. 33). The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are “spirit and life” (see John 6. 63); but it was the Son of the living God who spake them (see John 6. 69). The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine, for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it (see Acts 20. 28).

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

We pass on to the resurrection of the blessed Lord from the dead; and here we shall have to establish the doctrine before we enter into its experimental fruits.

1. The first thing that we notice is what we may call *the grand fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ*. On this the whole verity of the Christian faith may be said to be suspended. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, He was not what He declared He was, “the Son of the living God.” But if He rose from the dead, it was God’s own attestation that He was His only-begotten Son, for all will admit that nothing short of the power of God can raise the dead.

For this reason we find in the Acts of the Apostles the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made a leading feature in every sermon and every address. Whether Peter preached to the enquiring Jews (see Acts 2. 23, 24; 3. 15), to the opposing Sanhedrim (see Acts 4. 10; 5. 30, 31), or to Cornelius and his friends (see Acts 10. 39, 40); or whether Paul addressed the synagogue of Antioch (see Acts 13. 30), the Athenian Areopagus (see Acts 17. 31), or King Agrippa and the most noble Festus, it might be said of them what the Holy Ghost declares of all the rest: “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”

Look for a few moments at this remarkable circumstance, that these blessed men of God made the resurrection of Jesus, as it were, the very foundation of all their sermons and addresses; for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles thus to preach. And see the reason why they bore this firm testimony in the very forefront of the battle

which they waged in the name of God against the kingdom of darkness and death. The Lord of life and glory had been condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy, first, because He had said that He would destroy the temple made with hands, and within three days build another made without hands (see Mark 14. 58); and secondly, that He had declared, in the very presence of the council, that He was the Christ, the Son of God (see Mark 14. 61-64). He therefore died under the charge of blasphemy, in pain and ignominy, crucified openly for that alleged crime in the face of the assembled thousands who had come from all parts of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Now, had Jesus not risen from the dead, that charge would have been substantiated, and He would have been justly convicted by the voices of many thousands as having been put righteously to death. It was necessary, then, not only for the whole economy of redemption, but for the very veracity of Jesus Himself, and for the whole truth of the gospel, that He should be raised from the dead by the power of God as the seal of His mission, as the standing, undeniable, irrefragable truth that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, as He claimed to be.

We see, then, the force and meaning of the apostle's words, where he says that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1. 4). It was God's attesting witness to His divine Sonship, the visible, ratifying seal to His heavenly mission. And not only so, but God's own assurance to the church that His atoning sacrifice had been accepted, that the debt due to law and justice was fully discharged, and her justification complete, for He "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification"; that is He, as the Head and Representative of the church, was raised by God from the dead as justified from all law charges, and the church was thus visibly and authoritatively declared to be justified in Him. This was the attesting witness from heaven that her justification was complete, and that Jesus lives at God's right hand to reveal that justification to her heart, put her into experimental possession of its unspeakable blessedness, and seal it effectually by the Holy Ghost upon her breast.

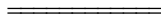
2. The next thing that we notice is that *each Person of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, was engaged in the blessed work of raising Jesus from the dead.* Though the Persons of the Trinity are essentially distinct, and their acts in the great economy of redemption separate, yet as one God they participate in the putting forth of every act of divine power. Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, as we learn from almost innumerable passages; but see the following, which we need not quote at length, but simply refer to: Acts 2. 24; 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 40; 13. 37; 17. 31; Eph. 1. 20; Col. 2. 12.

But the Son of God raised Himself from the dead, according to His own words of grace and truth: “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” He is “the resurrection”; and as He raised Lazarus from the tomb, and will at the last day raise up the sleeping dust of all that the Father gave to Him, so by the exercise of the same divine power did He raise His own incorruptible body from the grave.

The Holy Ghost also had a blessed participation in the same divine act. We therefore read that the Lord Jesus was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3. 18) – the same Holy and Blessed Spirit who will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the great resurrection.

3. The next thing that we notice is, *the identity of the Lord’s risen body*. It is a cardinal, fundamental article of our most holy faith that the same actual, identical body was raised from the grave which was deposited in it. If erroneous men had not indulged their vain speculations about the risen body of the Lord Jesus, we might well wonder at their daring attempts to pull up the landmarks which the Holy Ghost has so plainly set up in the Word of truth. The Lord never had, never could have, two different bodies, one before, another after the resurrection. We might as well talk of His having two different souls – one soul for earth, and another soul for heaven. The identity of His body is as indispensable to His still being Jesus, “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” as the identity of His soul, no less certain, no less necessary, and no less precious. But because, after the resurrection, the Lord came miraculously into the place where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and vanished out of the sight of the disciples at Emmaus, and because they cannot conceive how He can wear a human body in heaven such as He had upon earth, men who would be wise above what is written have assumed that a change took place in that body, and that it no longer consisted of flesh and bones and blood as before but was, as it were, transmuted into some aerial, celestial substance, they know not what, but such as they imagine would be more fitting to inhabit the courts of heaven.

Now, nothing can be more plain, if we are willing to follow the footsteps of the Holy Ghost, than that it was the same identical body which hung on the cross that rose from the dead.



The work of Christ’s intercession is a work of free grace. Christ’s praying for us is from His pitying us. He looks not at our worthiness, but our wants.

Thomas Watson

J.C. PHILPOT'S OWN TESTIMONY

This is one of the few occasions when Mr. Philpot actually speaks about himself. It shows why there is such an emphasis on the eternal Sonship of Christ in all his preaching and writing. It is a beautiful example of how doctrine, received in the soul, results in gracious experience; and how both together lead to loving obedience and practice (B.A. Ramsbottom).

From the very first moment that I received the love of the truth into my heart, and cast anchor within the veil, I believed that Jesus was the true and real Son of God; but rather more than sixteen years ago God's own testimony to His Sonship was made a special blessing to me. It pleased the Lord in November 1844 to lay me for three weeks on a bed of sickness. During the latter portion of this time I was much favoured in my soul. My heart was made soft, and my conscience tender. I read the Word with great sweetness, had much of a spirit of prayer, and was enabled to confess my sins with a measure of real penitence and contrition of spirit.

One morning about 10 o'clock, after reading, if I remember right, some of Dr. Owen's *Meditations on the Glory of Christ*, which had been much blessed to me during that illness, I had a gracious manifestation of the Lord Jesus to my soul. I saw nothing by the bodily eye, but it was as if I could see the blessed Lord by the eye of faith just over the foot of my bed; and I saw in the vision of faith three things in Him which filled me with admiration and adoration:

1. His eternal Godhead;
2. His pure and holy Manhood; and,
3. His glorious Person as God-Man.

What I felt at the sight I leave those to judge who have ever had a view, by faith, of the Lord of life and glory, and they will know best what holy desires and tender love flowed forth, and how I begged of Him to come and take full possession of my heart. It did not last very long, but it left a blessed influence upon my soul; and if ever I felt that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace, it was as the fruit of that view by faith of the glorious Person of Christ, and as the effect of that manifestation.

And now came that which makes me so firm a believer in the true and real Sonship of Jesus; for either on the same morning, or on the next – for I cannot now distinctly recollect which it was, but it was when my soul was under the same heavenly influence – I was reading the account of the transfiguration of Jesus (see Matt. 17), and when I came to the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him," they were sealed with such power on my heart, and I had such a

view of His being the true and real Son of God as I shall never forget. The last clause, "Hear ye Him," was especially sealed upon my soul, and faith and obedience sprang up in sweet response to the command.

EPAPHRAS, THE FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST

There are some characters in the Word of God who appear on the sacred page of Scripture for a brief moment and then we read nothing more of them: Jahaziel in 2 Chronicles 20 who prophesied of the victory God would give to Jehoshaphat; Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened." Yet the memory of such leaves the diligent reader with a firm persuasion: here is one whom God loved and who loved God in return.

Epaphras is just such a character. His name is only mentioned in three places, twice in Colossians and once in Philemon. From these three occasions we learn some very pleasing things about him.

1. Epaphras was to Paul, a dear "fellobservant" (Col. 1. 7). Though not so prominent as Paul in his ministry, he was nonetheless esteemed highly by the apostle. Paul recognised the diligence Epaphras showed in the work of the ministry. Labouring is sometimes hard and wearing. It can be discouraging when no fruit seems apparent. But in Epaphras there was that God-given diligence to be instant "in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4. 2), in the sphere of labour in which the great Head of the church had placed him.

2. Epaphras was "a faithful minister of Christ" for the church at Ephesus (Col. 1. 7). He did not "shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (see Acts 20. 27); not "handling the Word of God deceitfully" (see 2 Cor. 4. 2). Remembering the bonfire in the market place at Ephesus, and the riot that followed, to continue preaching faithfully and pointing sinners away from the idolatry around them needed courage which only God could have given him.

3. Epaphras was at one time a "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus" with Paul (Philemon 23). To Epaphras the word given to the sister church at Philippi was true. It was given to him "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1. 29). Like Timothy in 2 Timothy 1. 8, he was called to be "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," and not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ (see Rom. 1. 16). But like Paul, his very imprisonment was for the furtherance of the gospel. In another sense, God's ministers are sometimes in "prison-like" circumstances for the gospel's sake, that it might sharpen their sword in the ministry and make them useful to God's people in "prison-like" paths.

4. Epaphras was pre-eminently the servant of Christ. This was his greatest privilege, that his heavenly Master should constrain him to follow in this high calling. Whether Epaphras preached to his own flock at Ephesus or in the sister church of Laodicea, or was called to languish in a prison cell, this was the golden thread of his faith. He was Christ's by election, redemption and quickening grace, and also by the office to which he was called. He did not take this honour to himself, but was "called of God" to it (see Heb. 5. 4). In his darkest moments he could look back to his commission, and though often like Joseph tried by that very thing, yet deep down in his heart he could say like Paul did in 1 Corinthians 15. 10, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," whether it be as a believer, labourer, minister, prisoner or servant.

The churches would be well-served if the great Head of the church would be pleased to give "pastors according to His own heart" (see Jer. 3. 15) as Epaphras was. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezek. 36. 37).

THE VEIL WAS RENT IN TWAIN

By Gerald Hamstra (1927-2018)

"And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mark 15. 38).

The death of Christ was unlike any other death. Death did not come to Christ; He was not conquered by its power. On the contrary, Christ approached death and encountered it as a Conqueror. His last utterance sounded forth with a loud voice. In peace and triumph, He bowed His head and gave up the spirit.

Nature trembled when its Maker died. At noon, the sun failed to give its light. When His only begotten Son was silent, the Father spoke. The Father spoke in the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, and, most significantly, in the rending of the veil in Jerusalem's temple.

Historical chronicles dating from temple times record that thirteen veils hung in various parts of the temple. Each year, two veils were replaced. The veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies was eighteen metres high, nine metres wide, and as thick as the palm of a hand.

This veil was only opened once a year, on the day of atonement. On this great day of humiliation, the high priest was allowed to move the curtain somewhat aside and enter the holy of holies. Before he was permitted to do this, he was required to sacrifice a sin offering.

In the solitary darkness of the holy of holies dwelt God the Lord. There God was present with His people, Israel; at the same time, He was separated from them by the impressive veil. The heavy curtain with its splendid embroidery was an obstacle to God's nearness. It solemnly declared that the way to God was closed. When fallen man was expelled from the Garden of Eden, holy cherubim prevented man from re-entering. Cherubim were embroidered on the veil that marked off the holy of holies. They proclaimed the same lesson: sin has made a separation between a holy God and sinful man.

For fallen man, nearness to God is impossible without a satisfactory atonement for sin. God will never pardon a sinner without maintaining His truth, honouring His holiness, and satisfying His justice. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18. 20).

Let every sinner be persuaded that his sins separate him from his God. Let him realise the awesome reality that his sins will banish him for ever from the presence of his Maker, unless he be reconciled and forgiven on the basis of a perfect atonement. Only the blood of reconciliation can take away the veil.

It was Friday at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of the evening sacrifice. Numerous Israelites were visiting the temple and its surroundings. Devout men and women were lingering in the sacred courts, prayerfully waiting for the officiating priest to appear. They desired to be blessed in the name of the Lord. The priest was in the holy place to kindle and burn incense on the golden altar.

Suddenly, the earth trembled and shook. The waiting people and the ministering priests were frightened. Simultaneously, there was another remarkable occurrence. All at once, the thickly-woven veil, hanging from golden hooks at the entrance of the holy of holies, was severed. The invisible hand of God rent the heavy curtain from top to bottom. The two pieces exposed the holy of holies. Who can describe the astonishment and consternation of the witnesses to this sacred event! Undoubtedly, they did not yet realise the relation between this striking occurrence and the atoning death on the cross.

Christ's death is a perfect atonement for sin. Therefore, the veil must be rent in twain and disappear. No longer does the Jewish high priest need to pass through the veil to enter the holy of holies to atone for sin. The Levitical service with its types and shadows has been rendered void. The temple at Jerusalem has now lost its importance. The true day of atonement had arrived!

The sacrifice of the New Testament High Priest is the final sacrifice for sin. As Mediator, Christ answered and fulfilled every requirement for the pardon of guilty sinners. He fully secured their admission to the throne of God. By His atoning suffering, Christ widely opened the gate of heaven, the door to the Father-heart of God.

To the believer, the rent in the temple veil portrays the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. Prodigal sons and daughters may now come, without money and without price, and wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. By faith, they may cast themselves, unworthy as they are, in childlike trust on the Father's heart. The cross is the gateway to eternal life!

THOMAS CLOUGH – “THE COLLIER”

The following account of one of the Hope Chapel Rochdale members under John Kershaw is taken from, John Kershaw and Blessing over the Moors, by B.A. Ramsbottom

Thomas Clough (1817-1879) was a well-known and well-loved minister in the days of Kershaw and Philpot. A number of his letters were published in the *Gospel Standard*. He always signed himself, “The Collier” – referring to his days down the pit.

Grey Hazlerigg, who prepared an account of his life, wrote: “He was a man that truly feared God, dearly loved the doctrines of free grace, and loved to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus, who had doubtless done great things for his soul. He was a preacher, as many know better than ourselves, of considerable gifts; an able minister of the New Testament.”

The following are a few extracts from an account published after his death.

His own words, supplied to David Smith of Siddal, Halifax

The time the Lord first opened my eyes to see myself a sinner is a time to be remembered. I was then living in sin, and loving it well. At that time I was working at a coal mine in the north of England for my daily bread. I was then dead in sin, and cared for nothing. At the pit in which I worked there was a law or rule that no collier should be allowed to go down into the pit within three hours if he was not on the ground at a given time in the morning. One morning I was a few minutes late, and the banksman who had the care of the cage in the shaft refused to allow me to go down with the other men. As soon as all the men had gone down, I began to abuse the banksman who refused to allow me to go down, when some oaths and curses were exchanged between us.

I then went off the ground to a public house on the opposite side to get something to drink, proclaiming vengeance against my enemy, as I thought. In the course of an hour or two, I was singing merrily, and declaring I would not go to work that day – when news was brought into the public house that every man that had gone down into the pit that

morning was killed; and it was soon discovered that the news was too true. In one moment I felt as sober as if I had never tasted any intoxicating liquor that day. I trembled from head to foot, and said to myself, "If I had gone down into the pit this morning, I should have been a dead man; and what would have become of my soul?"

That seemed to be the first time that I had an impression on my mind that I had a soul, either to be saved or lost. The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me, and the terrors of hell got hold upon me. I was then both a convinced and condemned sinner in the sight of God and my own conscience, and I cried out in the bitterness of my soul, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner."

I passed many sleepless nights and very uncomfortable days in this state of mind; but at last the Lord spoke peace to my never-dying soul, and said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee."

"Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding!
Ransomed souls, the tidings swell;
'Tis a deep that knows no sounding;
Who its lengths or breadths can tell?
On its glories
Let my soul for ever dwell." (H. 766)

From that time I began to go to chapel, and was full of zeal for God, as I thought. I soon joined the Arminian band, and concluded they were all as holy as angels, and truly the "excellent of the earth." I attended their prayer meetings, class meetings and preaching, and was ever ready to lend a helping hand to forward God's work; and truly I thought this was it. I was soon invited to stand up to preach amongst them and I willingly consented, for my heart was warm with the love of God. I wanted to do something for that God who had spoken peace and pardon to my soul. I preached among those people for several years; in fact, until the Lord opened my eyes to see their error and my own ignorance. He did both, and opened my heart to receive His truth in the love of it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

About that time I was led by the Holy Ghost to see that God had a special people, of whom He says, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." As the Holy and ever-blessed Spirit was pleased to reveal the glorious doctrines of divine grace to my understanding, I was compelled to preach them wherever I was sent; but I was not allowed to preach them long before the leaders of our society were upon me like a hailstorm, declaring that I was a Calvinist. I must confess that up to that time I did not know what a Calvinist was. These preachers and leading men soon began to persecute me, and to condemn the doctrines I preached as erroneous; and they ultimately turned me out

as a dangerous man, saying that if I was suffered to go on preaching such things I should “ruin their flock.” At that time the Lord was showing me that He had a “slaughtered flock,” and that I must go and feed it; and, thanks be to God, I have been enabled to do so, to a lesser or a greater degree, ever since.

Some time before this took place I had heard of a man who preached the truth in the north, and I went to hear him preach. On that occasion he took for a text Ecclesiastes 2. 14, which reads as follows: “The wise man’s eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness.” When the good man had finished his discourse, I said, “I am the fool in the text.” I thought I was the greatest fool in the world for ever attempting to speak in the Lord’s name; and yet I felt some encouragement to go on declaring what the Lord had taught me, and what He was then teaching me. Since then I have had many things to pass through of a painful nature, both in providence and grace, both in the world and in the church; but I have been upheld to this day, through Christ strengthening me.

From a letter by his friend Elias Armstrong

We walked many years together in company to the house of God. I remember one Lord’s day we were coming from chapel. He was very poor at that time, but had a liberal heart. He saw a man on the road near my house begging; and seeing the man had no shirt on, as soon as he could he got into my house and commenced pulling off his clothes. I said, “What are you about to do?” He said, “If you will lend me a shirt, I will give that poor man mine.” I said, “I will not do so.” But he did give the man his. Poor fellow, he would give the last copper he had in the world.

Another time, he heard of a poor family that had no bread in the house. He went to the master of the colliery, and when the master saw him, he said, “Now, Tom, what are you wanting?” He said, “Well, sir, there is a family in this place which has no bread, and I want you to give me some money for them.” “How much?” said the master. “Well,” he said, “half a guinea”; and the master put his hand into his pocket and gave it to him. Mr. C., when he had received it, went and gave it to the poor family; and very thankfully was it received.

Mr. C. was always “ready to do good and to communicate.” I well remember him opening the room for preaching in West Hartlepool, where he preached once a month. He had to walk on one occasion to get there from Percy Main, a distance of twenty-seven miles, to preach the gospel. I remember when he first went to Leeds to preach; he came down from Percy Main with very little money. He had not as much as would pay his railway fare, so Mrs. Briggs and myself paid it. When he had preached at Leeds, the people gave him three pounds, and he gave one to Mark

Owen before he got home. The second time he went to Leeds he came from Percy Main with only twopence in his pocket, and he paid one penny for his boat fare and a halfpenny to go over the bridge at Sunderland; so he was left with two farthings. He went to sleep at Mr. Turner's; and after supper, as he was going to bed, Mrs. Scott said, "Mr. Clough, I have got ten shillings for you, which a friend left the other day." Mr. C. said, "That is just what I want for my fare to Leeds. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

I think, poor man, he has just got through this wilderness with strength enough, but none to spare.

From a letter written by Thomas Clough

In consequence of a slack trade, I went down into Scotland from the Newcastle district, and commenced sinking pits for ironstone and coal. We had sunk one near Carluke, and got little or nothing for doing it, as the proprietor withheld the money we should have had. I went about forty miles to get work at another place, and all the money we had was ten pence; so my wife insisted upon my taking eight pence, and she and four children had to subsist on a little oatmeal and the other two pence until I could get some money sent to them. I soon got to the place that I had to work at, and got a Post Office order for six shillings, which I sent directly with a glad heart.

After two days I received a letter from my wife, informing me she had nothing for the children to eat, and nothing for herself, and that they were very hungry. I cannot tell you the distress this occasioned me. I went down into a field, which, as it was winter time, was covered with about twelve inches of snow and, it being dark, I fell down in the snow and really groaned and cried to the dear Lord to have mercy upon me, and to spare my wife and children. I had been in a backsliding state for some time, and this was like a dagger in me; but instead of meeting with a rebuff, as I justly deserved, I found most wonderful relief in the words, I believe, for it is a long time since, "The eternal God is thy Refuge"; and I felt sure deliverance would be granted.

A few days after, my wife wrote to me that a woman had been awakened in the night by a dream about her and the children, that they were dying for want of the necessaries of life, which was true, for she had put the children to bed crying for bread, and she was almost broken-hearted with the trial. This woman aroused her husband, and he took a basket, and went and called a few neighbours up, and collected money and food sufficient to serve them for six weeks, I believe, and came and opened the door, and set it down, and went away and left it. When my wife awoke, for she had fallen asleep in her trouble, she was surprised to see the basket, and very soon had the children up to receive a part of its

contents. She wrote to me and told me that, after this intervention of a kind and gracious God, the Post Office order came to hand, and all others were delivered in their due order.

My rebellious heart melted under this kindness, and O how I felt the dear Lord’s goodness for a time! But alas, alas! I soon became, like Israel of old, forgetful of Him, and His works and goodness.

Supplied by David Smith

I remember Mr. Clough telling me some years ago of his having to go and preach at some place in the north. The distance from his home was about fifteen miles. He had only three halfpence in his pocket, and therefore had to walk all the way. After he had left home a snowstorm set in; and by the time he had got about seven miles on the road the evening shades drew on, and the storm was so heavy that it was impossible to get through without being lost in the snow. He therefore made for a farm house near some village that lay before him. He went into the house, and asked for shelter until the storm abated. The good woman of the house, the farmer’s wife, said, “Yes; come in and sit down.” He did so; and after being seated a short time felt faint, and asked the woman if she would sell him a pennyworth of milk. She said, “With pleasure,” and brought it to him in a basin. He then asked her if she would also sell him a half-pennyworth of bread. This was all that remained of his travelling money for the entire journey; but he was to retain so much for the next day, as the good woman said, “I will give you a piece of bread, and you may keep your halfpenny in your pocket.”

“For when the Lord’s people have need,
His goodness will find out a way.” (H. 276)

When Mr. C. had got his milk and his bread together, he asked the Lord to bless it to the strengthening of his poor body, and the woman looked on with surprise at her guest. When he had eaten it, he looked out at the door of the house, and the storm was still blowing and the snow increasing. He returned to the hearth, and sat down again on his seat, which was a large old-fashioned piece of furniture like a sofa, or what the Yorkshire people call a “longsettle”; and he said to the farmer’s wife, “Perhaps you would allow me to sit on this couch all night if the storm continues.” She said, “That I cannot promise you at present; but my husband will be in soon, and I will ask him.” Her husband had gone out into the barn to milk his cows and fodder his cattle for the night; but, as his wife said, he soon came in with his milk-cans.

After putting the milk into bowls in the cellar, he came and washed himself, and put on his better clothes, and came and sat down by the fire. His wife then said, “Here is a stranger come in out of the storm for shelter, and he has been asking if he may stay and lodge with us tonight,

as it is not fit for anyone to travel in the snow and storm.” Her husband looked at Mr. Clough, and said, “Well, you shall stay with us tonight, for I think you will do us no harm by the look of you.” Afterwards he said to Mr. C., “Will you go with me to our chapel, as we have preaching there this evening?” Mr. C. said, “O yes! I will go with you, with pleasure; but what sort of man is going to preach tonight?” The farmer said, “He is a stranger, coming from a distance, but he is what I call a milk-and-water sort of preacher, if you know what that means.” Mr. C. said, “I think I understand what you mean.”

They both went to the chapel and, although a stormy night, the little chapel was full of people to hear the stranger that should have come; but he, as well as Mr. Clough, had been prevented by the storm and the snow. So there was a chapel full of people, but no minister to preach to them. The farmer turned round to Mr. Clough, and said, “Would you have any objection, my friend, to giving out a hymn and praying for us? We are put to the lock.” Mr. C. said, “I will try and do what I can.” So he went into the pulpit, gave out a hymn, and prayed; and then gave out another hymn; and when that was sung he read a text, and preached from these words: “Ye must be born again.” Only a few of the people knew that Mr. Clough was not the man who was appointed to preach; but the thing doubtless was of God. The Lord blessed that preaching to the soul-profit of the people, and to one man in particular, as Mr. Clough told me.

About nine years afterwards Mr. C. was engaged to go and preach an anniversary sermon about sixty miles away from the same place; and when the service was over in the evening, a poor, thin-looking woman, worn down with labour from attending to a brother of hers who had been confined on a bed of affliction for many months, said, “Will you come with me and see my brother, who is very ill?” Mr. C. went; and as soon as he entered the sick man’s chamber, the poor man said, “That’s the man! That’s the man!” Mr. C. said, “What do you mean, my friend?” The sick man, who had not been able during six months to turn himself in bed, raised himself up in his bed, and said, “You are the man who preached in such a village one stormy night about nine years ago; and that was the time God saved my soul.” Mr. Clough and the man wept together, and rejoiced together. “Wonders of grace to God belong.” “He must needs go through Samaria.



A true Christian may be weary *in* serving God, but he is never weary *of* serving Him. He is neither afraid of dying nor living; he desires to go to heaven to see Christ, yet is willing to stay upon earth to serve Christ.

John Mason

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 90)

CHAPTER 4

His operations upon the church, the body of Christ; and that first as collectively taken, the whole thereof.

II. Let us now consider the operations of the Holy Ghost in and upon the church, collectively taken, as the body of Christ.

1. He was the first Founder of the church of the New Testament. The apostle, writing to the Ephesians, who (as you know) had formerly gloried of their temple of Diana as one of the seven wonders of the Gentile world, sets before them, chapter 2, an infinitely far greater and more glorious temple, whereof they themselves, he tells them, were a part, even the church universal of the New Testament, consisting of Jew and Gentile: A "building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2. 21). But then, who is the builder and framer of this fabric, age after age, till all is perfect? And through whom also is it that this temple, when built, is consecrated unto God for a mansion-house or habitation, who hath the whole world to dwell in? The twenty-second verse shows both: "In whom" – namely, Christ – "ye" – Ephesians – "also are builded up together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"; which in the coherence with the former, is as if he had said, He that made you, the Ephesians, a church (which was as a particular member of that universal body), as "members in particular" (1 Cor. 12. 27), yea, of every member that worships therein. Thus, in Ephesians 2. 18, "Through Him" – namely Christ – "we both" – Jew and Gentile – "have access," but, "by one Spirit." Yea, He is the soul of this one body: "There is one body, and one Spirit" (Eph. 4. 4). Christ bears the relation of Head to this body; but who is in all, and every part of it? It is the Holy Ghost; and oh, how glorious a church and body shall Christ have, when all are met and set together, and filled full of this Spirit at the latter day! At that day it is He will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (see Eph. 5. 27). Thus spake the Husband, the Head, of this spouse.

But who is it that gives this beauty, that formed this symmetry of all the members, and adds life to all? The Holy Ghost. And now, let us think what a mighty and vast work this of forming and building the universal church is, whereof this Holy Spirit is the Former and Effector. There was a perfect pattern and platform of the whole and every member thereof in God's breast, an idea also in Christ's (as appears by the last-cited Eph. 5), which this Spirit will bring in the end the whole unto, and frame each living stone in the building to bear a due, suitable and

comely proportion in the whole, and each to other. And this is, and hath been providentially doing in every part thereof, in every age, and hath been wrought from the beginning of the world, in the several parcels apart, even as each piece of tapestry in hangings use to be wrought in little bits and small parcels, which, when finished, are then at last set together.

And this Spirit, who is the Master-Workman, hath in His eye every degree of grace He works in every of these members' hearts who is a stone in this building, according to the pattern which the Father and Christ have in their purpose, of every particular, as also of the whole, and exactly frames each and the whole unto their mind, and misses not the least of the set proportion in the pattern, which, in so long, so various, and multifarious a work to do (as this therefore must be supposed), what infinite wisdom and power doth it require, and argues Him to be God, that is in God, as the spirit of a man within Him, and searcheth the deep things of God.

2. All the means of the church's edification (as the word, ministry, and all gospel ordinances) all which are the goods and the household stuff of the church universal ("Paul and Apollos are theirs"), these are all of Him, and blessed by Him. He wrote the Scriptures (see 2 Pet 1. 21), gave the prophecies (see 1 Pet. 1. 10), revealed the gospel (see Eph. 3. 5), in such a manner and measure, and with such an enlargement as never before, to the sons of men.

The care of all that great affair of the ministry, and the work thereof, is incumbent on Him, lies on His hands to manage. In the New Testament we find Him once immediately speaking in His own Person, and taking on Him as a Person (as the Father had done afore when He said, "This is My well-beloved Son"); and the occasion was particular about the execution of this work of the ministry, it is in Acts 13. 2. The Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." In which effort of His, He speaks as one entered upon an office or work committed to Him, and entrusted with Him. And it is as if He had said, This is My work proper to Me; I am the immediate Governor and Administrator herein; for all that any way concerns the edification of the church is committed to My management and care. And He says He had designed Paul and Barnabas to one part, as Peter and John to another (see Galatians 2), yea, all their gifts are His, in Him, and He as a Person that is the Sovereign thereof, distributes them as He will (1 Cor. 12. 4, 7).

He makes ministers (see John 20. 22). And that power to declare that sins are forgiven, and so set free men's consciences, is from their having received the Holy Ghost first: Christ "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; and then adds, "Whose soever

sins ye remit, are remitted.” And as He makes ministers, so He sends out ministers (see Acts 13. 4); and in vain it is for them to go until He comes upon them. The apostles are therefore commanded to stay going forth into the world till they should have received the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1. 8). He appoints the place and people any of them should go unto, and forbids and hinders where they should not be usefully employed. He gives them orders: He bids Philip go to the eunuch (see Acts 8. 29, and Acts 11. 12); He sends Peter to Cornelius; and on the other side, He forbids to preach to such or such. Paul and Timothy were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia (see Acts 16. 6); and they again “assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (verse 7).

And when they preach, it is He prompts them with their sermons (see Mark 13. 11). The apostles “spake as the Spirit gave them utterance,” and when they spake, they spake weighty sayings: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2. 13), that is, suiting expressions to the gravity and weight of the things delivered. He fires their tongues and hearts, that they should not speak mere empty and powerless words, nor shoot powder, but fiery bullets, such as have warmth and life in them. And when they preach, He makes their sermons to be the ministration of the Spirit, to convey Himself unto their hearts, and to make the gospel “the power of God unto salvation.” All the power of sermons is from the Holy Ghost: “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1. 5); the gospel is said to have been preached “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (1 Pet. 1. 11, 12), who waiteth and watcheth when ye come to sermons, and at the speaking such a word as will do your hearts good, He falls upon you: “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (Acts 10. 44).

For a conclusion, it may be truly said that as Christ was the Fulfiller of the law, and the end of the law (see Rom. 10), so that the Spirit is the Complement, the Fulfiller, and Maker-good of all the gospel, otherwise all that Christ did would have profited us nothing, if the Holy Ghost did not come into our hearts and bring all home to us. Christ made His will by His death (see Heb. 9); but the Spirit is His Administrator. Christ’s blood and purchase gave us, by His redeeming us; but the Holy Ghost, by applying it; He gives us possession. The promises had been but as blanks else to us; but it is the Holy Ghost is the Sealer of us by them, the Verifier of them (see 2 Cor. 1. 20, 22). Christ also came, and delivered His commands to His apostles, to teach His church to do them, as in Matthew 28. 20; but withal it is expressly said of Him, and that after His being risen again, that He gave those His commands to them by the Holy

Ghost (see Acts 1. 2). And then again, those great truths He uttered only by word of mouth; but it was the Holy Ghost which recovered them when they were almost lost, and in a manner clean gone out of the apostles' weak and shallow memories and understandings. And He it was that added a thousand more truths to them, which Christ never uttered; to whom therefore Christ refers them: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak" (John 16. 12, 13).

Only by the way, let ministers and Christians take notice what is the glory of the ministry, even the Holy Ghost. Thus Paul himself: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2. 4). The phrase is, He "hath made us able ministers ... of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3. 6). The words in that text are indeed "ministers of the New Testament," but it follows in the same verse, "not of the letter, but of the Spirit." And this New Testament, or the gospel, says the apostle (see verse 3), is ministered by us "with the Spirit of the living God." Our abilities lie in our being made more or less instruments, by whom the Holy Ghost is pleased to communicate Himself. In Acts 11. 24 it is said, Barnabas was "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost," in his own person; "and much people was added unto the Lord." A preacher, in the primitive language, is termed, "He ... that ministereth to you the Spirit" (Gal. 3. 2, 5). And therefore value ministries by this; and let ministers seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is still prefaced of their preaching, such or such an one was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake, as in Acts 4. 8, and Acts 2. 3, 4.

Abridged

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

Trees of Frankincense: Free Presbyterians of East Sutherland and North-East Ross, compiled by Ruth Daubney; 386 pages; price, paperback, £15.99 plus postage; hardback, £24.95 plus postage; obtainable from ruth.m.daubney@gmail.com; the Free Presbyterian Book room, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; also available from www.lulu.com/shop, price £27.55 plus postage.

This excellent book contains accounts of over sixty men and women whose lives span from 1808 to 2015. The title *Trees of Frankincense* refers to the sweet savour of Christ evident in their lives which grace engendered. It is a pleasure to recommend it to our readers.

Chosen – Called – Kept: The Conclusions of the Synod of Dort (1619); translated and set out for prayerful reflection, by C.W.H. Griffiths; 102 pages; paperback, £6.99; hardback, £12.50; published by Pearl Publications, and available from Amazon and bookshops.

This is a new translation of the famous Canons of the Synod of Dort, the first for 150 years. Although it is not a paraphrase, nor an edited version, each line has been carefully separated into a simple form for readers, accompanied by suitable Bible references. It is divided into a fifty-two-week reading scheme to encourage regular reading.

The Canons of Dort stand alongside the Westminster Confession as a noble confession of the Protestant and Reformed faith and this publication is to be warmly welcomed, especially for its gracious simplicity.

Some of our readers will find Article 17 on “*The security of the children of the elect who die in infancy*” as being beneficiaries of the covenant of grace through baptism somewhat controversial.

SUBSTITUTION

Who can express the wisdom vast
 The wondrous wisdom of our God,
 Which in eternity that's past
 Designed to send the Incarnate Word?
 And who can tell the depth of love
 Which in the Son of God did move?

Atonement must be made as man,
God could not suffer, bleed or die,
 And so was formed salvation's plan
 God's righteous claims to satisfy,
 Thus God and man are honoured too
 And mercy now may justly flow.

Behold, the perfect Saviour stands
 A willing sacrifice for sin,
 To answer all the Law's demands,
 And bring complete atonement in,
 “Lo, glad I come to do God's will
 And with delight His word fulfil.”

“Stern Justice,” now the Saviour said,
 “Enforce thy rightful claim on Me,
 Come spend thy vengeance on *My* head,
 I will My people's Surety be,
 Thy good requirements I will meet
 And render payment quite complete.”

“O, Law, what is thy just demand?”
 “Complete obedience is my claim,

Fulfilment of each good command,
Obedience both in heart and aim,
A perfect life without a flaw,
And love to God and man in all.”

“I gladly render this thy due
Thy law, O God, is in My heart,
My spotless life Thou mayest view,
Nor from Thy precepts will I start,
Thy rule I honour in its depth,
In all its height, and length, and breadth.”

“What penalty dost thou inflict
Against the sinner, holy Law?”
“The curse is my indictment strict,
I cannot my demand withdraw,”
“I bear it, wrath, and curse and shame
To glorify My Father’s name.”

“O, perfect Holiness of God,
Say, what is it *thou* dost require?”
“A spotless purity in word,
In heart, in deed, and in desire”;
“This I will gladly render thee,
For virtue is most dear to me.”

Thus all God’s perfect attributes
Are harmonised and glorified,
Hell’s darts the child of God refutes,
For God’s great law is magnified;
By substitution in our flesh,
Jesus has made complete redress.

O, what a glorious gospel’s this,
Fresh beauties here we oft may trace
Here righteousness and peace may kiss,
And flow to sinners saved by grace;
O may we evermore adore
This love, which knows no bound nor shore.

Elizabeth Jempson, March 1961

NOTICE OF DEATH

David John Field, Pastor of the church at Coppice Chapel, Coseley, West Midlands, for twenty-six years, passed away on February 19th, 2023, aged 77 years. “They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage” (Matt. 25. 10).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

MAY 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III

On May 6th the coronation of Charles III and his consort Camilla is expected to take place in Westminster Abbey, if the Lord will. Recognising the truth of God's own word that, "By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Prov. 8. 15), and that we are to "Honour the king" (1 Pet. 2. 17), those of our readers in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth nations desire that his reign over us may be as stable as that of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Sadly, it has to be acknowledged that while desiring to honour the king and queen, we wish we had the same confidence in them as we had in their predecessor. Example is paramount in all positions of authority, especially in such a high office as monarch. Charles and Camilla's behaviour in earlier years, together with his statements speaking of faith as if it is not absolutely confined to the Word of God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, do instil fears as to the future stability of the throne, and our ultimate Protestant heritage, which according to the coronation oath first enacted in 1688, he is sworn to obey. When Elizabeth II was crowned, among other things she vowed as follows:

"I will to the utmost of my power maintain the laws of God and the true profession of the gospel. I will to the utmost of my power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law. And I will maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline and government thereof established in England."

We think of the last words of William Tyndale as he was about to be martyred: "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." The king at that time was no less a one than Henry VIII. May our prayer for the king and queen and all the rulers of this world be likewise, remembering that "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14. 34).

A good man is so far acquainted with the corruption of his own heart, that, instead of condemning others, he is apt to account them better than himself.

John Mason

FUNERAL OF MR. B.A. RAMSBOTTOM

*Address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, at the funeral service of
Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, on Tuesday, January 31st, 2023*

Published by request

Readings were from: John 11. 25, 26; Job 19. 25-27; 1 Timothy 6. 7; Job 1. 21; John 14. 1-6; 1 John 1 (this was a chapter very precious to the Lord's dear servant in his early days when he was seeking mercy); Revelation 5; Revelation 14. 13.

“Blessed *are*” – note that, the present tense, the blessing they have entered into in glory above. “Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord.” What is it to die *in* the Lord? To be in the Lord in the eternal sense is to be in the covenant of grace made between the three Persons in the glorious Trinity, that blessed purpose of God in preparing a congregation to sing His worthy praise to all eternity. To be in the Lord is to have union with Him by His blessed Spirit. To be in the Lord is to have communion with Him here below, and then beyond the grave that full, unutterable, unspeakable bliss.

“There shall I see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.” (H. 770)

This is the blessing enjoyed by those who die in the Lord. One further thing about the word *in*: in His care.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His loving breast.”

“Their works do follow them.” They do not go before them. There is only one work goes before them: the finished work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But their works follow them. Their life of faith has been lived, witness has been borne, and that word is fulfilled: “He being dead yet speaketh.”

One further thought. With the Lord's people, their sins go before them to judgment. In other words, they are already dealt with at Calvary. So, when they pass from time into eternity, there is no controversy, nothing more to be done. “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?” is said. But there are those whose sins follow them to judgment. Who are they? Those who live and die without faith, without repentance, without godly sorrow for sin, who never flee to the cross for refuge, and never shelter under the blood. This large congregation this morning hour, examine yourselves: have your sins gone before you to judgment? Are you sheltering beneath the blood that our

dear friend spoke so lovingly of, or are you resting somewhere else? May God answer that question for you and for us each.

Just before I speak a few words which I trust the Lord has given me, I would first of all, on my behalf and on the behalf of all the dear friends here, express our deepest sympathy to Jean, the dear widow, in the loss of her beloved husband of so many years. I feel that word is true concerning our dear friend now left: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." May the family prove it, the children, and the grandchildren. He prayed much for you. He entered into your joys and your sorrows. He has left you a gracious example to follow and may that be in your mind for the rest of your days.

To the church at Bethel, you have lost a gift that God gave you fifty-five or more years ago – a faithful, loving friend who entered into your joys and your sorrows; sometimes a reprover, often a consoler; used of God in the quickening of many and the establishing of others. This is a great gift given, which the Lord has now taken. What are we to say? "Remember them that have the rule over you, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Yes, his work is done. He would not wish to come back to his beloved Bethel, much as he loved them. His work is done. Now may the Master raise up another, an Elisha to follow the Elijah in the same spirit, with an equally prosperous work to be done.

Then to all of us here, every one of us has a never-dying soul. It was a sudden home call in the end to our dear brother and fellow-labourer. When he awoke that Saturday morning, he did not expect to end the day in heaven, but the Lord's appointed moment came, and it is a warning to us each: "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." He does not always give warning, but in His Word He has told us that there is an end to this time state. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Let us now turn to the Word of God, and the one thing I know: if our dear friend and brother were here this morning, he would say, "Speak well of Him." He never mentioned who the Him was. We did not need to ask. It was his Lord and Master.

As soon as I heard of the passing of our dear friend, these words dropped in: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." "The Master is come." So, there are five points briefly to bring before you this morning.

Firstly, who is the Master? Who was the Master of Benjamin Ashworth Ramsbottom? Who was He?

Secondly, His coming.

Thirdly, His compassion.
 Fourthly, His call.
 Fifthly, His conclusion.

When I was sent out to preach, our friend gave me this advice: “Hang your sermon on pegs if you can. It may be a poor sermon, but at least the congregation will remember what you were trying to say.”

First of all, then, *who is the Master?* Who was his Master? The dear, incarnate Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church; the One who in the fulness of time was sent by the Father into this sin-cursed earth to bear the sins of many; the One who lay as a Babe in Bethlehem’s manger, verily God and verily Man; who grew up in that humble home at Nazareth and in three short years of ministry as we read, near the end of His time here below, performed so many miracles that John the apostle said if all that could be written had been written, he thought the whole world could not contain the books that should have been written. What a full ministry our Saviour’s was!

And then we know He went to Gethsemane, and there He bled, as it were, in anticipation of the sorrows of Calvary. Sweat poured from His holy body. Why? Bearing the sins of many. From Gethsemane to Gabbatha, then to Golgotha where He hung and bled and died. But what a victory! He cried, “It is finished,” and the sins of His church were put away for ever and ever, justice satisfied, mercy’s streams opened, and now at the right hand of God in that same glorified body He sits a Prince and a Saviour. He has His servants, and our dear brother was one of them, sent forth in God’s time to be a servant, the greatest privilege a poor sinner can ever really have, to be a servant of Christ. In one sense all of God’s people are. It is however a privilege and a humbling honour to be used of God in the ministry of His Word. So, the Master is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *His coming*. We have already hinted at His coming in His incarnation. But He came into the life of our dear friend. He came and took hold of him in his early days, fashioned and formed him to be an able minister of the New Testament. It does behove you and me this morning hour to examine ourselves: has the Lord taken hold of us like that? You may say, Well, I am not called to be a minister. Well, that may be so, but every one of us needs to be laid hold of, apprehended, as we will notice in a moment. The Lord did so with our dear friend. O how solemn to be left untouched by the gospel, unquickenened by the Spirit – we will never die in the Lord if we live and die like that. Dear friends, we need to be laid hold of as our dear, departed brother was in his early days. The Lord came into his life and took hold of it. Our brother never regretted being the servant of his Master.

I think of the late Mr. Fraser MacDonald, a loved minister at Portree for many years, now in glory. I sat there one time listening to him at a prayer meeting, and he made this statement. He said, "If my Master was any other but who He is, He would have dispensed with my services long ago." I know what he meant. God's servants feel unprofitable. They make mistakes; we are not perfect; but the wonder of it is God uses earthen vessels. Through the foolishness of preaching He saves them that believe. But He will have the honour and glory. It belongs to Him and Him alone. So, His coming.

I would mention for a moment *His compassion*, because this is very significant. In the context of our verse, O His compassion for Mary and Martha! There was Mary sat at home, too grief stricken to go out, and He calls her. Why does He call her? To weep with her. He calls the dear mourners this morning hour to come out and weep with Him. "Jesus wept" – the shortest – and I think perhaps the longest – verse in Scripture. God incarnate, in His holy humanity, weeping real tears of human sorrow. Yes, He still has that comfort to give to His mourners. "The Master is come." He is calling for thee.

Now I want to speak about *His call*, and concerning our dear, departed friend, there were three calls he experienced. First, his call by grace; secondly his call to the ministry; thirdly his call to the pastorate here. We can only briefly mention one or two things which we have gleaned.

In his early days he has confessed to being unspiritual, especially having a love for football and sport. On one occasion, leaving a football match in the north (I do not know exactly where it was), there was a man standing outside with a placard with these words: "What think ye of Christ?" They arrested him, and for a day or so laid hold of him. He said, but then that seemed to fade, and he did not think much more about it, till not long after a man from the Plymouth Brethren denomination accosted him in the street and said, "Are you saved?" He could not give an answer. He thought, well that is an Arminian saying that; but he could not shake it off. From that moment it became a question with him: was he a child of God? He dared not assume it. There were many things which he knew of in his life that were not consistent with being a child of God. And so it now became a great exercise with him, to know that he was a child of God, and he found his life stirred up, and the late Mr. Salmon, a godly man who preached in our northern chapels, once preached from those words: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest," and he felt the Lord was stirring up his nest so he could not settle down in this world.

When he went to university, he found something else happened: he lost all the religion he thought he had had from a child, because there was

no place of truth he could find nearby that preached the same truths as they did at Haslingden. He now found he was like a sparrow alone upon the house top, but it began to drive him for a personal knowledge of the Lord. After some conflict, as I mentioned earlier, 1 John 1 became very precious to him, just those lovely words, “The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin.” In his ministry he often spoke of the atonement. It was a theme that he loved to expound upon: Christ and Him crucified. He said Isaiah 53 became very precious to him, and there is a hymn in our hymnbook he said he dare not give out, but he loved it: “My sins, O how black they appear.” That is hymn 162:

“When on my Beloved I gaze,
So dazzling His beauties appear,
His charms so transcendently blaze,
The sight is too melting to bear.
When from my own vileness I turn
To Jesus exposed on the tree,
With shame and with wonder I burn,
To think what He suffered for me.

“My sins, O how black they appear,
When in that dear bosom they meet!
Those sins were the nails and the spear,
That wounded His hands and His feet.
'Twas justice that wreathed for His head,
The thorns that encircled it round;
Thy temples, Immanuel, bled,
That mine might with glory be crowned.”

What a testimony!

And eventually under those beautiful words, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” he ventured to join the church at Haslingden, almost seventy years ago. The actual baptism to him was not as blessed as he thought it might have been. There was no outstanding feeling. He was a little bit disappointed. But the Lord spoke later with these words: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

His call to the ministry. At his baptism, the late Mr. Wolstenholme, who was a very discerning man, said he felt that he would be raised up to preach, but it was several years before he felt able to venture. He spoke at Sovereign Grace Union meetings; he spoke at Trinitarian Bible Society meetings more than once. But after giving an address at a church in Sheffield, being greatly helped, he began to be pressed by other churches to go and preach, but he felt he could not do it until he had something very clear. For several years he resisted all attempts to get him into a pulpit, until Mr. Lythgoe, who was the Pastor at Thirlmere Chapel, Manchester, a very exclusive place, wrote to him twice and

begged him to go and preach for him. In the end he felt he must go, and he was helped, but he still came back and said, "I am still not a minister." That is how he felt. But he asked the Lord for one further token, and he would tell the church how far he had got in the exercise. Then the late Mr. E.G. Rowell of Old Hill sent a letter and asked him to preach there. Having the fleece wet and the fleece dry he then went before the church and, we know, was sent out to become an able minister of the New Testament; Christ centred, self-abasing.

The word that finally released him to go was very precious to him: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." He felt that promise would be with him in all the pulpits he went in, the journeys he took, and whatever lay before him to the end. Some years ago, he was on holiday in Cornwall watching the sunset on Perranporth beach. As the sun was sinking into the sea, he thought, my life is like that. It is sinking away. The shadows of life are lengthening. And then the Lord spoke to him: "Occupy till I come." And he did, didn't he! Almost to the last he occupied in this pulpit until the Lord came and took him home.

What about *his call to Bethel*? He loved the north – Haslingden and its hills, and its towns around, and the causes, Manchester, Liverpool. They were very dear to him, and I am sure in his heart of hearts, naturally speaking he would like to have settled there, and we can understand that. The northern churches wanted him to settle there as well. There was great pressure, especially from Liverpool. As he began to preach more widely, he told me, "I found, that in coming into Bedfordshire particularly, there was a certain people that kept coming to hear me, at Blunham, at Haynes, at Clifton and other places. They were from a place called Luton. I had never been there. They were from a church called Bethel." And then rumours went around that they were going to ask him for a trial period, and eventually of course they did. Now I can remember those early days. O how unctuous they were! O the sweetness of his ministry! What a help it was to those of us who were young in the way. Even now my memories are very precious of those early years here at Bethel.

Eventually, of course, he took the pastorate, but there were two things here. The Lord had to loosen his hold of the north, and that was not easy for Ben. However, under the ministry of the late Mr. A. Garnham, those words were given him: "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." My friends, the hands of the Lord were over His dear servant here all those years, blessing him, helping him, upholding him. But I remember coming to one of his young people's meetings. He had been here three or four years then. I said to him, "Do you feel settled here?" He said, "I

don't know." It was a strange thing to say, wasn't it! But apparently after five years he was. He told one of his dear friends this: "I am settled now." He said, "I love my people at Bethel more than any others to whom I minister." We know the love he had for Bethel. He was called not just to the pastorate here, but to be the faithful Editor of the *Gospel Standard* for so many years, the faithful leader of our churches, a faithful, loyal friend, and beyond. Wherever he found a kindred spirit, he was glad.

Now he has received that final call. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." And so, on January 14th, the Master called him: "Come up higher"; "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" He left behind that weakening, suffering body, and all the toils of this earth, the struggles with the world, the flesh and the devil that the God's people know, the temptations – all those eternally left behind. O,

"It is enough: earth's sorrows now have ceased;
And Jesus called him to heaven's perfect peace."

Surely it was said of him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And what would he say about that? He has cast his crown before the throne. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

As I pondered this service, I felt we could say: he has not entered heaven because he was a faithful husband, father and friend, neither because he was such an acceptable minister and pastor, neither because of the many books that were faithfully written over his long life. He was all those things here below, but he entered heaven as a sinner saved by grace.

"Upon a life he did not live,
Upon a death he did not die,
Another's life, Another's death,
He hung his whole eternity."

Thus, safely landed and joining the chorus, casting his crown before the throne, now singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." O what a place to come to, what a prospect for the believer. It is not far from some of you, some of us perhaps. A few more steps, yes, and then, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

Some years ago now, when preaching about Moses and his death and his passing, he said this: "The best of men, the most valuable of men, do not live for ever. O what a great and godly man Moses was! He is

continually described as ‘the servant of the Lord.’ What a blessing he was to Israel and what a great work he accomplished! But the time came when he died, when he went the way of all flesh. The wonderful mercy is this (I believe it is engraved on one of the tombs in Westminster Abbey): God buries His workmen, but He carries on His work. No-one is indispensable. God’s work was going on long before we arrived on this earth. God’s work will still be going on after we have been taken from it.”

And so, to the church at Bethel: “God will always carry on His own work. When the Lord needs a man, that man will always be there, raised up and equipped and then used. So as Moses died, the Lord raised up Joshua. And it will ever be so, right down to the end of time, a Joshua taking the place of a Moses. For no man is indispensable, not even the best of men, not even Moses. But what a solemn time it was in Israel. ‘Moses my servant is dead.’ And it is a solemn time in the church of God today. We do miss these old, gracious, godly people, who have been taken from the evil to come. ‘Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth’; and ‘the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.’” May that not be said of you nor me. What did Moses say? “O that they were wise ... that they would consider their latter end.” Yes, are you wise? Our dear friend set that example before you all those years. Consider your latter end.

“The Master is come, and calleth for thee” – an irresistible call, in love, everlasting love, with everlasting consequences.

So, the conclusion of it is this. Lazarus remember was raised from the grave showing the power of Christ’s resurrection. This is not the end. Yes, we are soon to commit the mortal remains of the Lord’s servant to the earth. That is not the end. I can hear now our friend saying it: “He from the grave my dust shall raise,” and again,

“Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!” (H. 485)

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... saith the Spirit.” We also would say it humbly this Tuesday morning. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” May God add His blessing. Amen.

A Christian shall be here as long as he hath any work to do for Christ, as long as Christ hath any work to accomplish in him: Christ will fit him for Himself, and then take him to Himself.

John Mason

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

By Gerald Hamstra (1927-2018)

“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16. 19).

The ascension of Christ is a redemptive fact of the utmost significance. To think of Christ’s ascension only once a year on ascension day is not sufficient. We should always be mindful of Christ as having ascended into heaven. The Christian church confesses every Lord’s day: “He ascended into heaven.” Christ is no longer on earth; He returned to the place from whence He came – heaven. The disciples were eyewitnesses to that blessed fact. They were present with Him near Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. He spoke to His disciples and blessed them. He ascended, a cloud covered Him, and they saw Him no more. The ascension of Christ was a sublime event. His reception into heaven was an indication that His substitutionary sufferings were fully accepted by the Father. On account of the sins of God’s people that were laid on Christ, the heavens were closed for Him as Sin-Bearer. By His atoning death, the heavens were opened again for Him and therefore also for His people.

The ascension of Christ brought His earthly ministry to completion. On the cross He finished the great work of atonement. Just before His death, His own lips testified to that great truth when He cried out, “It is finished” (John 19. 30).

By raising Him from the grave, God the Father set the seal of His approval upon the finished work of Christ. Yet Christ’s earthly ministry was not completed with His death and resurrection. He still needed to appear to His disciples and many others to provide clear proof of His resurrection. Likewise, He further instructed His disciples, giving them the great commission: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28. 19).

When Christ ascended, however, His earthly ministry came to a close. The ascension of Christ was a most glorious triumph. Being ascended and seated at the right hand of God the Father, He continues to minister to His people, to the church bought by His precious blood. The task of the Old Testament high priest on the annual day of atonement was twofold: first of all, to offer to the Lord a sacrifice; and secondly, when the sacrifice was offered, to bring the blood of the slain sacrifice into the holy of holies and to sprinkle it upon and in front of the mercy seat. In the holy of holies, the high priest presented the blood of the atoning sacrifice before the Lord. As the advocate of God’s people, he pleaded solely on the sacrifice. So it is also with the High Priest of the new

covenant. His task was of a similar twofold nature. Christ, as the great High Priest of His people, has made atonement by sacrificing Himself that He might bring us to God. He completed that work on the cross. This is the first aspect of His twofold high-priestly work.

Just as the Old Testament high priest went into the earthly holy of holies, so did Christ ascend into the heavenly holy of holies. There He pleads as the High Priest and Advocate of all His ransomed people. He pleads with God the Father on the basis of His finished work. He ever lives to make intercession for us (see Heb. 7. 25).

His earthly ministry was of inexpressibly-great value and so is His heavenly ministry.

How precious was the comfort He provided while He was here on earth for those who came to Him with the burden of their sin. Now, being ascended, He still helps the needy in their distress. He prays for His church, for all those who believe in Him. He still speaks – by His Word and Spirit – of peace and pardon to those who are troubled on account of their lost condition. How heavenly is the comfort He brings when all seems lost from man's side, when the needy sinner no longer sees a way out. The peace He gives the lost sinner in Himself is the most blessed balm the human heart can ever know. Nothing can compare with Christ Himself, coming by His Word and Spirit, making it known to a lost sinner that He remembers him in mercy and prays for him as the great High Priest who prays for all His own.

Christ's heavenly ministry is a precious comfort for the true believer today. He never fails to intercede for His own. He continuously prays for them. To know this by faith is an indescribable comfort in all the distresses of life. When the Holy Spirit convinces us of our sinful and undone condition, we can experience the most precious comfort when Christ, by His Word and Spirit, makes it known to us that He pleads our case with the Father. That is heaven on earth. How blessed are those who know this heavenly peace!

Someone may say, "I can believe that Christ so comforts His own, but, alas, I know nothing of these precious mercies in my own experience. Oh, I wish that Christ would also do something for me." The good news is that He can help you too. By His heavenly ministry He can teach you to pray for the grace that He gives to His own people. The first true prayer for grace is a fruit of Christ's heavenly ministry.

When a sinner begins to pray to God from the heart, Christ has produced that prayer. He can make the hardest heart to pray. Ask Him to work in your hardened heart. He is fully qualified to do it. Think of what happened on the day of Pentecost: three thousand prayed for the first time. What He did for these three thousand, He has often repeated since. Would He not be able to do it for you? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

ADAM AND CHRIST

By Samuel Mather (1626-1671)

Adam was a figure of Him that was to come (Rom. 5. 14). The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit (1 Cor. 15. 45).

It was chiefly in regard of his headship and influence. Adam was the head of the first covenant; Jesus Christ is the Head of the second covenant. Adam was the covenant root and head of all mankind, a public and common person representing them; yea an undertaker for them. He was the representative of the whole world. He sinning, we sinned in him; he being condemned, we are condemned in him. So Christ is the Head of the second covenant, and of His elect, who are involved and wrapped up therein. He hath undertaken for them. Therefore when He died, we died with Him; when Christ was crucified, our sins were nailed to His cross, and buried as it were in His grave. When He arose, we rose with Him, to die no more. His influence is to all His seed. For both Adams have a seed. As Adam, so Christ: "He shall see His seed" (Isa. 53. 10).

Adam communicates sin and death, but Christ, righteousness and life. Adam brought in these two great intruders and usurpers, sin and death, into the world. As Adam conveyed sin to those who had not sinned actually, so did Christ convey righteousness to those who had not wrought righteousness (see Psa. 51.5; Rom. 5. 12, 14; 9. 30, 31). As soon as there is union between soul and body, Adam's sin is imputed to his seed. So, as soon as there is mystical union between Christ and the soul by the Spirit of faith, so soon is Christ's righteousness imputed.

But there is a "much more" put upon Christ. The disparity between the two Adams is very great. In their persons: the first Adam is of the earth, earthy; but the second Adam is the Lord from heaven. In their headships and undertakings: the one was head of a covenant of works, the other of a better covenant of grace. In their success: the one failed; the other kept the covenant. The first Adam was tempted by Satan and conquered by him; but Christ was tempted and overcame the tempter. In their influences: the first Adam was made a living soul, the second a quickening Spirit. The one conveys all evil, sin and death to his seed; the other communicates all good, righteousness and life to His. There is righteousness opposed to sin, and life to death, and with a "much more" (see Rom. 5. 15-18). "Not as the offence, so also is the free gift" (verse 15). At the great day, when Adam shall see his seed lost and undone, he must own it. But Christ shall say, "Here am I, and the children which God hath given Me"; not one of them is lost.

Be exhorted to examine yourselves, and try which of the two Adams you are under. For there are but two men in the world, the first and

second Adam. Thou art a member of one of them. Adam and Christ divide the whole world.

**THE LIFE AND WITNESS OF
BENJAMIN ASHWORTH RAMSBOTTOM**

Benjamin Ramsbottom was born in the industrial town of Haslingden, among the hills and moors of Lancashire, in April 1929. It was here that he heard the three great calls of his Lord and Master: his call by grace in the 1940s; the call to the gospel ministry in the 1950s; and, in the 1960s, the call to the long and fruitful pastorate at Luton – a call which took him away from his beloved Lancashire.

He was brought up to attend Cave Adullam Chapel in Haslingden. He enjoyed helping his grandfather in the chores around chapel, and from the age of nine played the organ for public worship. “I had a natural interest in the services of the house of God but, as I grew up, my heart was bound up in worldly things.” He looked on the Lord’s people and knew that they had something that he did not possess. He felt that he wanted to be like them – but only when he was older.

When he was a teenager, about the time of the end of the Second World War (1945), he recalls leaving a football match miles from home and seeing a man holding a placard – “WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?” It had a significant effect on him and condemned him; yet soon sadly the impression dissipated.

When he left grammar school at the age of eighteen, he tried hard to settle down in the world. One November evening, as he was walking through Haslingden, he met a member of the Plymouth Brethren – who pointedly asked him if he was saved. “I left him disturbed and angry.... I tried to put him off and said to myself that he was an Arminian – but all my arguments could not shake me out of the solemn persuasion that I was out of the secret. This inward concern I found I could never shake off.”

He recalls that his natural desire was always to put things off, but he was learning that there is an eternal difference fixed between the Lord’s people and the world. One Lord’s day evening, the visiting minister – Mr. Salmon – stayed and spoke briefly at the after-service prayer meeting. “I was finding my efforts to settle in the world painful and that evening he spoke from, ‘As an eagle stirreth up her nest....’ He spoke of the thorn in the nest and how, the more the young eagles try to settle in the nest, the more the thorn hurts. Then Mr. Salmon said, ‘If the Lord

is dealing with you, the more you try to settle in the world, the more painful it will become.’ From that moment I had a clear realisation that I should never find rest in the world.”

Death and eternity became solemn things to him, the world lost its charms, and he felt the emptiness of his own religion. He was a talented sportsman and enjoyed watching professional football, but recalled clearly “the last time I went to a football match. How ridiculous it all seemed in the light of eternity: grown-up men playing with a ball! I felt as I left the ground I should never again enter” – and indeed he never did.

Alongside a sense of the vanity of the world, he was particularly led into a view of the blessedness of the people of God – seeing them as happy and safe: all that he desired to be. “One Lord’s day afternoon, the closing hymn was ‘Immortal honours,’ but I could see nothing but the little piece over the top of the hymn which says, ‘Safety in Christ.’”

When he was nineteen, he went to study history at the University of Hull. This was slightly delayed because of the large numbers of servicemen leaving the armed forces after the end of war. The pressure on university places meant that his choices were restricted and, when he arrived in Hull, he found that there was no free grace cause within fifty miles. “I think I had made an idol of the chapel I had attended and now being completely separated from any place where the truth was preached, I found I had no foundation to my religion. Every prop was taken away.”

He later felt that Berridge’s quaint verse was true of his early experience:

“Every prop will, first or last,
Sink or fail, but Jesus Christ.” (H. 742)

Although he tried many different places of worship, he found no satisfaction. This left him very lonely (“absolutely alone” in his words) – but he increasingly found he had to seek personal dealings in secret with the Lord. “Painful work,” he commented, “coming away from every vain hope, every false foundation. But I could not find any resting place at all.”

As concern about his soul’s welfare increased, the precious promises of the first chapter of John’s Epistle were constantly on his mind. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” and, “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” A particular concern was whether he had truly confessed his sins, given that his spiritual beginnings were so gradual in comparison to the deep convictions of many others.

One day, as he was considering these things, a verse came suddenly like a whisper:

“Rest in the promise God has spoke,
 In all things ordered well for thee;
 Whose sacred words He’ll ne’er revoke,
 Nor alter His profound decree.” (H. 915)

Although he could not recall hearing these words before, for the first time he felt he could rest in the promises of 1 John 1. A little extra encouragement was when he found the hymn in his hymnbook (Gadsby’s, 915) and read the following verse:

“’Tis good to cast an anchor here
 And patient wait, till thou shalt see
 Thy hopes for heaven more bright and clear,
 Blessed with a surer prophecy.”

In the months that followed, Isaiah 53 was made exceedingly attractive. “I read it day by day and felt such nearness to the Lord in meditation and in prayer. I felt an interest, not in any special verse, but in the blessed work there described. I often meditated on those two words – ‘the atonement’ – and they seemed so blessed: I seemed to follow the Lord from the garden to before Pilate and then to Calvary.” The whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews – with its emphasis on the shed blood of Christ – was also very precious. “I felt a soft heart and such love to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This went on for weeks. I wondered at the time if it was just imagination, but I have never been able to feel the same things in the same way since. I believe at this time I first truly realised my sin – as seen in the light of the spotless perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His awful sufferings under the weight of His people’s sins.”

Many, many years later, at the memorable services for the fiftieth anniversary of his pastorate, he closed the meetings by once again turning to read Isaiah 53 – noting that it was the place where his soul first cast anchor. The glorious themes of the atoning love of the Lord Jesus contained in that chapter remained the great themes of his life and his ministry. “It is,” he often said, “that vital, personal, saving, experimental knowledge of the Son of God. Nothing else will do.”

At this time of blessing early in his spiritual life, there was a verse of Joseph Swain that was impressed with great power on his heart and seemed to summarise his feelings:

“My sins, O how black they appear,
 When in that dear bosom they meet!
 Those sins were the nails and the spear
 That wounded His hands and His feet.
 ’Twas justice that wreathed for His head
 The thorns that encircled it round;

Thy temples, Immanuel, bled,
That mine might with glory be crowned.” (H. 162)

He felt the burning beauty of that hymn so deeply that he was never able to give it out, not even around the Lord’s table.

During his time at Hull, he came into contact with many students (including at the Christian Union) who opposed the doctrines of grace. He found that these doctrines – known since childhood – were increasingly coming under scrutiny and being tested. He was very concerned to be right on these points. While meditating frequently on Isaiah 53, he saw the doctrine of particular redemption with complete clarity once and for all: “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” He felt it to be a most blessed verse, and that he could sympathise with the Lord in His sufferings and rejoice with Him in His triumphs. Another truth that became particularly attractive to him was the covenant of grace. He had often heard of it but had never fully felt its preciousness. “I had to pass through some things which caused deep sorrows, and I felt how much was wrong with myself, but the word was most sweet, ‘Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.’

‘On my unworthy, favoured head,
Its blessings all unite.’” (H. 84)

When speaking of the doctrines of free and sovereign grace over the years, he often used to emphasise that he believed them not simply through tradition, but because in his student days – when attacked from every quarter – they had been burned into his heart.

In those early days, it was his particular delight to hear anyone speak of the glory of Christ, and he loved returning home from university to hear the truths of the gospel. One particularly special time, he heard Mr. E.G. Rowell preach on, “His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

The time came for him to leave university and take up teaching, but first he had to take his final examinations, which was a time of great anxiety. The night before the first exam he read Isaiah 43. It seemed as if the Lord spoke the words with great power: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” All his fear was taken away and the power of the word remained all week – especially the absolute certainty of the promise.

Following these days of blessing, he was exercised about believer’s baptism, but did not mention his experience to anyone and did not venture until some five years later. He often wished that he had felt able

to speak to his dear, aged grandfather – who made such an impression on him from the youngest age – and who died during this period.

There were many hindrances to an open profession, not least that he lived away from Lancashire for four years, and that the church at Haslingden seemed more or less finished following his grandfather's death. He had a ready excuse but, "looking back, the Lord Jesus never accepted that excuse from me." Eventually the Lord removed every hindrance and he was baptized on the first Lord's day in May 1953, joining the little (and re-formed) church at Haslingden. As he came to the end of the day of his baptizing, he felt a little disappointed because he had not felt anything special. In bed that evening as he read Hebrews 13, the verse came like an inward whisper: "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave, thee nor forsake thee." The Lord's *He hath said* seemed so much better than any special feeling on one particular day, for it carried with it an eternal promise – and so he proved across the next seven decades, through days of trial and days of blessing alike.

The second great call experienced by B.A. Ramsbottom (as he was almost universally known during his adult life) was the call to the ministry. From a small boy, he often used to think of preaching, although he later commented that this "sprang from nothing but pride."

Mr. Wolstenholme, in chairing the church meeting at which he gave his testimony, stated publicly that he wondered if the Lord would call him to the work of the ministry. This was a great shock and surprise: Mr. Wolstenholme, the minister from Blackburn, was a former sergeant major known for his somewhat discriminating views.

A few months after his baptism, while at Sheffield for the weekend, he was asked to give an address at the chapel. As he began to speak (with some nervousness), the word so sweetly spoken on the night of his baptism came back with considerable power – "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

"I think," he later recollected, "that I have never felt greater freedom than on that occasion, speaking from 'He led them forth by the right way.'" The church at Sheffield, feeling he was called to the work of the ministry, convened a church meeting and unanimously invited him to preach at Sheffield, if the church at Haslingden would agree. In the same week, he also received two further letters from other churches, inviting him to preach.

He spoke to the Haslingden deacons, and indicated that he had – at that time – no special exercise about the ministry. On their advice, he

therefore declined all of the invitations. Between 1953 and 1956, he continued to receive various invitations to preach, but declined them all. He did, however, give addresses on behalf of the Sovereign Grace Union and the Trinitarian Bible Society – and was invited to write for a number of magazines including the *Evangelical Quarterly*, *Free Grace Record*, *Peace & Truth* and the *Evangelical Magazine*.

In January 1956 an invitation to preach arrived from Mr. Lythgoe, Pastor of Zion, Manchester. “This came as a real shock. Mr. Lythgoe did not really know me, and I knew he had only seven or eight Lord’s days away from Manchester, and that he was very particular who supplied for him. I wrote back to say I was afraid I could not go.”

In response, Mr. Lythgoe sent a long letter – among other things pointing out that the Lord does not call all ministers in the same way and that not all could expect a similar call to, say, the Apostle Paul. “This brought me into a real concern.... I had read of godly men suddenly having a word powerfully applied telling them to preach. I was waiting for this and, for three years, had remained unexercised about the invitations I had received. From this time, my concern began.”

In June 1956, Mr. Lythgoe wrote again, imploring him to preach in Manchester later that month. On the third Lord’s day in June, Mr. Lythgoe told his congregation he hoped he would have a young man preaching the next Lord’s day but he did not know – and neither did the young man!

He felt unable either to decline or accept. In some considerable concern and distress, he felt great liberty in laying the matter before the Lord and was sweetly led in Isaiah 55. He had tried to reason out what he should do but was stopped by verse 8 (“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways.”) He felt that his preaching would be unprofitable, but was answered by verse 10 (“that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.”) Above all, verse 12 was impressed strongly on his spirit: “For ye *shall* go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.” It was his answer, and the word came to him with a powerful resolve: “I will go in the strength of the Lord.”

“Then how sweetly I viewed the Lord saying, ‘Ye *shall* go,’ and my spirit saying, ‘I *will* go.’”

He spoke to the deacons and the church at Haslingden, although indicating that the Lord had only shown him that he could preach in this one place. Greatly troubled at standing up in the Lord’s name, and concerned about what to speak, the word came – “Ye shall ... be led forth with peace.” The congregation at Manchester received him so kindly that the fear of speaking was taken away as he spoke from Colossians 3. 1; journeying home, the word was once again impressed on his spirit, “Ye shall ... be led forth with peace.”

He begged the Lord that, if he was not meant to preach, he would never again receive an invitation. Mr. Lythgoe wrote shortly afterwards, however – and he felt he dare not refuse. “During these months, the awful solemnity of the work of the ministry was shown to me, and it seemed that every possible burden was brought before me.... The chief obstacle was my own unfitness.”

Yet he also felt the desire to submit, if the Lord’s will, and felt encouraged by the word, “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.” One day, while in prayer, there came a sudden realisation that he never could be fit and that the call to the ministry was entirely on the grounds of grace. He later reflected that he “saw it as much a call by grace as the sinner’s conversion.”

Then he received a terrible and solemn shock. He heard of a well-respected, free grace minister among the Independents who had grievously fallen and was in prison. “This finished my ideas of preaching. I felt I too should one day fall, and this was such a temptation to me that I resolved to put away all thought of preaching from my mind.”

Several weeks later he attended the anniversary services at Accrington. In the prayer after the last hymn, the minister quoted, “The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for ever more.” All his fears, all of his objections were gone in that instant – and he felt able to lean on that promise until the end of his life.

“It was a beautiful summer evening and a few of us walked home from Accrington to Haslingden. It is four miles – and steep uphill all of the way. I suppose it takes about an hour but it only seemed a few moments, I felt:

“Enough, my gracious Lord,
Let faith triumphant cry;
My heart can on this promise live;
Can on this promise die.” (H. 345)

He asked for one last token. At a church meeting one of the members spoke about the fleece wet and dry (see Judges 6). He felt he could ask for this and – having the invitation from Mr. Lythgoe as the wet fleece – he begged the Lord for a further invitation from somewhere that had not invited him before. Before the week was finished, an invitation arrived from Ebenezer, Old Hill, in the Midlands.

With the Lord’s leading so clear, he felt he could do nothing but inform his deacons and place the matter before the church at Haslingden. The church meeting was arranged for October 1956, but while waiting he was brought nearly to despair. All he could cling to was this: “With God nothing shall be impossible.” Yet the church received him with

great love, the snare was broken and he finally proved God's great faithfulness to His promise, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace."

It was a promise that he walked out over the next sixty-six years as he preached Christ faithfully in season and out of season. In the early years, his preaching was mainly among the churches in Lancashire and Yorkshire – working as a teacher all week and then taking often difficult journeys on public transport at the weekend. Later it expanded to other parts of the country, especially after his move to Luton. During nearly seven decades, he preached many thousands of sermons. The joy and peace that the Lord had promised at the start of his ministry was often felt by those blessed under his preaching.

What was the secret to his long and fruitful ministry? There is only one secret to the gracious effect of gospel preaching: the working of the Spirit of the living God. "The best of preaching without the power attending will not avail," as he himself said, "and the feeblest statement of divine truth, attended with power, will do the deed." He was blessed with a prodigious memory and a gift for expressing the truths of the gospel in a fresh and living way. He felt a solemn need to warn – to speak of the wrath to come, but always also to speak with great warmth of the love of Christ. It was a preaching that remained consistent during that long period as many things changed in the country and among the churches. Among other things, two stand out as underpinning his ministry. First, a great reverence and love for the Word of God, and a desire in preaching to expound the glorious truths of Scripture; secondly, a wish to exalt a precious Christ – and he never deviated from those glorious truths that had been so powerfully applied to his heart when a teenager. So he did not bring into the pulpit too much of his own experience – although speaking of things that he had heard, seen and handled – nor his own (considerable) learning.

Since his death, his family have been touched by countless testimonies of times when his preaching consoled, comforted or convicted, but, as for the full effect under the Spirit's sealing, only the day shall declare it.

The third call experienced in his life – the call to the pastorate at Luton – was, in some ways, the one which caused him most concern and anguish, although it would come to prove one of the greatest blessings of his life too.

By the early 1960s he was increasingly preaching in the south of England. Wherever he went he seemed to find that there were people from Luton to hear him preach. He found afterwards that the church at

Bethel were deeply burdened concerning calling a pastor. Unknown to him, his name had been proposed and there was a near unanimous wish to invite him. Strangely he had never been there to preach, but eventually was engaged to preach for the first time on Easter day 1964.

A week after he received an invitation from the church at Bethel to preach three months in 1965 with a view to the pastorate. It was not an invitation that he particularly welcomed. "Now I didn't really want to come to Luton. I never wanted to leave my beloved Lancashire. Also I had two invitations for pastorates from churches in Lancashire."

In the end he felt that he had to accept but, as 1964 came to an end, also felt a great depth of darkness and despair. He just could not face leaving Lancashire to come down for those three months to Luton. At the end of November, he preached at Siddal, Halifax from what felt like the very cry of his heart: "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee."

He began preaching the trial period in Luton in 1965, "almost in black despair," taking as his first text: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." A strange contrast emerged. He felt in darkness and that his "preaching was not particularly good and not particularly profitable." Yet many who were there during those three months never forgot the power and unction that attended the preaching – and across the ensuing years many testimonies gave witness to the work of the Spirit during those months.

Before he returned to Lancashire, he received a call from the church at Luton to begin the pastorate the following year. He felt that he could not accept it, but neither could he refuse it and – in some confusion – suggested preaching another trial period at the start of 1966. That period came and went. He still felt unsure of the way, and that his preaching was no more profitable than in the previous year.

"There came a day in June 1966 and I felt that on the next day an answer would need to be given. Now the evening of that day I was going to hear Mr. Garnham preach. If ever a person wrestled with God for a Yea or Nay – 'If it be so tell me, or if it be not so, tell me' – it was that June day in 1966. I was prostrated before the Lord all day. I felt it was so weighty, so much hung on it."

That night the text was: "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." One thing that the minister said was this: "The Lord Jesus could have blessed His disciples in Jerusalem. He could have blessed them where they were, but He did not. He led them out. They had got to go to Bethany. He blessed them there. The Lord could keep you here and bless you here, but He is not going to do that. He is going to lead you out as far as Bethany. So you have to go to Bethany, and when you go to Bethany, the Lord will bless you there."

The following morning he wrote the shortest letter of his life – one sentence – accepting the pastorate. “O but the trial of it! I was so tried I had made a mistake.”

So it was that, with some sadness and still in a measure of darkness, he left his family and the Lancashire that he loved so much and moved to Luton. “For four-and-three-quarter years, I thought that I had made a mistake and used to pray continually that the Lord would make an honourable way how I could get out of Bethel and get back to Lancashire. They were very, very deep, very, very solemn things, very, very close things – heartrending things.”

But, like Bethany itself, he came to find Luton as a place of love and a place of blessing. Despite fearing that his pastorate would collapse in dishonour in a matter of months, he was sustained by the Lord throughout fifty-five years.

In the first year of his pastorate (1967), he married Jean Kelsall from Coventry. It was the happiest of marriages and she proved a constant support during all the years of the pastorate. They were blessed with six children.

Much could be written about the long pastorate. There were, of course, days of difficulty and trial, but through it all – supported by loyal deacons and church – the Lord built up both the congregation and the church. Many can testify to days of gracious reviving during each of the subsequent decades. He felt a deep love and care for his congregation, and perhaps particularly towards those walking in difficult or dark pathways.

Speaking at the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pastorate he said: “If I were to be asked what were my sweetest memories of Bethel, they would be things like this. The prayer meeting, 7 o’clock, the meeting just about to begin and the door opens and someone creeps in and sits on the back row who has never been before. I have witnessed that again and again. Then those occasions, an unexpected knock at the door, an unexpected telephone call ... and some sweet testimony of the Lord’s dealings. We have had some delightful church meetings, days of the Son of Man, over the years where sinners with tender, broken, weeping hearts have told their little tales of hope in the Lord’s love and mercy.” At times, he added, “We have not been very far from heaven. But beloved friends, really that is what it is all about, what brought me from Haslingden to Luton, what binds our hearts together in Christian love – the Lord of glory dying that sinners such as we might one day be in heaven for ever and ever.”

In the 1980s, several of the congregation become concerned about the possibility of circulating printed transcripts of his sermons that were

proving such a blessing, particularly thinking of those who did not live near a place of worship. Every month since August 1985 a *Bethel Pulpit* sermon has been published and circulated – and latterly a shorter prayer meeting address too. Over four hundred sermons have been distributed across the world in the subsequent years, and have been used by the Lord both in private reading and during reading services.

From the earliest days of the pastorate, he had a particular burden for the young people in the congregation. For many years, on the first Saturday evening of each month, he held a meeting for young people crowded into the chapel's schoolroom, where he would speak on a range of relevant topics – talks that had an influence on many lives. A Bible class for young people was also started at his house on Sunday afternoons.

Each month, he addressed the whole Sunday School and it was a series of talks on doctrines of Scripture that formed the basis of perhaps his most widely-distributed book: *Bible Doctrines Explained for Children* (later, *Bible Doctrines Simply Explained*). Much of his writing ministry was concerned with setting gospel truths simply before young people and he wrote a large number of books of Bible stories. The books have been translated into many languages and distributed widely across the world.

He never lost his early love for history and especially the glorious heritage of the church of God. Among other historical writings, his life of William Gadsby was published in 2003 – the fruit of a lifetime of interest and research into this remarkable minister whom he esteemed very highly.

Alongside his writing – and whilst seeing his pastorate at Luton as central to everything – he increasingly was also called to spend time on wider matters. He had a great affection for all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and had friendships and maintained correspondence with a large number of people. He did not seek to be, nor considered himself to be, a denominational leader – but he did have a great burden for the churches. It was therefore a labour of love to take up the editorship of the *Gospel Standard* magazine in 1971, succeeding S.F. Paul, desiring to continue in the same vein as his godly predecessors and continuing until 2015 – with a short break due to ill health (partly caused by the strains of the editorship) in 1996-97. “Our one desire,” he wrote in his first editorial, “is that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. We long that the *Gospel Standard* may contain a sweet savour of Christ.”

As well as editing the *Friendly Companion* magazine between 1985 and 1996, he sat on and chaired various of the committees serving the churches. Perhaps above all, as the Lord helped, he endeavoured to encourage the churches through his preaching, including at the Annual General Meeting of the Societies, on several occasions in North America,

as well as on many special occasions for individual churches. There are happy and blessed memories of, for example, the services at Milton-under-Wychwood on August Bank Holiday, Liverpool on Good Friday and Leatherhead on Easter Monday (the latter for over fifty consecutive years). A largely-unseen element of his concern for the churches was extensive correspondence with individuals and with churches. Although not something he dwelt on, it was an undoubted cause of sadness that virtually all of the chapels in Lancashire and Yorkshire were closed by the time of his death; these were causes he loved very much and that he had laboured among during the 1950s and 1960s.

It could be a temptation when writing about a long and fruitful life to give too much praise to the man. The emphasis of his own life and preaching was the opposite of that, as he pointed away from everything – and toward Christ. In coming toward the end of this account of this life, we quote from a sermon he preached on 2 Corinthians 4.

“We have continually to be reminded of it – the treasure is not in us. The treasure is not in the earthen vessel. The treasure is in Christ, ‘that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.’ If there were a priceless gem on display and it was displayed in a casket of pure gold, people would not know whether they were supposed to admire the casket or the gem that was in it. In a word, in its pure, gospel simplicity it is this: everything in Christ, nothing in the sinner.”

His children remember often when they were young wandering into his study and invariably finding him deep in prayer or deep in meditation. That dependence on his Lord was the secret of his life, and not a dependence on his own ability or gifts.

A few years ago, while on holiday in Cornwall, watching the sun set into the sea and burdened about the future, the Lord dropped these words into his heart: “Occupy till I come.” As he became frailer physically in older age, he was able to walk out that command through the Lord’s help and to preach with the continued vigour and clarity of his younger years. By the sustaining grace of God, he maintained the pastorate at Luton until the end of 2021. During 2022, despite retirement and increasing weakness, he was encouraged by six individuals constrained to make an open profession of faith at Luton – all of whom had been helped during the years of his pastorate; he was able to preach at each of the baptismal services. As the year came to a close, it was clear that his health was declining – but he was able to preach to his beloved congregation for what proved to be the last time on new year’s day 2023 from the dying words of Moses: “And the LORD, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

That final call on January 14th, 2023 – from earth into the immediate presence of the Lord that he had loved and served – was in the end relatively sudden. “After he had served his own generation by the will of God, [he] fell on sleep.”

His friend and brother-in-law, Mr. Gerald Buss, was greatly helped in preaching to a large congregation at his funeral from the words, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” The mortal remains of our father were then laid to rest in the graveyard of Clifton Chapel, the committal being conducted by his old friend, Mr. Robert Field, awaiting that great day when the dead in Christ shall rise.

Preaching two decades ago on the glories of the resurrection (a favourite subject) our father said this: “How often have we looked down into the open grave of a believer and we have said, ‘Come, see the place where the Lord lay’! All the sin, all the bitterness taken out of it, that as surely as Jesus died and rose again, the blessed dead who have died in the Lord will one day rise again triumphant to eternal life.”

“Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!” (H. 485)

As we remember those who have spoken unto us the Word of God, may we each be given grace to follow their faith, “considering the end of their conversation.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Paul Ramsbottom, on behalf of the family

GOD’S CHASTENING IN LOVE, NOT IN ANGER

Letter written by C.H. Marston to the church and congregation at Old Baptist Chapel (now known as Maryport Street Baptist Chapel) in Devizes, Wiltshire, after (because of severe illness) he had moved from his home in Devizes, and a few days before he died.

Neither by my will nor by your will has this separation been effected. It is, and has been, to my own mind most evidently by the will of God. Why it has been, it may be you or I know not, and yet I so strongly feel that “Himself hath done it,” that I know wisdom and righteousness, goodness and mercy, must be at the bottom of this dispensation. I have had some precious tokens that the trial is not in wrath, that though my sins, and shortcomings, and failings, and inconsistencies, might well be the cause why the Lord should see fit to

incapacitate me to continue my office among you, yet they are not the cause. I have had sweet assurance that He hath blotted them out. Oh, wonderful mercy, rich, surprising grace! I thought at one time it was all anger, wrath and judgment; but I have been made to feel that “Wisdom and mercy guide my way.” And since my lips have been closed, there have been many times when I have longed for the power to declare unto you the lovingkindness and tender mercies of God through the precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

On that gospel which I have declared to you I am prepared to live and to die; nay, I am thoroughly convinced in my heart that I have preached unto you the only one gospel by which you as well as I can be saved; the gospel which I have proclaimed in your pulpit [in Devizes] must be your and my deathbed gospel, and everyone who has fled to Him broken-hearted, lost and ruined, is led by God’s Spirit, and shall for ever be saved, while mere notion and fleshly experience will leave many a professor [of religion] naked and undone.

I know I have preached to you the truth, and I know, too, that that truth which I have preached to you will remain a witness for you or against you; I have no doubt about that. Some of you have heard the gospel from my lips; through rich, free and sovereign grace it has entered into your hearts; bless, O bless God for it. Some of you have heard it, you have liked to hear it, you have approved of it, and I have been to you as a pleasant viol; but if that is all, you are unsaved; you have heard the truth and you have heard it in vain; your ear has been heavy and your heart hard ... what will you do without Christ when you die? or when He shall come to judge the world in righteousness? Hearers may blame ministers, and ministers may blame hearers; but be it ours in continued affection to be solemnly and deeply humbled before God. God has seen good to dissolve our relationship; I do not believe it to be in wrath, but it may be in chastisement. God would not have done it had there not been a necessity for it.

To me and to you the dispensation has a voice. May we mutually hear the rod and Him who hath appointed it. Bless God, though He chastises, He rests in His love. All with Him in Christ Jesus is grace. He chose, redeemed, called, quickened, sanctified, pardoned and justified, all in grace, in full knowledge of the irremediable condition of our corrupted nature. He will chastise, and purge, and purify, but all this is itself in richest and freest grace, to make His dear children partakers of His holiness. O the wonders of eternal love.

C.H. Marston

Reading, Berkshire
July 1870

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 126)

CHAPTER 5

His operations in every part and member of the church and body of Christ.

III. It is next to be considered what the Holy Ghost doth in every part and member of this body of Christ, the church; what He doth for every particular saint. For look, what He is to, and in the church universal, that He is first unto, and in, every saint in particular; for it is the particular individual saint that makes up the church universal. And when He falls upon assemblies of saints as met, yet it is so as He falls on the whole, by visiting the particular souls so assembled, and out of respect unto each single soul; as when the rain falls upon a field of corn, it falls upon the whole for every particular blade's sake, watering every stalk at its root, and so all grow up together. Hence therefore, Acts 2, where the fulfilling of those promises made in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John, were in the first fruits of them accomplished, it is expressly said that the Spirit "sat upon each of them" (verse 3), "and they were all" – that is, every one of them – "filled with the Holy Ghost," as organ pipes use to be with the common blast of the bellows that breathes wind into them, though by the difference of the pipes there is a differing sound. And thus the Holy Ghost doth, as one Spirit, inform and inspire the whole body of Christ, as the soul doth the whole body of a man. "There is one body, and one Spirit" (Eph. 4. 4), and the Spirit is the same in every member.

What therefore is next to be considered, is the activity of this Holy Spirit upon us, and in working in us.

First, in general; He worketh no less than all that is wrought: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12. 11). As of Christ, who is the Word, it is said in the point of the first creation, that "without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1. 3), so of the Spirit in this new creation we may say, that without Him there is not anything wrought in us that is wrought.

But let us consider particularly His works.

1. In regeneration, which is His prime work in us. He is the Author of all the principles or habits of grace, of that whole new creature, of that workmanship created to good works, the spiritual man, which is called spirit; that divine nature, which is the mass and lump of all things pertaining to life and godliness; "that which is born of the Spirit" (John 3. 6); the image of Christ, which is styled, "Christ ... formed

in you” (Gal. 4. 19). That divine nature is the image drawn. But who is the immediate former? It is the Spirit of God. “We ... are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3. 18). And that place shows that not only the first draught of that image is of His drawing, the ground colours, but all the additional lines that follow after, to perfect it all along, from one end of the work to the other. For He attributes that continual change wrought after conversion, in every degree of it, “from glory to glory,” unto this Spirit. And therein He so speaks of Himself and these believing Corinthians, yea, all believers. “We are thus changed,” all along by beholding, etc. All the changes into that image are by the Spirit of the Lord. No hand hath skill or power to add to this work; none able to mingle colours orient and lively enough but He. In the same chapter the believing Corinthians are declared to be “the epistle of Christ,” so far as they were or showed themselves Christians in reality. And there is not a letter or tittle added in the copy which is not found in Him. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered” – indeed says the apostle – “by us” – as the pens – “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3. 3), unto the draught of the least line of which no art or pencil of man can reach, or hath colours orient enough to write it. For all and every tittle, every stroke, is no other than an inward, living disposition of heart, like unto the divine life and nature of Christ, the Son of the living God, and therefore requires the living power of the Spirit of the living God (as He is there styled) to concur to the creating of it. “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psa. 51. 10, 11). For as He vouchsafes to become the ink, so He bears the part of a hand, too, of a ready writer. The Spirit is the finger of God (Matt. 12. 28 compared with Luke 11. 20), the sole artist that guides those pens that cast this ink, as there also it follows: God “hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter” (2 Cor. 3. 6) – for even that New Testament hath also letter to men unregenerate, and is but the dispensation of a notion – “but of the Spirit,” or power.

Let us go over the particular actings of the soul, which are as a drawing out of those created principles, whether at or in our first conversion or afterwards; and we shall find that each and every particular thereof are attributed to this Spirit.

i. Hast thou seen thy sinful condition, and been humbled, as to hell, for it? It is the Spirit’s proper work, for which He was sent. Thus says Christ, “When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin” (John 16. 8). And He says it to His apostles, when He was to send them into the world to convert men. And this is the first work of the three there

rehearsed, that the Holy Spirit begins with, in conversion, viz., a conviction of a state of sin and unbelief. As it follows, "Of sin, because they believed not on Me," and consequently, of damnation, as having lived without God and Christ in the world; and this work, though it may seem too low for Him, yet He is pleased to bear a title from it, and is termed a Spirit of bondage to us, as causing us to see our bondage to sin, and death, and hell: "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8. 15). It is one and the same Spirit there spoken of, in respect of two contrary operations, who hath the title there of both. It is the Holy Ghost who is that Spirit of adoption there spoken of, whereby we (afterwards) cry, Abba, Father.

This you may also see, Galatians 4. 6, and in the next verse 16 of that Romans 8. It is the Spirit who also witnesseth to us that we are the sons of God; and by the opposition it will follow that if the Holy Ghost be the Spirit of adoption spoken of, that He also was that Spirit of bondage; inasmuch as He doth discover to us our bondage; even as He is termed the Spirit of adoption, because He testifies our sonship. And the discovery of this our bondage is an infinite favour. For do not the great and wise ones of the world go hoodwinked quick to hell in a moment, and know not whither they are going until they are there? And of thyself thou couldst never have been thoroughly convinced of that; for the heart is deceitful above measure, who can know it? None without the light of this Spirit. For it is the spirituality of the law whereby He instructs men to know wisdom in the hidden point of their corrupt nature, as David, confessing it, speaks, Psalm 51, fifth and sixth verses compared together: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." And without the light of which law the same David likewise confesseth, "Who can understand His errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Psa. 19. 12). By which secret sins He understands the immediate bubblings of corrupt nature.

And it is He that "searcheth ... the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2. 10); "the hidden wisdom" (verse 7); "hid in God" (Eph. 3. 9); and reveals it to us (see verse 5). It is He, the same Spirit, that searcheth the deep deceitfulness of men's hearts, and reveals it to them, which David called wisdom in the hidden part. And it is Thou (says he to God) that makest me to know it; that is, Thou by Thy Spirit, who knowest all things (see 1 Cor. 2. 11). And this for Him to vouchsafe to do for Him, to take the same pains to do it (as ever mother or schoolmaster took to teach a child from His alphabet to read), is an act of infinite grace. It is He that

gives thee eyes to see, and an heart to understand, who holds the candle to thee, and points with His finger to every sin.

Let us all consider the unpleasingness of this work, which were it not that it is necessary for His saving thee, He who is the Holy Spirit would never rake into such foul and filthy dunghills of lusts and by-ends, unbelief and presumptions. This must needs be a loathsome work to Him, by reason of the objects He is exercised in, and tedious in itself. And this is the entrance into conversion.

ii. It is this Spirit which works repentance upon this discovery of sin, and turns our hearts from sin to God effectually. John the Baptist came preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Now by what, or whose power was it, that repentance was wrought in the hearts of multitudes that were His hearers? It was the Holy Spirit. “He shall come,” says the prophet, “in the spirit and power of Elias” (see Mal. 4. 6). The spirit of Elias was the Holy Ghost resting on him (see 2 Kings 2. 15), as He did on the Baptist: “He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1. 15). And it is spoken to signify the power that should accompany his ministry, to work repentance, as it follows in the next verse, “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.” And thereupon it is, that this prophecy of Malachi’s is alleged: “He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of ... the disobedient to the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1. 17). So as that which is spoken of Paul’s ministry among the Thessalonians, that it came “not ... in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1. 5), might (though in a lower degree) be said of his. And yet the first and eminent effect of his ministry was seen in the working of repentance, as it is often said, in Acts 13th and 19th chapters. It may likewise be observed, as serving to this purpose, that when Christ gave that new commission to His apostles, to preach repentance in His name unto all nations, for the remission of sins (as in Luke 24. 47), He renews “the promise of the Father,” which was the Holy Ghost. “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you” (verse 49). And why is that annexed to the former, as the preface thereto, “And behold,” shows, but because the giving of the Holy Ghost, even after Christ’s ascension, was to work repentance in men’s hearts by their preaching? Yea, and He commands them (as with a caution, in the following words), that they should tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high. Without whom, and the power of whom, their preaching repentance would have had no efficacy at all, to move men to turn unto God; but through whose operation God gave Israel (see Acts 5. 31, 32), yea, and the Gentiles, repentance unto life (see Acts 11. 18).

Abridged

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Doctrine of Election, by John Calvin, translated from the French by Robert White; hardback; 236 pages; price £15; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian bookshops

John Calvin needs no introduction to our readers. His works have had a profound influence for centuries since the Reformation. He *did not* formulate the doctrines of grace – they were in Holy Scripture from the beginning – but he was greatly used of God to bring them to a light which had been largely hidden during the Dark Ages.

The following quote concerning the doctrine of election is very helpful, given in an address to the church in Geneva: “Now there are those who say we could well do without this doctrine, and that faith and repentance can be preached without insisting that only some are God’s elect. These people fancy that they are wiser than God Himself. True, we must be sober, as I have just said, and we cannot be too careful in observing moderation as God has commanded, so that we do not exceed our limits. But by what measure is sobriety to be judged? From whence are we to get it? From our own wisdom or from God Himself? It is certain that God knows what is needful for us to understand. Since this is so, let Him show us the things we have already seen: we must know them, but we must not go beyond the bounds. As soon as God has blocked the path, we must call a halt. We should understand then that it is for God to show us, it is for us to accept in all humility, and to enquire no further.” We commend this work to our readers.

Theodore Beza: The Counsellor of the French Reformation, by Henry Martyn Baird; hardback; 398 pages; price £13.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a reprint of the biography first published in 1899. In great detail it traces the life of one of the lesser-known, though not less important, French Reformers. He was greatly used in consolidating the work begun by Calvin and others by establishing the doctrines of grace in the minds of his hearers. Though stationed in Geneva, Beza was closely connected with the Huguenots and warned of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre some time before it took its awful place in French history. This is an excellent book for historians, though its attention to detail may be challenging for some readers.

NOTICE OF DEATH

David Frank Holman, deacon for nearly fifty years of the church at Zion Chapel, Leicester, passed to his eternal rest on February 26th, 2023, aged 94 years. “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him” (Isa. 3. 10).

“WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER”

(1 John 2. 1)

Dear Advocate, I must and will commend
Thee above all who do hard causes plead;
For I have proved Thou art the sinner’s Friend,
And Thou didst plead my cause in time of need.

Dear Advocate with God the Father, Thou
Dost plead Thy precious blood in heaven for me.
Mine was indeed a dreadful cause! But now
I feel ’twas pleaded well indeed by Thee.

Dear Advocate, Thou madest my cause thy own.
Thy wondrous love I never can forget!
Through Thy dear merits and Thy blood alone
My soul’s discharged without a single debt.

Dear Advocate, through Thee e’en Justice smiles,
And not a charge against me has to bring.
Through Thy sweet merits Satan and his wiles
Have helped my soul a louder song to sing.

Dear Advocate, I will to sinners call
To take their cause, however bad, to Thee.
I stand astonished! Thou dost all things well.
For through Thy intercession I am free.

Dear Advocate, no cause can be too hard
For Thee to take in hand. It must succeed.
How safe are they, my dear and faithful Friend,
Whose cause Thou condescendest for to plead.

Dear Advocate, though Thou mayest slighted be,
Yet, if alone, I must for Thee contend;
For Thou didst plead my cause, from charges free,
And even now Thou dost my soul befriend.

Dear Advocate, I had not e’en a mite to pay,
So poor and destitute indeed was I;
But Thou who knowest all things found a way
To save my soul, and all my wants supply.

Dear Advocate, I want a thankful heart;
I want to love the Friend that set me free.
But even this, dear Lord, Thou must impart,
For every good and perfect gift’s from Thee.

Author Unknown

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

JUNE 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

OUR FATHER

In yet another step towards total apostasy, the Church of England has suggested that the “Lord’s Prayer” should be amended in its language to be more inclusive, as they put it, of different genders. We may ask what right has mortal man to adapt Holy Scripture? And how blasphemous to imply, by so doing, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught this prayer, was somehow deficient in His understanding of the needs of mankind to the end of time. How careful we should be not to “handle the Word of God deceitfully” (see 2 Cor. 4. 2).

How precious, to a child of God, is the exact language our Lord uses in teaching us to pray!

When the Lord Jesus Christ rose again, one of the first utterances from His holy, risen lips was this: “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (John 20. 17). How lovingly He shares with His children His relationship with His Father as the Son of God, through His holy humanity. Despite the fickle behaviour of the eleven disciples at the time of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, He is not ashamed to call them brethren, and even sends a special message to Peter to assure him of His continuing love for him.

In the two opening words of the prayer, we learn five lessons.

1. That we should not forget the relationship each born-again sinner manifestly has with the Father. Their Father, to whom they owe their spiritual birth by the Holy Spirit, fills the throne, and it is His love that has given them the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Elder Brother.

2. That the way to the Father is through the Son. “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14. 6).

3. That in using this language by faith, the child of God pleads all the merits of Christ on their behalf, as they have none of their own.

4. That the child of God should covet and prize the spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, “Abba, Father.”

5. That in this respect, irrespective of the measure of the Spirit of Christ in the heart of a child of God, the little children, young men and fathers enjoy the same relationship with God the Father as each other (see 1 John 2). A babe in a family is as much entitled to say of its father, “He is mine,” as the elder children who have learned more from him by

virtue of their age. So, the well-experienced Ananias could say of the new-born child of God, Saul: “Brother Saul” (Acts 9. 17).

May we each seek the witness of the Spirit to enable us to say of God: “Abba, Father.”

“My God, my Father, blissful name!
O may I call Thee mine?
May I with sweet assurance claim
A portion so divine?” (H. 1083)

THE CALLING OF NATHANAEL

*Sermon preached by Mr. M.T. Pickett, at Old Paths Chapel,
Choteau, U.S.A., on Lord's day evening, October 25th, 2020*

Text: “And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1. 51).

Those of you who were here this morning will remember that I said that it laid upon my spirit to bring before you today two examples of the Lord's wonderful work of conversion in the hearts of men and women. This morning we considered the life of Jacob; one who was brought up in a home where God was recognised. He had that great advantage over many. And we too, if we have been brought up in godly homes, have an advantage over many in our day and generation. But as I said then, it is one thing to know about God – it is another thing to know God for ourselves.

The Scriptures are replete with examples of the Lord's sovereign work in the hearts of men and women. We sometimes, perhaps, look at a case like Jacob and see how wonderfully the Lord appeared for him, and how he was brought to know and love the Lord. And perhaps we feel: “Well, my case is not like his. Therefore, is my case real?” Well, if you look at Acts 16, we have two cases there of very different characters and very different ways the Lord led His people. First, we have the case of Lydia. We are told that Lydia was a seller of purple and that she was on her own, it would seem. On the Sabbath day, she went to a place “where prayer was wont to be made.” And after that prayer meeting, the Apostle Paul spoke unto the women that resorted there. He began to communicate the things concerning Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. And under the preaching of the gospel, was this woman named Lydia, who gave attention unto these things and “whose heart the Lord opened.” In one sense it seemed the very gentle work of the Holy Spirit who opened her heart that she might receive the

things of God. The Lord used it effectively to her soul's conversion, and she followed the Lord Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism.

But also, in the same chapter, we have the case of the Philippian jailor. A jailor was a hardened man. The very nature of his work required it. Some have thought that perhaps this jailor was an ex-soldier, now in partial retirement, being given a position like this, of authority. He had been given the charge of the apostles. He had thrust them into the inner prison and chained them up there. All the preaching of the world would never change the heart of this jailor, unless the Spirit worked. He had no desire to hear anything concerning his own soul. What was needed in his case? Well, the Lord knows exactly what each one of us needs to bring us to hearken to the things of God, to soften our hearts of stone and to make us tender in the fear of God. And with the Philippian jailor, it needed an earthquake. This awakened the man to his felt sense of need as a poor, wretched, hell-deserving sinner. And he came in to the apostles, fell down, and cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" If we read the account aright, the jailor took the two disciples, washed their wounds, and then he and his household (which would probably mean his servants), listened to Paul preaching. And it was under the preaching of the gospel that this man was converted unto the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is a beautiful thought that Lydia and the Philippian jailor were to be found in the same church in communion one with another. We find in this chapter, that we have read together this evening, the way of the Lord calling His disciples. And all these things are examples to us of how the Lord sovereignly works in the lives of different people at different times under different circumstances.

There is the account of when Jesus calls two disciples, Andrew and another disciple, believed to be John. These were touched by John the Baptist. Speaking of Jesus and looking upon Jesus as He walked, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God." This made a deep impression on these two disciples. So much so that they followed the Lord Jesus Christ. Then Andrew called his brother, Peter, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter is to be a great disciple. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. "And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." And so Andrew was made instrumental in bringing Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we read: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me." It would seem in Philip's case there were no outward means used. The Lord called Philip directly unto Himself. Then we read that "Philip findeth Nathanael." How vastly different is the case of Nathanael from that of Jacob! It would seem that with Nathanael, the work of grace had already begun in his heart. Philip says unto Nathanael, "We have found Him, of

whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.” What a wonderful statement to make! So often I believe that when a person is called by grace, another is laid upon their spirit and they feel zeal to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ; to speak to them of His wonderful works and what He has done for them, how He has called them by His grace and quickened them by His Spirit and given them the gift of everlasting life. These things cannot be hidden. We are to speak. They used to speak of gossiping the gospel. Well, I think today we are too reticent in these matters. We should speak freely of what a glorious hope we have. The Lord Jesus Christ has put in our hearts that good hope by grace that we shall be saved at last, brought into His kingdom and glory, there to be for ever with the Lord. “We have found Him.” Have we found the Lord Jesus Christ? Has He been made known unto us? I believe if He has, then we will want to tell others – our loved ones, our nearest and dearest, our children, our relations and our friends.

“Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found.” (H. 144)

“We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” See how clear this statement is! See how faithful this man is! He is without any doubts. “I know whom I have believed.” Do we know in whom we have believed? Do we not so often have to say, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief”? Do we not harbour, at times, many doubts and fears? But here is a clear statement of faith. This man believed with his whole heart that Christ was the Son of God.

But what was the reaction of Nathanael? “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” It shows his ignorance, but I do not believe that Nathanael was like some of the Pharisees who were stubbornly ignorant of the things of God and who questioned the veracity of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe Nathanael could not understand because he could find no reference in the Scriptures to the Messiah coming out of Nazareth. I believe it was a genuine enquiry. Perhaps I can speak to you young people. Maybe there are things you do not understand. Perhaps you need to enquire about things. Do not be frightened to ask! You may think your question is so simple that you will be spurned, but your pastor, and I am sure deacons and members, or perhaps your parents can perhaps help you. Do not harbour these things. Seek an answer, because if your question is real in your mind, then there will be an answer to it. And that answer will be satisfactory to you from the Word of God.

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” It would seem an impossibility. But then, consider the answer that Philip gave. He did not try and teach him doctrine. He did not even go to the Scriptures and

say, "Well, look. These things are written here." He did not try and explain the meaning that Christ came from Nazareth. He made a simple and yet a profound statement. "Come and see." And if you come and see, then you will believe. Sometimes we need that simple faith to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that "name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." "Come and see." What better answer could he give to direct him to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! And remember that we have "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Our ministers are not called priests. Priests are no longer needed in the church. We are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is our office to speak well of Him; to exalt a precious Saviour and to point sinners to the one and only Saviour.

"A refuge for sinners the gospel makes known;
'Tis found in the merits of Jesus alone." (H. 1097)

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" We need to examine Scripture minutely at times. Every single word has a meaning. We have here *behold*. You may remember that in our text this morning there were two *beholds*. What is the word *behold*? Well, I liken it to a signpost; a signpost that gives direction – direction to some important way, or, in this instance, to some important truth. I believe you will find that after every *behold* there is some vital statement set before us. "Behold an Israelite." Not a Jacobite! You will remember with Jacob there came a time when the Lord said, "Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob" – which means supplanter – "but Israel shall be thy name." If you look through the Scriptures, you will find this throughout the whole Word of God. There are times when it speaks of Jacob; there are other times when it speaks of Israel. And I believe we can see it in this light: that Jacob is the old man of sin, and Israel is the new man of God. So, where we have a reference to Israel, it speaks of a new creation. "Behold an Israelite." Here is one that is a converted soul. Here is one that is a child of God. Here is one that has been called by grace. "An Israelite indeed," truly so.

Now, we are not told much about Nathanael. It would perhaps be that he had never committed any gross sin. But we know, of course, that all are under sin. We are born in sin and "shapen in iniquity." In sin did our parents conceive us. The whole creation, from Adam's day to this, have been born as sinners. So, Nathanael was a sinful man. But look at the statement of the Lord Jesus. A wonderful, wonderful statement is spoken here of this man. "In whom there is no guile." I believe that means this: that his sins, which were many, were all forgiven him. Christ made an end of sin for him and clothed him in His own perfect righteousness. I say again, "He is a new creature: old things are passed

away; behold, all things are become new.” Nathanael answers, “Whence knowest Thou me?” He had never seen the Lord Jesus Christ before. He did not know Him. And the Lord Jesus Christ answers, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” Again, it shows the perfect nature of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. He knows the thoughts and the intents of every heart. He knew what Nathanael was meditating upon, what his thoughts were directed to, what his desires were and what the whole thrust of his life added up to. The Lord knows us altogether exactly as we are. We cannot hide from God. As the hymnwriter says:

“I cannot draw another breath
Unless Thou give me power.”

We are His creation. The Lord created man upon the face of this earth. Do you not think that the Lord knows His creation? He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything. He knows us in our unregeneracy. He knows the appointed time when His people shall be called unto Himself. He knows the beginning; He knows the end of their days. He knows all that they pass through in this waste-howling wilderness here below. The Lord knows us. What a mercy!

“He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!” (H. 9)

What was the reaction of Nathanael? Perhaps it is among the greatest statements to be found in the whole Word of God. “Rabbi” – that is Master – “Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” You will remember that Peter made a similar statement to this. Jesus asked him, “Whom do men say that I am?” Peter’s answer was: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“What think you of Christ? is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him. (H. 1149)

“Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” Nathanael had just met the Lord Jesus Christ. How did Nathanael know this concerning Him? It did not come from nature’s ground. It did not come out of his own fallen heart. Led of the Holy Spirit, taught of God, these things are a revelation from the Most High to bring us to know Him, the eternal Son of God, the second Person in the blessed Trinity. “Thou art.” It is a statement that is definite; a statement that has no uncertainty in it. “Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” Thou art the rightful King.

“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave TO BE.” (H. 4)

If Christ is a King, then He has a kingdom. And, as He said to His disciples, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He is the King of heaven. He sits upon the throne of God. All power is given unto Him, both in heaven and in earth. And in that power, He shall come again to deliver His people unto Himself and to destroy the wicked from off the face of the earth. Now, to whom do we owe allegiance? Man thinks that he is a free agent. But of course, he is ignorant of the very fact that he is under a Master. Man, by nature, is under the devil. The devil leads man whithersoever he would have him to go. Man is subject unto the wickedness of that evil one until the Lord Jesus Christ sets him free and at liberty; until a stronger than he comes and binds the strong man. Then we become the servants of Christ. We obey our Master. Who is our master? Who is my master? Whom are we serving? Are we serving the lusts of our flesh? Are we living in the pride of our life? Are we following the dictates of this world? Or are we simply following the Lord Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life? It is a simple question in one sense, but very profound, because the answer dictates where we stand at this given time. If we remain the servants of Satan, then we shall be destroyed at last. There are two places to which every one of us is bound. It is either to heaven and eternal glory, or to hell and eternal misery. Where are we destined? Do we have any good hope through grace that we shall not be cast out of God’s presence for ever and ever? Do we have a good hope through grace that we shall be found in heaven, at last, singing the song of the redeemed around the throne of God, worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ through a never-ending eternity? Blessed portion to those who are truly His people!

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Those of you who were here this morning will remember that these words were taken from the account of Jacob’s ladder; the dream that he had of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. But notice this here: Nathanael said, “Thou art the Son of God.” Christ said that He is the Son of man. Again, it is a wonderful truth if only we could receive it, that Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father from the beginning of time, who left the heavens, veiled His glory and took upon Himself the nature of man. Why did He do this? That He might pay the price for their sin. That He might deliver them from the wrath that is to come. That He might reconcile them unto the Father.

I believe we mentioned this morning this statement, which on the surface may seem strange to us. We would expect, perhaps, to consider that the angels were descending, and then ascending. But, no, the Lord Jesus Christ here confirms what is said in Genesis, that the angels of God were ascending and then descending upon the Son of man. What does it mean? It means this, that the Lord Jesus Christ paid the price of the sin of His covenant people, that tremendous load that was laid upon Him. And we see His sufferings in Gethsemane's garden, when His sweat "was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." And then in the judgment hall His back was rent by the soldiers, the crown of thorns laid upon His head. Then His journey to Golgotha, the place of the skull, where they nailed Him to the accursed tree and hung Him up there.

"Of His sufferings so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense." (H. 154)

And how can we fully enter into these things? Oh, that we might be led a little into the mystery of His sufferings.

"The soldier pierced His side, 'tis true,
But we have pierced Him through and through." (H. 153)

He died for sinners. He died to set the captives free. He died that they might live, and lives that they might have life more abundantly. He died unto sin. He paid that ultimate price. And, on the third day, according to the Scriptures, He rose again. We sometimes sing:

"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell." (H. 485)

What a mercy that the Scriptures were fulfilled, that the Son of man rose triumphant from the dead, and after a brief period, ascended up into glory! "The angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The message of salvation for God's people relayed unto heaven itself, unto the throne of God, unto the Father that sits upon that throne, that Christ had remitted all that was due unto the law. Remember that the apostle tells us that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." Are we brought to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is our hope found in His death? Can we see the glory of our Emmanuel, who rose triumphant, having defeated sin and death and hell, justifying His people?

We mentioned, I believe, in prayer, those opening verses of Romans 8. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open." I believe we might interpret that as "henceforth" – from now on – "ye shall see heaven open." To the unbeliever, the heavens are shut. Their prayers cannot enter in, for we read: "God is angry with the wicked every day." His judgment is toward them. They have no peace with God. But, when a

person is called by grace, justified through the sovereign, finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are made one with God and their prayers are offered up through Him alone. It is that conveyance into heaven itself; those prayers which are acceptable unto God, because He says of His Son: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God was satisfied with the work that the Son had performed. The Son could say, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." That which we could not do, Christ did for us, if we are His people. And it is this ministry of reconciliation that the apostle preached, and all God's servants are commissioned to preach. "Be ye reconciled to God." What a mercy to have heaven open!

Notice again the exactness of the language. It does not say: "heaven opened," or, "heaven will open," or, "heaven is opening." No. It says: "heaven is *open*." We have access through God's only beloved Son, through the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," through our great Mediator, through Him who has made atonement for us. We are no longer under the condemnation of God. We are at peace with God.

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you." Here is a statement of assurance to every true child of God, that heaven is accessible, that God will not deny the prayers of His people – poor, stumbling, foolish souls that we are. How we feel the poverty of our prayers! How we feel ourselves so often wretched and undone! But,

"Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I choose Thee in return." (H. 940)

And it is this love to the Lord Jesus Christ where we come unto Him, our great High Priest, who now lives upon the throne of God. And while it is a statement of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John, on the Isle of Patmos in his vision saw a Lamb in the midst of the throne, "as it had been slain." A lamb is, perhaps, of all creatures the weakest and meekest, and a lamb slain surely is a picture of great weakness. But here this Lamb is in the midst of the throne. This Lamb is triumphant. This Lamb is all glorious. What a view, by faith, to see Christ; to see Him, who is our Lord, our God and our All! He is King of kings, Lord of lords, the sovereign Ruler over heaven and over earth. Are we subject unto Him? Have we that living taste that is evident in the life of Nathanael and in the life of many of the characters that are given unto us in Scripture?

We mentioned the conversion of the Apostle Paul, how the Lord appeared unto him and called him directly. We see the tremendous change – a complete and perfect change in the life of this man. He was

once a hater of the things of God, now a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered many things for Christ and for the gospel's sake. And we have the case of Timothy. I have often thought upon this. Timothy was instructed by his grandmother and his mother. We do not read of any dramatic conversion. But he was a converted man. The Scriptures were made known unto him. The Spirit laid them upon his spirit, and he became a child of God.

Then, poor sinner, what is your case tonight? What are your doubts and fears? Are you saying that you do not have the case that some of these have? "My case seems to be so poor. I seem to know so little of the things of God." Take courage, soul. What is the desire of your heart? I mentioned this morning that there is a "heretofore." There is a previous state. There is a present time when the Lord meets with His people, and then there is a "hereafter." And it is in seeing that "hereafter." What is the thrust of your life? Is it to glorify God in your body? Is it to speak well of Him? Is it to follow according to His holy will? Can you honestly bow before God and say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? "This is my desire." Are you made willing to forsake all that you might follow Him; to give up everything for Christ's and for the gospel's sake? Think of those early disciples. They sold all that they had. The things of this world meant nothing to them. The apostle says in one place: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him." Is this your desire tonight, that you might "win Christ, and be found in Him"? That you might walk in newness of life, that you might be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you might be an example to others to show how Christians ought to live.

Well, we have seen two different cases, but we have seen one glorious end. To know the perfect work of God begun in our hearts! Let me remind you again "that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it." That work will continue, because it is God's work. It is Christ's work in you. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." That work must and will continue because His honour is at stake. And so, to serve Him all our days – may this be our great desire.

"I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee." (H. 1105)

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Look to the great Mediator, the One who paid the price and gave deliverance unto His people. His great delight and His great desire is to have His church complete with Him in glory, and to rejoice. And they to rejoice in Him through a never-ending eternity. May the Lord be pleased to add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

THE LORD'S OVERRULING HAND

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov. 21. 1).

The general truth here implied has been before stated – man’s entire dependence on God (see Prov. 16. 1; 20. 24). It is taught here by the strongest illustration – His uncontrollable sway over the king’s heart – the most absolute and unsubjected will. He turns all his most despotic rule – all his political projects – to His own purposes, with the same ease that the rivers of water are turned by every inflexion of the channel.* While their course is directed, the waters flow naturally and unforced on their own level.

Nehemiah fully acknowledged this prerogative when, having a favour to ask of the king, he “prayed to the God of heaven” (Neh. 2. 4, 5). And indeed Scripture witness is abundant. Abimelech’s heart was in the hand of the Lord for good (see Gen. 20. 6; Psa. 105. 14, 15). Pharaoh’s heart was turned towards Joseph (see Gen 41. 37-45). The Babylonish monarchs showed kindness to Daniel and his captive brethren (see Dan. 1. 19-21; 2. 47-49; 3. 30; 5. 29; 6. 1-3, 28; Psa. 106. 46). The Persian monarchs countenanced and assisted in the building of the temple (see Ezra 1. 1; 6. 22; 7. 27; 9. 9; Neh. 2. 4-9). The hearts of wicked kings are alike in the hand of the Lord (see Rev. 17. 16, 17), yet He hath no part in their wickedness (see Exod. 1. 8-22; Psa. 105. 25). The hatred of Pharaoh; the ambition of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar (see Isa. 10. 7; Jer. 25. 9), were His instruments for His own purposes. Ahab’s murderous heart was restrained, and even made to accomplish the downfall of Baal (see 1 Kings 18. 10, 40). The counsels of the kings of the earth against Christ were under divine control (see Acts 4. 25-28, comp. John 19. 10). Thus does the wrath of man praise Him; and the remainder He restrains (see Psa. 76. 10). The same almighty agency is visible by its effects in the minutest affairs. Ahasuerus’s sleepless night (see Esth. 6. 1, 2); Nebuchadnezzar’s divination (see Ezek. 21. 21); the appointment of the year of general taxation (see Luke 2. 1-7) – these seemingly-unimportant events were turning points in the dispensations of God, fraught with immensely momentous results.

The history of our blessed, though now calumniated, Reformation shows the same sovereign control of the royal heart. Henry VIII was employed as an unintentional instrument, and his godly son as a willing agent, in furthering this great work. The recollection encourages us to

* The allusion evidently is to channels made for the distribution of waters according to will for gardens or irrigation of fields.

refer all anxious care for the church to her great Head; to rejoice that, not kings, but the King of kings reigneth (see Isa. 9. 6). And shall we not be quickened to earnest prayer for our sovereign: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (1 Tim. 2. 1-3), that his heart, being in the Lord’s hand as rivers of water, may be disposed to rule for His glory, and a blessing for His people.

GOOD WISHES FOR A NEW PASTOR

Dear Friend,

Without wishing to intrude, I would like to send you a brief note to express my earnest desires for you in the very important step you are taking. After being pastorless for so many years, the position will be difficult – more so perhaps than ordinarily. But on the other hand, you have not to follow an established minister. In any case, I sincerely hope and believe that the Lord will graciously afford you all the needful grace, wisdom, patience and strength for the weighty office. In my small way I realise what a real need there is of all-sufficient supplies from Him who alone possesses all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. May He enable you in humble faith to look right on, and give you a truly single eye to His glory.

May He help you to handle the matters attaching to a pastorate wisely, and thus find good (see Prov. 16. 20). I know you will need that wisdom which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated ... without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3. 17). Love and discernment, with faithfulness too – O your needs will be great! But all of every sort and kind dwell fully in Christ. I hope you may receive constant, fresh supplies of the Spirit of truth, and that the unction of the truth may pervade your spirit and ministry. This, with gracious exercise before the Lord and in His Word, will preserve you from that speculation and curious interpretations into which even some good men have wandered. To stand before the same people week after week needs a living spring, and nothing of natural ingenuity can replace that source of life in the ministry.

I trust too that you may not be moved by critics or by flatterers. The latter may be more dangerous; the former may be made a means of increased exercise before the Lord, and this will be profitable. I feel much, but can say little. You have my sincerest good wishes, and I hope

I may be enabled to pray for you; and indeed have already done so. The Lord guide and keep you, and bless you with His gracious presence. I hope too that your dear wife will be helped in the important position of pastor's wife. The qualifications laid down in God's Word may try her, but she knows the source of every good and perfect gift.

If I might venture one word of a practical nature, do not try to do too much. The Lord teach you when to go and when to stay, and be with you in private and in public. If in the midst of your own exercises you can find a heart to pray for one who expects soon to put off the harness, I shall be glad. My needs are greater today than when I came here thirty-one years ago. John 3. 30 – "He must increase, but I must decrease," must be truly fulfilled in experience.

Your affectionately in gospel bonds,

J.H. Gosden

Maidstone, May 21st, 1955

REGENERATION AND ELECTION ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

By John Brine (1703-1765)

Regeneration precedes, and may be considered as the foundation and spring of, conversion and sanctification, for that is the principle from which both arise. Grace, as a principle of spiritual acts, is first communicated, and from that proceed all acts of a holy, spiritual nature, both internal and external. Neither of the latter can be until the former is wrought; and when that is effected, both the latter certainly follow. In the first we are merely passive; in conversion and sanctification we are active. For conversion is the primary actings of the grace of regeneration in turning from sin, self and Satan unto God through Christ. And sanctification is the progress of that work, and includes in it all the secondary actings of grace in opposition to sin, and in a course of holy obedience unto God.

Having observed the difference between these, I would proceed to show,

First, *the necessity of this work in order to our final happiness*. And this will appear by the consideration of two things in general:

I. Without it no man is "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

II. Election is the choice of persons to holiness in this state, in order to the enjoyment of happiness in the next.

I. *No unregenerate person is meet for, nor capable of enjoying, the heavenly state.*

1. He is *not the subject of a disposition suited* to view the infinitely-glorious objects with the least degree of delight, which the blessed always behold and adore, namely, God, Christ in His mediatorial glory, and the Holy Spirit. Enmity, which the carnal mind is against God, will eternally turn from Him and choose other, yea any other objects, rather than Him to view. His infinite excellencies will never affect with pleasure the depraved mind, nor engage it for a single moment to reverence, praise and adore Him.

2. *Nor is an unregenerate person capable of that holy fellowship* which subsists in the heavenly world between God and the saints. This communion, on the part of God, is His discovering to them His infinite perfections as they have been exercised in the contrivance of the stupendous design of their eternal salvation, and in its accomplishment through the mediation of the blessed Jesus. On their part, it is a clear, steady and uninterrupted prospect thereof, with ineffable pleasure and the most profound reverence. The glory of heaven consists much in a contemplation of the eternal grace, mercy, wisdom, holiness, etc., of God, as displayed in our recovery. And consequently, minds prejudiced against these sublime mysteries, as all our minds naturally are, will never have any relish for them nor satisfaction in them. Those who are indisposed to gracious communion with God now, will never desire fellowship with Him hereafter. Such a cursed aversion is there in our hearts to God, that we could be always content without a sense of His favour, provided we might but for the same endless duration be free from a painful sensation of His terrible displeasure. It is not heaven those men love and desire, but hell which they dread, that influences them to reform their conduct, who are enemies to the gospel of Christ. The spiritual, the pure joys of the blessed world, they would never envy the saints the fruition of, were not they to suffer infernal torments. The annihilation of heaven would give them no pain, the ceasing of hell would afford them the highest degree of pleasure they at any time wish for. It is not better than infatuation to think that men whose minds are wholly taken up with trifles and carnal pleasures, who have no inclination to present communion with God, can have any desire to the nearer fellowship with Him in heaven. And therefore this new birth is absolutely necessary. Grace must be given, or else glory will never be desired or enjoyed. And this is true of every man.

3. Unregenerate persons are *disinclined to the spiritual, pure and holy service* which is the constant employ of the inhabitants of heaven. The departed saints are not entered into a state of slumber and inactivity, but of the noblest action and service, namely of praising God and punctually performing His will without any interruption or defects. As they have always a ravishing sense of His goodness to them, so they

exercise their perfectly-pure minds in ascriptions of praise and glory to Him for delivering them from deserved ruin and placing them in the blissful mansions, where they find themselves possessed of ease, delight, complacency and glory, wholly unmerited. Now minds unacquainted with the excellency, vast moment, and transcendent glory of the way of salvation by the blood, righteousness and grace of Christ, can never unite with the blessed in acts of adoration and praise on that account. For without a perception of the propriety and fitness of this method of saving sinners, the mind can never be suitably affected with, nor give to God the glory due unto His name for this infinitely wise and gracious contrivance. Therefore those only who are now made light in the Lord will hereafter be capable of beholding the celestial light of glory in the world above. If we do not now admire and bless God for the provisions His rich grace and mercy have made for our pardon, peace, the acceptance of our persons and the sanctification of our souls, by the sacrifice, obedience and grace of His only Son as our alone and complete Saviour, let us never think of an entrance into that world whose happy inhabitants are constantly employed in songs of praise to God and the blessed Redeemer, for all saving benefits which flow from His atoning death, and to God a well-pleasing sacrifice; for if we do, we shall find ourselves dreadfully deceived.

II. *Election* to everlasting life is the choice of persons to holiness here, as the means leading on to the fruition of it hereafter (see Eph. 1. 4). As future blessedness is the result of the eternal, gracious decree of predestination, the enjoyment of that, it must be concluded, was impossible to any without this purpose of divine grace; and since this decree appoints the participation of holiness here in order to the possession of felicity hereafter, it is a vain thing to admit the least hope of happiness in eternity unless we partake of holiness in time. If God receives one unsanctified sinner to glory, He must act contrary to His own purpose and change a resolution He has formed, which is agreeable to His own infinitely-pure nature, and that would be a denial of Himself, which to Him is impossible. Add to this that all those whom God intends to render perfectly happy in the next world He designs to make in part happy in this world; and as holiness is essential to the happiness of an intelligent creature, it is most certain that the participation of a holiness now begun must consist in partaking of holiness in some degree at least, as complete happiness supposes a perfection in holiness.

(To be continued)

A true Christian lives like a saint, and begs like a sinner.

John Mason

CHRIST'S PRAYER

John 17

By Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Many a solemn prayer Christ made in the days of His flesh. Sometimes He continued all night in prayer, but none of His prayers are so fully recorded as this. The time when He prayed this prayer was when He had given the foregoing farewell to His disciples.

1. It was a prayer after a sermon when He had spoken from God to them. Those we preach to we must pray for. The word preached should be prayed over, for God to give the increase.

2. It was a prayer after sacrament. He closed the solemnity with this prayer that God would preserve the good impression of the ordinance upon them.

3. It was a family prayer. Christ's disciples were His family, and to set a good example before masters of families, He blessed His household, prayed for them and with them.

4. It was a parting prayer. When we and our friends are parting, it is good to end with prayer. (See Acts 20. 36.)

5. It was a prayer that was a preface to His sacrifice, which He was about to offer on earth. Christ prayed then as a priest offering sacrifice, in the virtue of which all prayers were to be made.

6. It was a prayer that was a specimen of His intercession, which He ever lives to make for us within the veil.

CHRIST HAS POWER TO PARDON

By Gerald Hamstra (1927-2018)

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house” (Mark 2. 10, 11).

After Jesus had completed His second journey through Galilee, He returned to Capernaum. When it was known that Jesus was home, many flocked to His dwelling. The house was soon filled to overflowing. Everyone appeared to be captivated by the preaching of Jesus.

Four men came to the house. They were bearing a sick friend on his bed. The nature of the man's illness was such that he was no longer able to walk. The willing friends endeavoured to bring this paralytic to Jesus. However, access to the Saviour seemed impossible.

What to do next? Return home and wait for a more convenient opportunity? These men could not possibly do this. They knew the real need of their friend. Besides, deep in their hearts they believed that Jesus

could and would heal. The friends decided to take the man to a place on the housetop. Oriental homes were built with a flat roof. An outside stairway led up to the top. The tiles were easily removed. Before long, they made an opening in the framework supporting the tiles. Imagine the surprise of the people when this opening appeared and a sick man was slowly lowered down on his bed!

The sad face of the needy sinner turned to Jesus. The man's eyes met the eyes of the Saviour. This was his first contact with Jesus. How memorable are such moments! The feeble man did not utter a single word; neither did his friends speak on his behalf. The deeds of these men were more eloquent than any words that could be spoken. Like no one else, the Saviour fully understood the deep need of the one who lay at His feet.

Jesus perceived the faith of the four men who believed in His love and power to heal. He also saw the sincerity of their friendship. This was faith working by love. Jesus likewise observed the longing faith of the troubled man. Immediately, the Saviour measured the depth of his emotional and physical anguish. Nevertheless, the Lord's compassionate eyes saw yet a weightier burden, the burden of a sinner in soul's distress.

The man possessed no strength of his own to come to Christ. He was drawn by everlasting love. Four friends had been the means of his coming to Christ.

In the Father's name, Christ spoke the word, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2. 5). Kindly, the Saviour received this sinner and forgave his transgressions. How precious is this grace! It brought a deep and holy joy into the heart of the one who experienced the love that pardons.

Certain scribes and Pharisees were present when Jesus uttered these words. Although they did not speak, their hearts were filled with dismay. How could any man utter such holy words! This was blasphemy. Only God can forgive. They were right about that – only God can forgive sins. Nevertheless, these blinded scholars failed to see that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah who would give His precious life as a Substitute for sinners.

The Saviour was well aware of the thoughts of these critical scribes. He knew that they mistrusted Him. Although nothing was verbally expressed, His all-seeing eye had searched their hearts. Jesus provided an answer to the unspoken words of the scribes: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" (Mark 2. 9). The former as well as the latter would require the same divine power. This was indisputable. Only God has the power to pardon sinners, and only God has the power to heal a paralytic instantly.

If Jesus could heal the paralytic, would this not be an incontestable display of His divine nature? Would it not be the clearest evidence of His messiahship and of His authority to pardon sinners?

Everyone present on that crucial occasion was waiting with more than an ordinary interest. If Jesus would not be able to heal the man, then the scribes would be justified in their criticism. But if the paralytic would be healed by the word of Jesus, this would be an unmistakable evidence of the divine glory of the Saviour.

Then, at the word of Jesus, the paralytic was instantly healed. All who were present saw the man rise, take up his bed, and walk away. He was restored to full health. The effect of this miracle of healing was visible to the human eye. It verified the other miracle of grace which no eye could see: the pardon of the sinner.

The significant truth was evident. Jesus, the Son of man, had the power to pardon sin. With an impressive zeal, Jesus desired for people to know this precious message. This certainly points to the serious reality that pardon is the most urgent and pressing need of every sinner. In addition, it reveals the wondrous truth that Jesus is able and willing to provide this most essential grace, freely and fully. It is His heart's delight to receive helpless sinners who come to Him for pardon. Have you already come?

NOT KEEPING BACK PART OF THE PRICE

From the diary of Ruth Bryan (1805-1860)

July 23rd, 1849: I received part of my rent this morning, and, when going to take a tenth for the Lord, I felt an incitement to give it all; and was reminded of David, who would not drink the water brought to him at the risk of life, but poured it out before the Lord. Knowing what great straits I had been in before my illness, I waited a day or two to prove if it was from the Lord: the impression continued, and I dare not touch the money for my own use. I had some more to receive, and almost thought I might have *that*; but these words stopped me: "He kept back part of the price"; so I put all into my charity purse, asking pardon of the Lord for not doing it more heartily, and yet having some fear that I might come to want it. O for a more clear understanding of the intimations of the Spirit!

Today I most unexpectedly received five pounds from town, for rent. Surely this says I was right in giving the other. I am indeed astonished at the Lord's mercies. I am most unworthy of the least, but it is all for Jesus' sake. I trust Thee to guide me aright. Thou knowest my deep conflicts, but with thanksgiving I renew my trust, and yield

myself afresh to Thee; from which Satan and the flesh have tried to hinder, urging that I only bring myself into fresh suffering and fiery trials. May the Lord pardon me for being beguiled by it for one moment; bring me to new and full surrender of heart – not courting affliction, yet not withholding myself from my Lord to escape it.



HUMILITY

Extract from a letter by William Romaine (1714-1795)

I have ever had such awful apprehensions of the charge of souls, that I durst not (though often solicited) undertake it, ever since I knew my own heart. I have found myself plagued to death with watching over it: what must it be to watch over two or three thousand! who is sufficient for this? I feel myself as unfit for it, as to have the government of the world upon my shoulders; but being appointed to this church, not only without my seeking, but also against my will, and having an undoubted call from God, therefore my sufficiency for the work being of God, I dare not stand out. I have been forced to say, “Here am I, send me!” And though He has enabled me to depend upon Him for grace to do His will, both in me, and by me, yet I find the flesh resisting, and putting forth a multitude of doubts and fears, in order to discourage me. Besides this, I have an enemy, whom I do not wish to make my friend, and who hates me with a perfect hatred; but I make the Lord my strength, and go to battle in the power of His might. I am sure all will be well while I am kept humble. O pray that I may be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ! but above all, ask for me humility.

A humble man can come to no harm; he will be ever trusting in the Lord, because he finds nothing in himself to trust in, while he gives great glory to God by trusting much in Him. God gives him great grace, and this grace is to keep alive an abiding sense of what he is in himself; to show him his ignorance and helplessness, to open to him daily more of the mystery of iniquity, to discover to him the stirrings of corruption, which others feel not, and make him sensible of these, even in duties and ordinances, that he may loathe himself and his very best works. These are the fruits of true grace; and he that is under the teachings of the Holy Ghost will abound in them. The more God does in the heart, the more He humbles it. The great design of His grace is to bring the proud sinner low, and then to keep him low.

When He hath brought us low, we do not like to be kept there, we want to get up again; our foolish desire is that He may do something in us, for which we may have a good opinion of ourselves; and so with this

thought we are apt to wish, Oh that I were more holy! Oh that I could pray better! Oh that I was more spiritual in duties! Oh that I was thankful enough! If you could come to the true nature of these wishes, (specious as they appear), you would find them spring from the secret workings of a proud, self-righteous spirit. Take off their cloak of holiness, and their meaning is this: "I wish God would give me something for which I might be pleased with myself." If this was the case, would not the eye be turned inward upon this very good self, and be drawn off from looking unto Jesus? and so far as self is made something, Christ is made nothing. You may depend upon this as one of the surest axioms of divinity: "Whatsoever it be that makes you pleased with yourself, that is not true grace; and whatsoever makes you displeased with yourself, is not true grace, unless it bring you humble to Christ, and make you put more trust in Him."

The Lord teach you these things practically! I have learned them by long experience. Though I know but little, yet I am getting on in Christ's school, and hope soon to be in the lowest form, for there we learn most and fastest; we there depend entirely on the teaching of our divine Master, who reveals His secrets to none but babes. A newborn babe absolutely depends on the care of its parents; so must we depend on God, on Christ our Prophet and Teacher; and when we are brought thus humble, He will then make known to us what He hides from the wise and prudent.

I would therefore wish you the humblest man upon earth; that not only you may know most, but love most. He that feels his sins and miseries, his vileness and unprofitableness, with the deepest loathings of them, is in the fittest way to love Christ. If he is an experienced believer, the feelings of these sins and miseries will make Christ more precious; the more he finds of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the more he will trust in Christ's righteousness; and the more misery he knows, the more he desires salvation; all will make Jesus more dear and lovely. His own vileness sets forth Christ's grace; his unworthiness the worthiness of the Lamb, the sufficiency of Jesus, who is All in all.

When you are going to measure Christ's high grace, do not get upon a mountain, but go down into a valley – lower still, to the belly of hell, from whence Jonah cried; from thence see the height of Jesus' grace, and from thence see how lovely He is. When the Spirit of Jesus is humbling you, showing you your deceitful, wicked heart, laying open your ruined nature in all its abominable workings – has not this often discouraged you, my friend, and instead of loving Christ more, and trusting Him more, did it not weaken your trust, and lessen your love? and therefore you counteracted the gracious purposes of Jesus Christ. May He teach you better! that every future sense of sin may greatly endear that Lamb

of God to you, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Depend upon it, that is the only true humbling for sin, which makes His blood more precious.

Be faithful to your own heart; stop here a moment: look back and read what, from one thing to another, I have written to you, and examine, if you do not begin to fear for the interest of duty and holy obedience. If the more I feel sin, I may trust the more, and love Christ the more, what place is left for obeying? Is that your thought? to which I answer, The humblest man not only knows most, and loves most, but also obeys most. Is not grace the principle of gospel obedience? and does not God give grace to the humble? grace to do all things, grace to suffer all things?

What says he who was less than the least in his own eyes? Oh, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" The humblest lean most on Christ's strength; and therefore, through that strength, which is almighty, he can do most; he is helped best, fights most courageously, conquers most triumphantly. Show me a seemingly-humble man, who does not love duty, and I will show you his pride; but let me see a truly-humble man, and I am sure to find him walking humbly with his God. He walks with God, and God walks with him.

Hear how He declares who are His favourites! Not the rich, not the learned, not the Pharisee, not the great and noble; no, but, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." These He honours; they are in His sight of great price; how exalted in His esteem, who is the Fountain of all true honour! and He will exalt them very high. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted to the throne above, where all God's children are perfectly humble, crying with one voice, "Not worthy we, but worthy is the Lamb!" If there be so great peace, O pray to God to make me more and more humble. I will do the same for you, and remain your's.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR WEAK BELIEVERS

By John Flavel (1628-1691)

If Christ be the great Prophet of the church, and such a Prophet, then it follows that the weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dullness and incapacity they find in themselves, for Christ is not only a patient and condescending Teacher, but He can also, as He hath often done, reveal that to babes, which is hid from the wise and learned (see Matt. 11. 25). "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psa. 19. 7). Yea, and such as you are, the Lord delights to choose, that His grace may be the more conspicuous in your weakness

(see 1 Cor. 1. 26, 27). You will have nothing of your own to glory in; you will not say, as a proud wretch once said, "I and my God did this." Jesus Christ affects not social glory; He will not divide the praise with any.

Well then, be not discouraged; others may know more, in other things than you, but you are not incapable of knowing so much as shall save your souls, if Christ will be your Teacher. In other knowledge they excel you, but if ye know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Him, one drop of your knowledge is worth a whole sea of their gifts; one truth sucked by faith and prayer from the breast of Christ is better than ten thousand dry notions beaten out by racking the understanding. It is better in kind, the one being but natural, the other supernatural, from the saving illuminations and inward teachings of the Spirit, and so is one of those better things that accompany salvation. It is better in respect of effects. Other knowledge leaves the heart as dry, barren and unaffected, as if it had its seat in another man's head; but that little you have been taught of Christ, sheds down its gracious influences upon your affections, and slides sweetly to your melting hearts. So that as one "preferred the most despicable work of a plain, rustic Christian, before all the triumphs of Alexander and Caesar," much more ought you to prefer one saving manifestation of the Spirit to all the powerless illuminations of natural men.



THE SCRIPTURAL ADORNMENT OF MEN AND WOMEN

Trousers and Skirts

By K.D. Macleod

The following article appeared in the Young People's Magazine of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In these solemn days when the God-given distinctions between men and women are deliberately being violated and abused it is a very apposite reminder of what Scripture teaches us on this issue, and especially for the young to be aware.

A recent issue of *The Herald Magazine* contained an article about three men who regularly wear skirts. It is clear from their walk around central Glasgow, in the company of the reporter who wrote the article, that people generally are not comfortable with the idea of men wearing skirts. Yet one of the men points out that most of the women they see around them are wearing trousers. Another comments, "Women wear trousers, and no one thinks anything of it."

Yet this comment is not altogether accurate; there are some people who believe that it is wrong for women to wear trousers, and equally for

men to wear skirts. And most of these people believe as they do because of what the Bible says. Deuteronomy 22. 5 tells us: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.” In the past, in Britain and elsewhere, the distinction between male and female was maintained by men wearing trousers and women wearing skirts.

But someone might object that such Old Testament laws no longer apply to us in the New Testament age. That would be true if we were talking about something that was part of the Old Testament ceremonies, such as sacrifices; laws about such matters no longer apply since Christ has offered the one sacrifice that can really take away sin. But the verse I have quoted speaks about a moral issue; it has to do with right and wrong. So the teaching of this verse still applies today.

There is a real difference between males and females. That should be obvious, in spite of what so many people claim today. The distinction should be kept up in every age. It should never be considered out of date.

That distinction comes out clearly in what the Bible tells us about the creation of human beings: “Male and female created He them” (Gen. 1. 27). First God created Adam, then Eve. And as people go about their business in life, they should respect that distinction between male and female by wearing distinctive clothing – by wearing a garment that distinguishes them as males or as females.

The same difference between male and female should be reflected in the length of their hair. Paul asks, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her” (1 Cor. 11. 14, 15). It is women who should have long hair and men who should have short hair.

These differences in hair length and in clothing should be maintained to emphasise the real distinction between male and female. The man or boy who is wearing trousers and has short hair is saying, I am a male; and he should be implying, That is how God made me. The woman or girl who is wearing a skirt (or a dress) is saying, I am a female; and she should be implying, That is how God made me.

Most people in our society reject the authority of the Bible; in particular, they reject the relevance of the Bible’s account of creation. So they feel free to dress as they please and to ignore what God says in the Bible about the length of people’s hair.

We must not ignore God; He made us and so has authority over us. We must not reject the authority of the Bible; it is a revelation from God, telling us what we need to know. What the Bible tells us about the distinction between male and female is still relevant; we ought to follow it.

BALANCINGS OF THE CLOUDS

While in hospital after receiving injuries in a road crash, I was much favoured in feeling the Lord's gracious presence with me. When an approaching car altered its course and came directly towards me, I expected instant death, and was much surprised some hours later when I became conscious in hospital. I felt a miracle had been performed to save my life. The first verse of hymn 139 (Gadsby's) came very sweetly to me, especially the lines:

"My Shepherd will supply my need;
Jehovah is His name."

I felt it was a promise from the Lord, and that He would help me and sustain me in whatever was before me. Day after day I felt my dear Jesus was with me, and there was a blessed reality in the lines:

"Twas Jesus, my Friend, when He hung on the tree,
Who opened the channel of mercy for me." (H. 11)

I felt to receive a clear passport for heaven because of what He had done for me in bearing my sins, and clothing me in that robe of righteousness wrought out by Him.

My injuries included a compound fracture above the right knee, and for about twelve weeks I was chiefly in one position, but was helped to rest cheerfully in the Lord's will, because I felt He was with me and I was one of His favoured people. I felt then that I must publicly acknowledge His great goodness to me, but the thought came: "You do not know whether you will ever walk properly any more." Well, even now, forty-three weeks after the event, I have difficulty in walking; but God has been very good to me, and though in an unexpected path, my hope is in the Lord and I know that He abideth faithful. I feel, "My Jesus has done all things well" (H. 410), and want to crown Him Lord of all.

T. Fenner

Sometimes a short syllabus is useful to those who want to have a scriptural and experimental summary of the truth in a short and readable form. This was the reason why our reformers drew up in their time many catechisms, that the people might be instructed in the truth in a simple, compendious way. Great ignorance prevails amongst our people in many places, for very few ministers are now able to set forth the truth with clearness, and thus, like children, they are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

J.C. Philpot

MEMORIES OF GREY HAZLERIGG

By John Raven (written in 1934)

One morning, nearly fifty years ago, a somewhat elderly gentleman, not tall, but of aristocratic appearance, while his dress suggested the ministerial calling, knocked at the door of a small house on the outskirts of the Midland town (now city) of Leicester. On being admitted, he seated himself by the cheerful fire, and began to chat very pleasantly with the young mistress of the house. He had heard of the ill-health of the woman's only son, aged four or five years. The little fellow had been declared consumptive by the family doctor, and condemned to wear one of those unhygienic horrors called "respirators," now long since discarded by the medical profession. This was the reason for the pastor's morning call. Before departing, he kneeled down by a chair, the mother and her boy kneeled by a sofa, and the pastor prayed, and prayed specially for the little boy. That homely scene is still a cherished memory, and that prayer is thought of with loving gratitude. Contrary to all expectation, and through many periods of illness, more or less severe, that boy's life has been mercifully spared, and now it is his privilege and pleasure to write, by special request, this little introduction to a small volume of sermons that were preached in those long-ago days by his beloved pastor.

Mr. Grey Hazlerigg was born at Nosely Hall, near Leicester. The estate has been in the possession of the Hazleriggs since the Norman Conquest. He lived with his widowed mother, Lady Hazlerigg, in the family dower house at Carlton Curlieu for a time, before removing to Leicester.

In his latter days he revisited both Nosely and Carlton Curlieu, and was delighted to look again on the old, familiar scenes: the church, where the recital of the commandments in the communion service was to him like a sentence of condemnation and death, filling his soul with dread; the room, in which he was when hope – sweet, God-given hope – sprang up in his soul, so that he cried out, "*I shall be saved! I shall be saved!*" and the chair, where he kneeled before God and uttered those most sweet words, "My Father!"

He was in the army when God began with him, and soon he was made to feel the scorn of his brother officers. "Hazlerigg has become a new light," they said. Once he rebuked a brother officer for some improper remark. The officer retorted, "As for you, you profess what you know nothing about." That remark was made useful to him, in that it led to much anxious searching of his own heart before God.

During the time of his first love, he attached himself to the Plymouth Brethren. They showed him great kindness, and rejoiced much with him

in his new-found joy. After a while the Lord withdrew, and who can decree a day when the Lord decrees a night season? Temptations, utter wretchedness, doubts and questionings, now brought him low, which his new friends could neither understand nor sympathise in. In this trial he found the Brethren wanting, and eventually he threw in his lot with the Strict Baptists.

When he commenced to speak in the Lord's name, it caused a great sensation in the district. A young man named Abraham Deacon went to hear the baronet's son who had turned Nonconformist preacher, and summed up the preaching thus: "He ties the sinners up in bundles and casts them into hell, and then calls them back again."

Nearly sixty years later, Mr. Hazierigg was told of this, and his comment was, "Well, as the Lord dealt with me, so I had to preach."

This was characteristic of Mr. Hazlerigg's ministry down to the end. Totally unlike any of his contemporaries, he was in the best sense of the word original. As the Holy Spirit led and taught him, so he preached. Referring to him, an old lady once said to the writer: "I heard him thirteen times, and he was different from any other minister I ever heard. The difference was like that between wall fruit and other fruit. When a girl at home, I used sometimes to be given a peach, and as I ate it the juice ran down my fingers; and when I heard Mr. Hazlerigg it was like that: *the rich lusciousness ran all over me.*"

In the pulpit he was much given to making what he called his confessions, and would tell out some of the secrets of his own inner, day-by-day exercises in a way that was often made very helpful to the exercised ones of his flock. He once said, "I awoke early this morning in such a wretchedly-indifferent state of soul – no desire Godward; no spirit even to take up my Bible; no heart to pray. Then these words dropped into my heart with a degree of reviving power:

'With long desire my spirit faints
To meet the assemblies of Thy saints,' (H. 369)

and I began to want to come and preach to you."

He did not continually emphasise the extreme depths or the extreme heights of the experience of a child of God, but while treating of these with a due sense of their right place and proportion in the ministry, he also described with rare skill, tenderness and insight some of the feebler heartbeats and the fainter breathings of those who were just "living things" in the family of God. He treated of a law work not in one or two aspects only, but as varying in the different cases of God's people from, "It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in the house," to clearer, deeper and more soul-shaking manifestations. But a spiritual

conviction of sin he ever insisted on. If there is no wound, there is no healing; no sin perceived and felt, no salvation experienced; no ruin, no redemption; no bondage, no liberty. He treated of the work of faith not only on the mount of full assurance, but in the depths; not only singing songs of triumph, but "Wrestling hard, with sins and doubts and fears."

On the two covenants he was remarkably clear. Into the painful mystery of the two natures in the believer he was deeply led. But oh, when he got his wings on the loveliness and grace of Christ, on the sweet communings of God with the soul, and the soul with God, or sometimes on the believer's prospects of heaven, how his face did shine!

He had a very homely, pithy way of enforcing the preceptive word. Once, at West Street Chapel, Croydon, he was speaking of Elijah the prophet, and how the widow woman of Zarephath, being requested, made *first* a little cake for Elijah. "That little cake," said he, "*sanctified the rest.*" Then he continued by remarking: "Some people do make a *little* cake for the Lord's servant, *and it is a LITTLE cake.*" This was said with that touch of scornful irony which he could use so effectively.

His diction was simple, yet cultured. Seldom, if ever, were the uneducated among his flock puzzled by hearing from his lips unfamiliar words or obscure phrases. Greek and Hebrew he wisely left in his study. Although socially he was far above his people, yet in his ministry he entered deeply into the daily trials and conflicts, ups and downs, of his exercised people, and they often felt that in their pastor they had a sympathising, understanding friend. Being a much-searched man, and knowing deeply the plague of his own heart, his ministry was uncommonly searching, yet often a means of great comfort to poor people similarly exercised.

To the poor he was exceedingly kind. When the winter days and nights were bitterly cold, he was careful to see that the poor of the flock and the aged pilgrims were supplied with coal and blankets. One wintry evening, as he passed down the aisle to his vestry, he turned aside to ask one aged pilgrim, "Have you plenty of warm blankets?" to which the cheerful old soul replied, "Yes, sir; of course I have." He employed as his almoner a godly old Wiltshireman, named William Sainsbury, with whom he often held sweet fellowship. There was only one bone of contention between them, and that was, which of the two was the greatest sinner. It was a matter in which neither would submit to the other. Mr. Hazlerigg once confided to the writer that of all his friends, William Sainsbury would be the greatest loss if he were taken from him. The high born and the humble were one in Jesus Christ. One rejoiced because sovereign grace had made him low, the other in that he was by the same grace exalted (see Jas 1. 9, 10).

As a pastor, Mr. Hazlerigg was a father among his people, and oh, how he loved them! and he could scold them, too. That he possessed *two* natures was at times very manifest, but love for him as a minister of Jesus Christ was deeply rooted in the hearts of his people, so many of whom had been called under his ministry. His own written description of Zion's watchmen was true in a good measure of himself.

"Surely the watchmen should know something of Christ, and should at least be aiming to keep up daily communion with Him. If they have been themselves with Jesus, and come to the pulpit from His presence, they will be able to say to the enquiring soul, 'O yes! we have come from His sweet presence; we have drunk afresh of His love, and we can tell you, poor, longing soul, that your Beloved is not far distant, but nigh, very nigh, to those who thus eagerly seek Him.' But though the watchmen can thus, if they are keeping up by His grace daily intercourse with Jesus, speak of Him, and direct to Him, they cannot of themselves cause the soul to find Him. The Holy Spirit is all in all here" (*Gospel Standard*, 1872, page 28).

One who loved him, and by the grace of God owes so much to him, and received much kindness from him, is glad to pay this tribute to the memory of a dear pastor. "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2. 12).

LETTER TO HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III Coronation May 6th, 2023

The following letter was sent to King Charles III on behalf of the Gospel Standard Committee to mark the coronation .

Your Majesty,

I write to you on behalf of the Gospel Standard Society, which represents a group of independent Baptist churches, on the occasion of your coronation and that of the Queen Consort.

On looking back to the editorial of our *Gospel Standard* magazine for June 1953, we read the following: "England has had five sovereigns in the fifty-one years since Queen Victoria's death, whose single reign ran through sixty-four years." Through the providence of God, your beloved mother, Queen Elizabeth II, reigned for seventy years, and to most is the only monarch they have known.

Sir, we wish you both well in the responsibilities which now fall upon you. Bearing in mind the Scripture: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14. 34), many changes have taken place during the past seventy years, which, to those of us who reverence God's Word, have not all been for the good of the nation, as

they are contrary to our Christian beliefs regarding God's holy law. We name just a few for your consideration.

- Sunday Trading: a day which should be set aside for worship, given to man at the time of creation as a day of rest (see Gen. 2. 1-3).
- Family: Eve was given unto Adam as a help meet (see Gen. 2. 18), the stable structure for family life and raising a family. Recent statistics show that more children are born outside of marriage than in. It is acknowledged those born into a home living with both father and mother prove often to exceed in education and live a more stable life.
- Medical profession: God has granted man much wisdom, in treating serious illness and the relief of suffering to many. Sadly, these things are often abused, and we witness many lives terminated in the womb, often causing much distress, to women, in particular, later in life. Now the question of euthanasia is constantly being promoted. God's Word is very clear: "A time to be born, and a time to die" (Eccles. 3. 2) is in His hand.

Many other things could be mentioned, but we pray that wisdom may be given to you to encourage a return to the standards of the holy Word of God, which in the past have been the strength of our nation; in particular we pray that you will stand loyal to the Protestant Constitution which has underpinned our freedom of worship for many centuries. Your position gives you unique opportunity to use your influence with those in authority in both the church and parliament. We pray daily for you that God may help you in these weighty burdens which are now on your shoulders.

Yours sincerely,

Secretary

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 158)

iii. The work of faith is of His operation; and therefore He is styled the "Spirit of faith" (2 Cor. 4. 13). And the same Spirit that wrought faith in the New Testament, is said to have done it in the Old, as that place shows: "We having the same Spirit of faith" (2 Cor. 4. 13) etc; the same which David and they in the Old Testament had. It is therefore also, that to be full of the Holy Ghost and of faith are joined. "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6. 5); also Barnabas is said to be a man "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11. 24).

Let us view some special acts of faith, and see how the working of them is ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

First, He gave thee a spiritual sight of Christ and God's free grace, which drew thy heart unto them. He gave thee a sight of God's free grace, when thou hadst seen thy sins and thy undone condition, and thy heart was thrown off the hinges of thy former hopes on self-righteousness, and presumptions upon God's mercy upon false grounds pricked and fallen; and thou wert left utterly at the loss, and knewest not what to do to be saved. Who was it opened to thee the first "door of hope" (Hos. 2. 15), and gave thee the first glimpse of grace and mercy; and that God would abundantly and freely pardon thee, if thou wouldst seek Him? Who was it then that laid before thee that all-sufficient righteousness of faith; and that did set thy heart on work to seek it? Even the good Spirit, who is therefore called, "The Spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zech. 12. 10). He became a Spirit of grace, in making a discovery of that rich and free grace in God's heart to be inclining towards thee, and therewith became the Spirit of supplication in thee, inflaming thee, as a condemned man for life, to seek after that grace and pardoning mercy in God. And from thence He led thee to the cross of Christ, and made and set such a lively picture of Him, as crucified before thine eyes (see Gal. 3. 1), as all angels and men could never have portrayed, no more, yea, infinitely far less, than they can the sun. It was He, the same Spirit of grace, that did it; and so it follows, "And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12. 10). Thus also it is said, "When He is come, He will reprove the world of ... righteousness" (John 16. 8), (which Christ there enumerates as the Spirit's second work in calling us); even of that all-sufficient righteousness of Christ, offered up for satisfaction to the Father; who was "made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And when the word of faith sounded in thy heart and ears, thou hadst not eyes to see it; therefore this fountain for sin and uncleanness to wash in must be "opened" (as it is said, Zech. 13. 1), or men see it not. Thou wert ready to perish for thirst, as Hagar was (see Gen. 21), and lifted up thy voice and wept. But as God "opened her eyes, and she saw a well" (verse 19) just by her, so did the Spirit thine, to spy out Christ and His righteousness, which is hid unto the world. As I heard one say on his deathbed, O where had I been if I had not spied out Christ! It was this Spirit of grace who caused thee to look towards Him, and first set thy eyes and heart to see Him, and look on Him that was pierced, as all that are saved should be brought to do, as they did on the brazen serpent (see John 3. 14, 15).

Secondly, when thou didst find (being come to this fountain) that the well was deep, and thou hadst not wherewith to draw; and while thou wert but looking down into it, with a longing eye after it; but couldst not reach into it, to wash thyself in it; but layest as that poor impotent man did at the

pool, utterly without strength (as John 5) to have stepped in: it was then the Holy Ghost sprinkled of it upon thy heart, and caused thine iniquity to pass away (see 1 Pet. 1. 2). It is Jesus Christ's name affords the merit and virtue for both, but the Spirit is the Applier of them and all other blessings.

Thirdly, and when thou hast been brought to close with Christ for justification and righteousness, who was it brought thee to the Father to be justified by Him also, "that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. 4. 5), and who gave thee access to Him, when thou stoodest trembling, not daring to approach to a consuming fire, and everlasting burnings? It is "through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2. 18). It is both through Christ, and by the Spirit, who leads us, as well as Christ. And indeed, Christ leads us to the Father (as it were) with one hand, and the Holy Ghost by the other. Yea, it was this Spirit that taught thee to call God Father (see Rom. 8. 15, Gal. 4. 6), and therewith to seek adoption from Him.

Fourthly, when thou art once justified by faith, and hast that righteousness imputed to thee, who is it hath hitherto kept, and continues to keep thine heart fixedly to wait for, and hold to that righteousness alone for thy salvation? And who is it withholds thee from betaking thyself to any other for justification? Who settles thy hopes solely on it? It is even this Spirit: "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5. 5). Justification by faith (as we know) is the eminent subject of that epistle; and these words come in in the midst of many other lesser, additional persuasives, which He useth last, after the doctrinal arguments in the former chapters, tending all to this, that they should stand fast in that liberty which verse 1 of this chapter begins with, and which the righteousness of Christ endows us with; and that they should renounce that of works in the point of justification.

Abridged

(To be continued)

GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE TOWARDS ZION

Of God's great love, ere time began,
His thoughts of peace to rebel man,
Let Zion sing, nor e'er refrain
To aid the sweet, immortal strain.

His sons elect He knows them well,
Nor less beloved when Adam fell;
Bound in life's bundle, called His own,
As sons of peace, to Him foreknown.

Then, O believer, cease to mourn,
 Return unto thy rest, return;
 Indulge no more thy grief and woe,
 His thoughts of peace eternal flow.

For thee salvation finished stands
 Wrought by thy Surety's bleeding hands:
 He vanquished sin, death, hell and law;
 His thoughts of peace no measure know.

When in thy blood He saw thee lie,
 He bid thee live and passed thee by;
 Bound up thy wounds, that all might see
 His thoughts how peaceful then to thee.

When rebels found against His laws,
 Haters of God, His name and cause,
 Yet even then His grace so free,
 His thoughts were thoughts of peace to thee.

When Jonah from His presence fled,
 He smote his gourd, but not his head!
 From hell's dark womb, His love to show,
 His thoughts of peace the rebel drew.

Should Zion's foes thy heart appal,
 Should deep to deep incessant call,
 No foes nor fears thy soul shall mar,
 His thoughts of peace thy bulwarks are.

Sins present, past, or sins to be,
 Shall never rend thy God from thee;
 'Graved on His hands He reads thy name,
 His thoughts of peace are walls of flame.

But should thy feet to error slide,
 From thee my God His face may hide;
 Yet ne'er to hell will He thee cast,
 His thoughts of peace for ever last.

'Wake, then, my soul, thy God to praise,
 In all thy sweetest, noblest lays;
 No seraph's song shall rival thine,
 A sinner saved by grace divine.

John Kent (1766-1843)

The report of the Annual General Meetings held on April 14th, 2023,
 will be published in the July *Gospel Standard*, if the Lord will.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

JULY 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY MEETINGS

Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society, held on Friday, April 14th, 2023, at Clifton, Bedfordshire.

“BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM”

Sermon preached at the evening service

Text: “Beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24. 47).

What a wonderful day, the day of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was. It began with tears on behalf of His little flock – disappointment, discouragement – and it ended with unbounded joy! If ever that word was fulfilled, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” it was that day; if ever the words of our Lord were confirmed, it is as they are in the beatitudes, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

Dear friends, what was it that wiped away their tears? What was it that made the crooked straight and the rough plain? What was it that calmed their troubled hearts? It was the coming of the dear Saviour, the drawing near to them in their sorrow, and interpreting it for them, showing how the curse that they felt was now turned into a blessing. And each troubled heart here this evening hour, it is the same answer to your trouble. It is the same answer to your disquiet. What will put it right? What happened to the two on the road to Emmaus? “Jesus Himself” – none other! Friends, none other will do, will it? “Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them” – with them in their sorrow, with them in their perplexity, with them in their poor, cast down state. But as He went with them, how the scene changed!

It was just the same when He walked on the waters. You remember, on the sea of Galilee those troubled disciples thought they saw a spirit. They thought another trouble had come to add to the darkness and toiling of the night, until they heard His voice, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” And, my dear friends, that put everything right. As it was with Mary at the tomb – just one word, “Mary.” She knew the voice. Unmistakable! It was the voice of her Beloved, like we read of in the Song of Solomon, “leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” There are those of us here who would know if Jesus spoke to us tonight.

We would know the power of it, the unction of it, and (what we heard this afternoon) especially the *love* of it! There is nothing more calculated (if I may use that word reverently) to bring love in the hearts of God's people, than for the love of Christ to be shed abroad in their heart. And that is what took place on this memorable day.

But now the evening had come. Again, the dear Saviour had visited this little band in the upper room, and now He begins to commission them, as they were to be the first witnesses of the resurrection. The point I want to emphasise, first of all, is this: that they were under His divine command. We read in the prophecy of Isaiah, "I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." But in these closing scenes of our Lord's sojourn here on earth, we find Him with some blessed commands. There are two commands, in particular, that surround our text.

One was these disciples – these eleven – were to stay in the city of Jerusalem, waiting for a promised blessing. They were not to go ahead of it. They were to wait for it. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The word *endued* means *clothed*. "Until ye be *clothed* with power from on high." And you have only to read the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2, and what that meant when that favoured band in the upper room were clothed with the Holy Ghost – how their tongues were opened, how their lips rejoiced to speak of the risen Saviour. When the Holy Ghost clothes the Word with power, something is accomplished. But they were to wait for that promised blessing. And I say to all waiting souls here tonight who are waiting for something that God has promised to them, wait! Wait until you have that enduing power of deliverance. It will surely come, because the Lord has promised, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." If He has taught you to wait for something in humble dependence, then friends, He will not disappoint you. They were to wait there, in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high. It would have been presumption to have gone forth without it.

The second thing was this: What were they to preach? What were they to teach? Whom were they to preach? Well, you have only to read the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, and you will notice that the one theme that pervades them all is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not that they were not to speak of His incarnation. There would have been no resurrection without that, would there? So yes, they *would* speak of that miraculous birth in Bethlehem's manger. They *would* speak of what took place in Gethsemane's garden, in the judgment hall, and on the cross. But they would not leave it there. No! Because our Saviour Himself did not leave the matter there. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." You read in 1 Corinthians 15 how Paul tells us, "If Christ be not raised ... ye are yet

in your sins.” It is a vital thing, that! So, they were to preach a risen Saviour.

I will just pause here for a moment. Examine your heart, this evening hour, each one of you! If Christ be not risen in *your* heart, then you are yet in your sins! Have you ever thought about that? You may sing of the resurrection, read of it, hear of it, even outwardly celebrate it. But is Christ risen in *your* heart? You say, “How can that be?” You have only to read Ephesians 1, which unfolds the doctrine of the resurrection, and Ephesians 2, the experience of it. “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” There is the experience of it, and every quickened soul here this evening hour, in that sense, is risen with Christ. It is the power of Christ’s resurrection that has wrought that great change, and such, in God’s account, are not still in their sins.

But friends, if you are an unquickened soul, with neither spiritual sight nor hearing, nor heart-work, dare I say to you, “It is well”? No! I must tell you, manifestly, you are yet in your sins. And to live and to die in that condition is to die lost! Do lay that to heart, this evening hour! Eternity is near. “The judge standeth before the door.” We need to come through that wicket gate of the new birth, by sovereign grace bringing us through it, because none other can. But if He has brought you through it, dear friends, then however much sin may plague you, however much the devil may assail you, you are not yet in your sins, and bless God for it! A mighty miracle has been wrought that can never be undone.

Then there is something else which brings us to our text this evening. The place where they were to begin their ministry. Which tells us – not just the ministers – where we are in life’s journey is according to God’s providential hand. Do you believe that? Do you think you are at liberty to make your own decisions and do your own thing as and when you feel? Friends, a child of God cannot live like that. He must ask God where he should live, where he should worship, whom he should marry. He should ask God where he might have employment. All these things are in God’s hands. “Ye are not your own,” child of God, “ye are bought with a price,” and you are to remember that! You are to “humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And these new-made ministers of Christ were to begin at Jerusalem. That was God’s dear Son’s ordained word and work for them. True, it spread from Jerusalem right through the world, as we know, even reaching these islands. How thankful we should be for it. But it was to *begin* at Jerusalem.

I want, with God’s help, for a few moments this evening, just to unfold why – why it must begin at Jerusalem. What does it tell us about the gospel, and about its blessed effects?

The first thing is a very important truth. You remember when Paul went preaching, eventually, under God's command, he nearly always went to the synagogues first – to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles. It seems there is something implied here. They were to begin to preach in Jerusalem. Yes, the very place where Christ had been crucified, the very place where so recently He had been hailed to death by that unruly mob, the very place where a cross had been erected, and He had hung between two thieves. That was where they were to begin – at Jerusalem, of all places. It was not easy, was it? They were bound to meet hostility. But, no! The Lord had commanded it should be so. “Beginning at Jerusalem.”

Then look at it like this. The first time we read of Jerusalem, in inference, is in the Book of Genesis, where we read of a wondrous man called Melchisedec. We are told he was a priest of the most high God and a king. Now throughout the Old Testament, in the Levitical dispensation, the kingship and the priesthood were kept completely separate. That is why king Uzziah was so sharply reprov'd and made a leper. He tried to take the office of priesthood which God had never ordained for him. It was not his office and he was smitten with leprosy. It was presumption of the highest order. But in Melchisedec you see the two come together. We read he was “King of righteousness, and ... King of peace.” The point I want to make this evening is this: “at Jerusalem” in that order, righteousness and peace were brought together. Righteousness – the holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness – that full satisfaction of God's holy law. Righteousness – that holy, harmless, undefiled One, in every thought, word and deed – pure, holy, harmless. What a blessed One is Jesus Christ the Righteous. And friends, if you feel your uncleanness tonight, your vileness, your wretchedness, then look to this precious, righteous One, and here is the answer to it: He says,

“Cease from your own works, bad or good,
And wash your garments in My blood.” (H. 352)

At Calvary, at Jerusalem – righteousness and peace met together. We might say the kingship and the priesthood met in Christ, as they do. Righteousness and peace. The peace came because of the righteousness that preceded it. When God is about to bring peace into a sinner's heart, first of all He applies the plumbline of righteousness. He lets it down against your life, and O what a crooked life it then appears to be! Thoughts, words and deeds – altogether inconsistent with God's holy mind and will. Eventually, as that plumbline does its work, the sinner is brought to that point, “In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”

“Righteousness to full perfection
 Must be brought, lacking nought,
 Fearless of rejection.” (H. 800)

Where is he to find it? Blessed be God, think of this great High Priest now who, not only did He bring righteousness in, but He brought peace.

“Peace by His cross has Jesus made;
 The church’s everlasting Head
 O’er hell and sin has victory won,
 And, with a shout, to glory gone.” (H. 925)

This is what took place, in that sense, at Jerusalem. The righteousness of God’s people was brought forth as a garment for them, and the precious blood of Christ shed to wash away all their guilt. So, “righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” mercy and justice, they embrace each other – all in that precious Christ. This is what they were to preach, this heavenly Melchisedec.

And how does Paul take that up in Hebrews 7? (You read it when you get home.) O that wonderful verse: “But this Man” – this Jesus – “because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore” – listen, O poor, far off sinner, this evening hour, here is the answer: “He *is able* also to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” This was the gospel they were to preach, “Beginning at Jerusalem.”

Again, why Jerusalem? Well, when you consider the Old Testament, and the wonderful types there were there, and the various miracles that were wrought, especially in the time of Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness, all of them spoke of a precious Christ yet to come, and all of them were fulfilled, really, at Jerusalem – outside Jerusalem’s gate, we might say.

You think, for example, of the smitten rock. I have often pondered that particular instance. Dear Moses, leading God’s people out into the wilderness, he was obeying his heavenly Father in so doing. He knew he was in the right path. But O the reproach it brought upon him! He could say, like poor Jeremiah, “Know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke.” Is there one here tonight who is feeling like that? If it is for His sake, dear friends, count it a privilege. But they were ready to stone poor Moses, because there was no water. It was all Moses’ fault! Some wanted to go back to Egypt even! Poor Moses – *rich* Moses, I would say, really! – he went to the right Source! Lord, “What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.” What did the Lord say? “Go on.” But do not go alone, Moses. You will not go alone. Go on! Where? To the rock in Horeb. “Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall

come water out of it.” And the dear man of God, doing as God bade him, goes to the rock and he smites it!

And we read in the Psalms (it is so beautiful): “He” – that is, God – “opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.” Remember, dry places are where the rebellious are. There are plenty of those in Jerusalem’s streets. Yes, and our streets as well. We have no stones to throw! But at Jerusalem the Rock was smitten. At Jerusalem divine justice smote the Rock Christ Jesus. At Jerusalem the Rock was opened and the water of mercy gushed out. It ran in the dry places like a river. And friends, they were to preach this gospel to the very ones who crucified the Saviour, the very ones who nailed Him to the cross, the very ones who chose Barabbas rather than Christ. They were to preach the gospel, “beginning at Jerusalem.”

You may say, “What is that to do with us, tonight?” Good John Bunyan says in one of his quaint sermons, “We are all Jerusalem sinners.” That is, God’s people! In other words, we are no better than the Jews who hailed the Saviour to the cross. We are no different – by nature the same spirit is in us. And ‘Jerusalem sinners’ are brought to that point, even as Joseph’s brethren were years before: “We are verily guilty concerning our brother.” Verily guilty! And ‘Jerusalem sinners’ are like that – verily guilty! They look on the wounds of Jesus – *my* sins created those wounds! They look at that dear head, crowned with thorns – *my* sins wove that crown! They look at those dear feet, nailed to the cross – *my* guilt, and *mine* iniquity fastened those feet, which did such good, to the cross! ‘Jerusalem sinners’ are those who are convinced of that solemn, awesome relationship between their sins and the Saviour’s sufferings! How many ‘Jerusalem sinners’ are there here tonight? God only knows! We are all sinners – of that there is not a doubt! But are we ‘Jerusalem sinners’ – those, whom you read of in Acts chapter 2, who were, “pricked in their heart” – they were convinced of their sin. “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” “Repent, and be baptized,” was the word that was accomplished in Acts chapter 2. But the point I want to make, dear friends, is this: they were ‘Jerusalem sinners’ wrought upon by the Holy Ghost – and knew themselves as ‘Jerusalem sinners.’ And the apostles were commanded to point ‘Jerusalem sinners’ to the cross, to the very One whom we nailed to the tree, to the very blood that flowed from those wounds that *we* created, that does not cry for vengeance, like Abel’s. No!

“Blood has a voice to pierce the skies:
 ‘Revenge!’ the blood of Abel cries;
 But the dear stream, when Christ was slain,
 Speaks peace as loud from every vein.” (H. 123)

And that beautiful hymn says: “The wounds of Jesus, for my sin” (H. 96). You say, “That is high language!” It is high language. It is

good language, though, isn't it! If the wounds of Jesus were not for your sin, or mine, we would have no hope – none whatsoever! This is the only remedy for sin. This is the only answer to your Jerusalem sinnership: the blood that flowed so freely from His holy hands and feet and side, which conveyed to the sinner His righteousness – His full atonement – and see Him taking to Himself the guilt of these ‘Jerusalem sinners.’

“In guilt's dark dungeon when we lay,
 Mercy cried, ‘Spare’ and Justice, ‘Slay.’
 But Jesus answered, ‘Set them free,
 And pardon them and punish Me.” (H. 837)

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” Jerusalem! Outside Jerusalem's gate – not far was a garden. That garden we know that our Lord often frequented with His dear disciples. On that dreadful night of His arrest, there He lay prostrate on the ground, in a holy agony – which we cannot begin fully to understand! Only God alone knew the depth of that agony, as God incarnate lay on the ground, sweating as it were great drops of blood. But whom was it for? ‘Jerusalem sinners!’ Yes! Think of Peter, so soon to deny his Lord with oaths and curses. Loving John was going to run away. And when He rose again and showed them His hands and His feet, He said, “Here is your pardon. Here is the receipt of it. See it in My wounded hands and feet!” Yes! O what mercy!

Again, you go to the judgment hall. You see the dear Saviour standing there, according to divine prophecy, fulfilling it all! “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb.” All the false accusations, He did not even answer. The only one He did answer was when they asked Him concerning His Sonship. Friends, He did not deny that! No! He did not deny that! And they thought that was enough to crucify Him. But therein lies our salvation!

“I durst not confide in His blood,
 Nor on His protection rely,
 Unless I were sure He is God.” (H. 1149)

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” You see Him led out bearing His own cross to Golgotha. We have that man, Simon – we do not read much about him – a Cyrenian, who was compelled to carry the cross behind the Saviour. Dear friends, ‘Jerusalem sinners,’ wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, and brought to know a little of God's love in their forgiveness, are made willing, like Simon, to bear the cross after the Saviour. Are you? Am I?

He goes out to Golgotha. There, between those two thieves, “numbered with the transgressors,” He pours out His soul unto death, crying out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Then, having paid the price, satisfied divine justice, He cries with that

tremendous voice, “It is finished.” It rent the rocks. It rent the veil of the temple. A way into the holiest of all was made by that dying cry. He yields up His holy soul into the hands of His dear Father. His holy body goes to the grave. There He awaits His resurrection morning, as we have in this very chapter.

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” Let us put it another way now. Our text speaks of a *beginning* – a beginning of a ministry. And those here who preach the gospel – how far short we feel to come in this – but this is where we should begin: all that took place without the gate. “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” Yes! “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” And friends, you will notice how soon the disciples had to count the cost of preaching at Jerusalem. We find on one occasion, not long after Pentecost, they were accosted and brought before the magistrates, and they were forbidden to preach in this precious name of this precious gospel. They were beaten with rods and scourged. And they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin rejoicing! Why? Their backs were bleeding – why were they rejoicing? Because they counted it an honour that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake. Friends, there is not much of that religion around in our day. We are too cosy. We are too wrapped up in cottonwool (if I may say so). But it is a great privilege when we suffer for Christ’s sake – that which comes upon us for Christ’s sake. And those dear apostles, they counted it a privilege. It cost them something to begin at Jerusalem. It cost them something to preach in those very streets where our Lord had been hailed to death.

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” But, of course, when all is said and done, the Jerusalem we are speaking of is a city which, not long after that, was razed to the ground by the Romans. But the Word of God speaks of another Jerusalem. Turn with me for a moment to Hebrews chapter 12, and you will find in there a wonderful interpretation of our text in a different level. Hebrews 12 from verse 18: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.)” Now, listen, dear friends: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made

perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

There the apostle, by faith, bids us look away from Jerusalem and all that it meant, all of its history. Look up, he would say, within the veil to the heavenly Jerusalem, where the church of the living God is being established stone by stone, as one by one “the spirits of just men made perfect” are being taken home, when the work of grace is done. O, says Paul, look up! Here is a city that will never be destroyed. Here is a city that will never be defiled. Here is a city wherein there is eternal peace, love, compassion. Here is a city where the presence of the dear Saviour is known eternally, and the presence of those who have gone before – those “spirits of just men made perfect” within the veil. This is the spiritual Jerusalem, which God is building, and at which, Paul says, we should be looking and remembering. We are to leave aside all the natural Jerusalem. We come to mount Sion – that is a typical word of what was done at Calvary. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.”

And if we were given a glimpse tonight within the veil, what would we see? We would see a throne, and on that throne, a triune God reveals His glory, in particular, in and through the Person of His dearly-beloved Son, who is the light thereof. And we would see around the throne, not only angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim – all there of course – but we would see a number that no man can number out of every kindred, nation, tribe and tongue gathered from this earth. They were ‘Jerusalem sinners’ – who, blessed be God – while they were here below were taught their sinfulness, and fled to Christ for refuge. But now they are within the veil, the work of grace is completed, and with that vast company above now enjoy “glory, glory in Immanuel’s land!”

“What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.... They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb” – that is Christ – “which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

I said at the outset, there were tears in Luke chapter 24, but no tears in heaven. No! The days of their mourning are ended – ended eternally.

“Adoring saints around Him stand,
 And thrones and powers before Him fall;
 The God shines gracious through the Man,
 And sheds sweet glories on them all. (H. 481)

O dear friends, this is the anticipation for ‘Jerusalem sinners.’ This is the end God has in view: to bring them at last to Himself, there to praise Him, and adore Him, to all eternity. “This people have I formed for Myself; they *shall shew* forth My praise.” God is preparing them – ‘Jerusalem sinners’ – to worship Him in eternity to come.

The great point with you and me this evening, is: Are we being prepared? The Puritans used to say, “He builds too low, who builds beneath the sky,” and we are very apt to build down here below to try and make things smooth for our flesh and our natural man. There is not much going forth unto Christ without the camp, is there? No! But I will tell you, dear friends, one sight of the dear Saviour on His cross, and what He has done for poor sinners and wretches like you and me, and to know, as I said earlier, that there is a relationship between your sins and His precious blood – friends, that will draw you! And it will be a privilege then to “go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” O this blessed anticipation, this eternal inheritance that awaits God’s poor, troubled people here below! There will be no more sin; there will be no more sorrow; there will be no more separation; there will be no more gathering around graves to mourn the loss of loved ones. That will be behind us for ever and ever. The glory of the Lord will be seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

“There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.” (H. 770)

What began at Jerusalem here below, ends in the spiritual Jerusalem above. That is the end God has in view. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

So these dear disciples were commissioned to go forth into Jerusalem and beyond. They were to preach repentance. They were to let down the plumbline of divine righteousness into the hearts of their hearers. It is only God can do that, but they were to be the means. And they were to proclaim a precious Christ to all those who were pricked in their hearts, and brought to cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They were to point sinners to Christ – the very One who was despised and rejected of men, the very One they are exhorted and encouraged to look to. “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

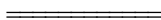
“Beginning at Jerusalem.” One final thought. You take it home, and pray about it, dear friends. Think of the great grace that abounded over these dear disciples as they went forth. It is amazing what they suffered, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. And you may tremble,

perhaps, with a path before you. There may be one here – I know not – exercised about the ministry, and what trials it might bring, and what difficulties might be in the way. Friends, if God is in the beginning of it, you can be sure of this: the Lord will manage every trouble that will come in the way. There will be troubles. There are certain aspects to that path which only those who walk it know. But one thing is certain: that parting blessing of our Lord, who lifted up His hands at Bethany, and spread them over those dear disciples, was this: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” And not just God’s servants, the ministers. No, all of God’s dear people.

“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” And the last scene they had of Him was those hands stretched out, no longer on the cross, no longer bleeding and torn, but stretched out to bless them. “And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” But although His physical presence was now no longer seen, yet they had the joy of this: “He hath said” – and He still says it – “*He hath said*, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Dear friend, what more can He say to you or to me, than to assure us of His presence, to assure us of His love and mercy? It will enable us to take every step He commands until that last step, which must come sooner or later, between life and death when the soul is called hence. But even there – “Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” Even there! Then at last –

“O that will be glory, be glory for me,
When by His grace I shall look on His face.”

God grant it may be so. Amen.



MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. B.E. Izzard (Fenstanton) read Psalm 119. 121-128; Isaiah 6. 1-8; 43. 1-13, and spoke as follows:

In these portions of Scripture this is where we want to come, if God may help us, for a few moments as we gather together. There is really the setting forth of God’s Word here by the Lord’s servants and prophets, those things which belong to the ways of the Lord with His people. Then there is also my heart’s desire to speak from the word here in the forty-third chapter. It does seem that there is before us in the Word of the Lord that understanding of the Lord’s dealings. I want to notice a few things as God may help me. We have before us David and the prophet Isaiah in the Word of the Lord. Then also as we may think a

little further, from the sixth chapter, there does seem to be a very needful part to consider. Here we have very solemnly, “In the year that King Uzziah died,” and in the sixth chapter that view of the Lord. That is what we need in our coming before Him. It seems as if there is something that draws my heart here in the chapter of the Lord’s dealings, His goodness with His people. I think of these words in the chapter.

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah there is the way to God, friends, with due reverence and godly fear. That is where we want to notice firstly, this coming. It is when the Lord personates our case, or personates our souls with desire for the Lord, and especially as we think of the chapter here in the verse before us, it does seem to speak of that true, living way before the Lord. It is when the Spirit personates our case, our desires, when the Lord takes in hand those that do so much need the Lord to bring them through perhaps, in some particular trial, in some great matter that is known to God.

So, there is the prophet Isaiah, and we think of David too. But what is upon my mind is the way in which the Lord leads His people, humbly. We want to come rightly to it. In the chapter we read these words that really stand out to me as we may come before the Lord. Friends, it is something that attends my thoughts, the holiness, thrice holiness of God revealed, and the prophet is sweetly favoured with that wonderful knowledge of the Lord. Friends, that is the right approach for us. I would seek ever to endorse and stand by the truth of God’s Word concerning those who wait upon Him.

My thoughts go a little further from this chapter, the sixth chapter, to the Lord in His grace, teaching, guiding, directing those that gather. They really want to know how to pray and approach and feel to need the Lord to guide their thoughts, to bring them perhaps especially to a sweeter knowledge of the Lord. There are two parts. There is David with the psalm. There is the dear prophet. How sweetly favoured he was! I notice it in passing a little further, as God may direct me. There is something more that attends my thoughts, and that is by the same dear prophet. Notice the author here in the chapter, Isaiah 43. “Thus saith the Lord.” It is the Saviour. We know something of that sweet word of the Lord to His people to bring them through.

I want to notice in the chapter here what the Lord says. That is why we have come here: not only to make supplication, not only to seek His mercy, but to hear what the Lord will say, perhaps in answer to some of your earnest petitions; I know not. Perhaps in some matters it needs the Lord. In this chapter it is He who speaks. We have it before us in the Psalm: “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work.” How many dear friends have those things they bring to the Lord like that: “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work” — perhaps regarding His dear people and the church of

God and perhaps especially needing the Lord to bring them on and bring them through.

There is something else I want to notice. It is the Lord speaking through the prophet, and how sweet the truth that he had had tidings of, or a report, but then in the forty-third chapter there is so much of Christ and His church. O that I could really come before you with it. “Thus saith the Lord.” What answers will He give to those who say, “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work”? “I will work, and who shall let it?”

Well, friends, we have read His sweet word and we have it in the Word of God’s sweet grace, as if there is an answer from Himself. Is that what you need? You need the Lord to grant some answer of peace. We have much thank to God for, but you need perhaps the Lord to speak a word, something that gets right into troubled hearts.

In the forty-third chapter, we concluded our reading with it. It is the word of the Highest to those who are brought to hear what the Lord may say. With all their burdens, they pour out their heart before the Lord. What is the answer, friends? It is He that speaks. “Yea, before the day was, I am He.” What sweet encouragement there is at the throne of grace. “And there is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall let it?” Those are my thoughts. That is what is impressed upon my mind. The Lord speaks to His church and people. He comes Himself. He uses His servants, but friends, it is when He speaks. He will speak peace. It is a wonder to me that ever the Lord dealt with me in the path of life. I often come to it, and wonder at it. It is He that speaks in our text in a very sacred way.

“Yea, before the day was, I am He” – the eternal God, to bow down in His mercy to those who have forfeited all and come short, yet they are gathered in to hear what the Lord will say, maybe with many troubles. So we have it here, a sweet display. It is in the gospel, only in the gospel. “Before the day was I am” – one of those *I ams* – “I am He.” O mark it well. “There is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall let it?” It may be said, How can we understand such a word as this? Well, friends, let me put it another way. In heaven there is not an empty place. That is the sweet substance of these words. “There is none that can deliver out of My hand.” It is grace abounding, to bring back these dreadful characters who have gone astray, and all because of His sweet grace, and His love too, to these wretched sinners.

We do not know anything without the Spirit’s teaching. This is how we come by way of encouragement to those who are bowed down, and say, “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work.” Perhaps faint and cast down, but the matter is what the Lord will say about it, in our text or in the word here. Just a few thoughts – O this great *I am*. Has He not made Himself known to some of you very sweetly? Down you will have to come to His

feet. It was not like that once. The Lord reigns by His grace. He is gathering in these characters. I was reminded of it last evening. They are so rebellious, but they are sweetly gathered in because the *I am* puts forth His power and His dominion.

“And there is none that can deliver out of My hand.” It is that immutable grace, that sweetness of it. “I will work, and who shall let it.” May that be underneath some of your great burdens and concerns. “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work.” Friends, He will bring in His dead elect. He will bring them. He still does. He will humble them. I am speaking of real things when the Lord makes Himself known, and friends, what a love there is to Him that first loved these characters. It is He that speaks. There are many things in the chapter. These verses in the previous part are very precious. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” This God lives. Now it is union we need to Him to bring us to that sweet place where we might hear His sweet word and grace. “I will work ... and in you too,” as it says in the hymn. “Who shall let it?” Who can turn it back? There may be many who turn back and would turn us back. I want to notice it more particularly in the Lord’s sweet favour. It is the *I am*. That is really the gospel.

I want to bring that before you as God may have impressed it on my mind. “Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.” It is His salvation. “I will work, and who shall let it?” Let us watch about it. It is a very solemn, solemn day, but God is on His throne. Watch, friends, but pray unto Him with the word of His grace, and may the Lord forgive just a few remarks this morning, and help us to seek His face in prayer.

Hymns 610, 540 and 641 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Luton), Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield), Mr. J.H. Cottingham (Blackboys), Mr. C.P. Warboys (Oakington), Mr. G. Cottingham (Heathfield) and Mr. D.F. Stevens (Ripley). Mr. Izzard closed with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 516, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. M.J. Hyde (Pastor, Brighton), to seek the Lord’s blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Psalm 46.

CHAIRMAN: This was the Psalm which cheered the Reformers. Martin Luther would say to his friend Philip Melancthon when things were difficult, “Come, Philip, let us sing Psalm 46.” It has been the

language of the church of Christ for many, many centuries, and there is not a generation to whom its truths are not relevant, and we also live in troublous times. We live in times when there is much shaking, even that of which Paul tells us in Hebrews 12: those things which may be shaken are being shaken, “that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Our health can be shaken, our friends can be shaken, our churches can be shaken; and yes, a mercy if our self-righteousness is shaken as well, and anything short of Christ. It is a mercy when those things are shaken, but O friends the great point is to have something that endures the shaking, trembling, troublous times. This is what Psalm 46 sets before the living church of God, those who know what shaking times are, who know what trembling times are, who know what Daniel meant when he said that the walls shall be built in troublous times.

This Psalm has often been a support. On the one hand it is very evident in the early part that we are not the only generation who have known great changes, nor will we be the last one either, but amidst those great changes there is something that remains: this river, “the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.” This river is the love of God in Christ Jesus toward His own dear people, and whatever the circumstance in which we may be found, this river flows. Temptation, conviction of sin, bereavement, affliction – you name it, dear friends – O how this river has been a support! Just one sip of its sacred streams has changed the scene so often for God’s dear children.

But in particular it is on my mind just to say very briefly a word on verses 7 and 11, which are repeated: “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” Now we would speak personally for a moment. As a denomination we have suffered a great loss in the removal of our former Editor, Chairman of this Society, and many other offices he held, our dear friend Mr. Ramsbottom. He was a pillar in the churches, and set by God’s grace a good example over so many years. He does not miss us. He sleeps in Jesus, and he has received that welcome above we believe, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” He has left behind a sorrowing widow, family, and as churches we mourn the loss of our dear friend. The last thing he would wish us to do would be to idolise him, but friends, what a mercy we may say, even now in this time of great change: “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

“Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!”

Just two or three things from this blessed word. *The uniqueness of our God.* There is no room for any other. Men will raise their idols, and

it is natural to us ever since the Fall, but if this great God has anything to do with you and me, that word will be fulfilled: “From all your idols, will I cleanse you.” God will not take second place to any. He is pre-eminent. He is King of kings. He is Lord of lords.

Further, we have *His omnipotence* – the Lord of hosts, all under His divine control – sinners and saints, nations, churches, families, individuals.

“Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.” (H. 64)

But what is very precious is *His presence*, His abiding presence. Throughout this Psalm, through all the changes, the one thing that changes not is His abiding presence with the living church of the living God. And the very term, “the God of Jacob,” gives us hope. Jacob lived hundreds of years before David wrote this Psalm, or whoever the psalmist was. Yet it still has that title: “The God of Jacob.” What does that tell us? It tells what our Lord said in His own ministry, that the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were in glory. He told the Sadducees this, who did not believe in the resurrection.

But friends it means firstly this: the God who was so good to Jacob is the same God who is just as good to His church today. The servants of God come, and they go; the Lord takes them to their eternal rest, but He remains. That is our comfort.

“God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race.”

Moses is taken, Joshua is raised up. Elijah is taken, Elisha is raised up. Joseph said, “I die: but God shall be with you.” O that blessed “but God!” “But God shall be with you.” O friends,

“He never takes away our all –
Himself He gives us still.” (H. 132)

And then, “The God of Jacob is our refuge.” Jacob was a poor sinner. We have his sins recorded in Scripture as well as what grace did in him. You and I are poor, wretched, fallen sinners by nature, nothing to boast of, so much to be ashamed of, but Jacob said, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth,” which the Lord had shown to him. We could say that this afternoon hour. We are not worthy of the least of His mercies, and yet they still come, do they not! The river still flows, and that is our comfort. O may we lay to heart the removal of the godly; we should do, “The living will lay it to his heart.” But friends, may we also prove that their God is our God. As the psalmist said, concerning the God of Jacob, “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.”

The great and vital point though, absolutely essential, is to be numbered among God’s people by the grace that alone can put us among them, to be quickened by the eternal Spirit showing us our need before a holy God, and that same blessed Spirit leading us to cast anchor where Jacob cast anchor. Where was that? What did the Lord say to him? “I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.” And here is the anchor: “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” Friends, has He spoken to you concerning your never-dying soul. That is the point. Give Him no rest until from His own infallible lip He speaks concerning that: “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” Pause on it, pray over it, meditate upon it, plead it.

Hymn 1141 was then sung.

CHAIRMAN: It is my privilege to welcome you to this Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Society, formerly the Aid and Poor Relief separate Societies, now one Society.

A resolution was put to the Meeting that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 8th, 2022 be approved. This was proposed by Mr. P.C. Tyler (Hastings), seconded by Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton) and carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then asked the Secretary, Mr. D.J. Christian, to introduce the Annual Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for the year ended December 31st, 2022, and in doing so, the Chairman recognised the great work Mr. Christian does for the Society behind the scenes, which is much appreciated.

MR. CHRISTIAN: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and friends, as we come to another Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society, the words of the hymnwriter are on our mind:

“Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away.” (H. 1139)

During 2022 several ministers passed to their eternal rest as well as gracious, long-serving deacons. We think of the ministers Mr. R.J Bradstock, Mr. H.A. Wallis and Mr. J.C. Woodhouse, and deacons, Mr. F. Hayden (Redhill), Mr. W. Wheeler (Moden Hill), whose passing has meant the closure of the chapel there, and Mr. E. Saunders (Carshalton). Since the beginning of this year two more ministers, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom (Bethel, Luton) and Mr. D.J. Field (Coppice) have been called home; also, Mr. D. Holman, deacon at Leicester. We mourn the loss of these faithful men, and our prayer is that the Lord will send more labourers into His harvest. In the case of Mr. Ramsbottom we have lost one who, under the blessing of God, did so much for our group of churches. He edited the *Gospel Standard* magazine for forty-five years and for a period also edited the *Friendly Companion*. He served on the Committee of the Gospel Standard Society and was Chairman for a number of years. He was also Chairman of the Gospel Standard Trust and wrote a number of books, notably the

series of books for children which have been circulated in many countries and translated into several different languages. We would also mention the passing of Mr. John Kingham and record our thanks for his long-standing assistance in connection with the publication of the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion* magazines, his work on the Gospel Standard Trust and the computer help he gave to many people.

There are others among our chapels who passed away during the year and we extend our sympathy to all those who have lost loved ones.

During the year the name of Mr. Mark Seymour (Staplehurst) was added to the list of ministers, and we would encourage churches to recommend ministers whose ministry is in power and in the Holy Ghost. Ministers must have been preaching for three years and they may be recommended by any church where they have preached for seven services during the past three years. It does not have to be the church where they are in membership or which sanctioned them to preach, but these churches would be consulted.

A further reminder came when preparing to send out the Annual Report booklet to subscribers in March. There were ten names that had to be removed due to members passing away. How these things should make us each consider our latter end.

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus’ blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?”

The principal aim of the Society is to assist those in need, and this includes grants to chapels to help with paying ministers. Prior to 2007 there were two separate charities, each with their own Trust Deed, The Gospel Standard Aid Society and the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Society, the main difference being the first fund related to ministers or their widows, while the second was members or attendees at Gospel Standard chapels. In 2007 the two funds were amalgamated together with the Convalescent Fund into the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society. The *Gospel Standard* magazines have a separate Trust Deed, but the Annual Accounts combine all the funds.

In 2022 the total income was £191,404 which included a legacy of £60,000 from the estate of the late Miss B. Wickens and £28,339 from the Solicitors Regulation Authority. In early 2022 we received a communication from Solicitors acting on behalf of the SRA who were investigating a firm of solicitors who had dealt with the estate of a Mr. S. George. The Society and the Bethesda Fund had received a payment over twenty-five years ago and it was thought a small amount might be due. The last correspondence had been in 2012. A claim was submitted and a payment of £141,694.23 was paid out, four-fifths belonging to the Bethesda Fund.

The total expenditure for the year was £214,280 of which £136,851 was paid out in grants and £32,915 in printing and posting the magazines. After a small unrealised loss on investments of £335 there was a deficit of £23,038. The previous year there had been a surplus of £278,118 but this was due to legacies being just over £60,000 higher and the sale of Romford Chapel for £240,620.

The rise in interest rates has helped increase the income, and it should produce a higher benefit in 2023. The accounts have not been audited as our

auditors informed us in late January that the costs would be at least two-and-a-half times higher, nearly £15,000, but then declined to do the audit suggesting we had an independent examination. This is possible within the financial parameters set by the Charity Commission, but a change in March 1992 stated that the word *audit* must only mean audit whereas previously it was a much broader definition. Our Charity Commission Scheme of 2007 only has the word *audit* so the Committee wish the subscribers to pass an amendment to allow an independent examination which will be carried out if the motion is passed.

The *Gospel Standard* magazine has continued to be edited by Mr. G. Buss who has been greatly helped through another year. The Committee are prayerfully seeking the Lord's direction in appointing a new Editor. Mr. G. TenBroeke has been helped in editing the *Friendly Companion* through another year and we are thankful that his health has improved since his illness in 2021, although he still suffers from shortness of breath. Mr. T. Scott edited *Perception* during the year, but after ten years he felt it was time to retire. We are very grateful for all the work he put in after taking over when Mr. J. Broome passed away. The Committee presented him with a special reading lamp in appreciation. We are thankful that Mr. Timothy Parish has accepted the position of Editor and his first issue was in March. We record our thanks to Mrs. Alison Kingham for her help with the magazines, and Mr. David Cooper for his work on the *Gospel Standard* wrapper. Thanks are also due to those who proofread the magazines month by month.

We mentioned the fall in the number of subscribers to the Society with the passing away of our elderly friends and we would encourage those who attend our chapels and agree with the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Society to consider becoming subscribers to the Society. The cost is only £5 per year and gives the right to vote at our Annual Meeting, and Special Meetings which may arise from time to time. Subscribers can also put forward the names of persons they believe to be in need. There has been some confusion in the past, but paying a subscription for the *Gospel Standard* magazine does not make one a subscriber to the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society. Application forms are available from the Secretary.

It is our desire that the Lord might be pleased to heal the breaches among our churches and grant a gracious increase. We think of the words of the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

We remember our churches in Australia, Canada and the United States and were pleased that the relaxation of Covid restrictions enabled visits to resume. Mr. Gilbert Hyde and Mr. John Hart visited Australia, and Mr. Jabez Rutt visited Canada and the United States to preach. In 2023 Mr. Gilbert Hyde has again visited Australia and Mr. Graham Cottingham the United States. If the Lord will, Mr. Graham Hadley and Mr. Mark Seymour hope to visit Australia. Visits to the United States have also been arranged for Mr. Timothy Parish, Mr. Graham Hadley and Mr. Jabez Rutt. Several ministers have continued to preach remotely to the churches in Australia, which is greatly appreciated.

In January we were pleased that Mr. John Hart accepted an invitation to join the Committee. Mr. Philip Pocock has decided not to seek re-election due to his

commitments on the other Committees. We do understand, but are sorry to lose him and we thank him for the time that he has served.

We were pleased that we could once again hold our Annual General Meeting at Clifton Chapel in April without the Covid restrictions that had been in place during the previous two years. A prayer meeting for the nation and the churches was held at Clifton Chapel in November and, if the Lord will, another meeting will be held there on Friday, November 24th, 2023.

The Gospel Standard Library is not part of the Society, but the Annual Report and Accounts have again been included at the end of the booklet to bring this especially useful resource to the attention of our friends and subscribers.

We thank the friends at Clifton for the use of the chapel and all those that help so willingly to make the day run smoothly.

Finally, brethren, the members of the Committee seek your prayers that the Lord will grant wisdom in conducting the business of the Society and that His blessing may rest upon our churches.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian and asked if there were any questions. There were none. He said that we have to note the Annual Report, and cannot pass it officially because the accounts have not been independently examined. This will be attended to later when everything is in order. The following resolution was put to the meeting: To pass the following resolution using the power of amendment in 8(1) of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society scheme. That the wording of 16(4) in the same scheme shall be altered from “The financial year shall end on the last day of December each year and the Receipts and Payments Account and Balance Sheet shall be made up at that date, and shall be audited by the charity’s auditors.” It will now read, if you are willing to accept the change: “The financial year shall end on the last day of December each year and the Receipts and Payments Account and Balance Sheet shall be made up at that date, and shall be audited or *independently examined* by the charity’s auditors.” The Chairman explained that the Gospel Standard Trust already have an independent examination rather than a full audit.

This was proposed by Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst) and seconded by Mr. M.J. Hyde (Pastor, Brighton), and carried *nem con*.

As such motions have to be passed at two meetings, this being the first one, notice was given of a Special General Meeting to be held at 9.30 a.m., on Friday, July 14th, 2023, if the Lord will, at Colnbrook Chapel. That date is the Gospel Standard Committee meeting, and the meeting will start with the Special Meeting to pass the resolution. Any friends are more than welcome to attend.

The Secretary announced the result of the election of two members who were retiring at this meeting and eligible for re-election, and also one new member who had been appointed. 202 voting papers were sent out, of which 111 were returned, including one spoiled paper. Both members received over 95% of the votes cast, so the retiring members of the Committee, Messrs. G.D. Buss and T.J. Parish, together with Mr. J.B. Hart, were elected to serve for a period of three years.

Mr. T.J. Parish then expressed thanks on behalf of the re-elected members of the Committee.

The Chairman said he had had contact with both our churches in North America and in Australia, and he read greetings from Mr. G.L. TenBroeke

(Pastor, Sheboygan, U.S.A.), and Mr. H.J. Flitton (Melbourne, Australia). The Chairman endorsed what Mr. Flitton had said – that the friends in Australia are exceedingly appreciative of those who have gone there to preach and who have served them remotely, and said that likewise the friends at Choteau are benefiting from this. But the Chairman added, like many of our churches, they need pastors, and we pray that the Lord will arise and give to them the blessing of under-shepherds.

The Chairman reiterated the need for more subscribers, which gives a sense of unity among us. He also hoped there would be more of the Lord’s servants added to the Gospel Standard list of ministers, and said it is not a “them and us” situation, but a desire that those who stand with us on our doctrines and who love the churches should be willing to show their love to us in that way.

The report of the Gospel Standard Baptist Library is included with the report and account of the Society.

The Chairman gave notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Trust to be held, if the Lord will, on Saturday, May 20th at 2.30 p.m. at Colnbrook Chapel, when Mr. M.J. Hyde will give an address on “The church.”

He thanked Mr. P. Hill for starting the singing, the ladies for their help with refreshments, and Mr. D.J. Lawson and his helpers for all they have done in arrangements for the day, and mentioned the collection to be taken after the evening service, for the Trinitarian Bible Society, who carry out such a vital work.

THE NEVER-FAILING CHARITY OF GOD

After hymn 1075 was sung, Mr. J.E. Rutt (Pastor, Matfield) addressed the Meeting from 1 Corinthians 13. 8: “Charity never faileth,” and spoke as follows:

It has been widely said by many a commentator that the word *charity* in the original scripture is *love*, which it is. In many places in Scripture, it has been translated as love; for instance, “God so loved the world,” and in the Greek it is the same word that we have here translated *charity*. Yet those that translated the Bible called it *charity*, and pondering on that, I wondered why. This word has rested quite heavily on my spirit: what is charity? It is giving. So what does the word *love* here mean? It is the love that God gives, and I believe that underlies the meaning of what our translators saw. Charity – love that is given by God. It is a gift, which charity is, freely given, given in love, and really that so describes our God. He is the God of love, and He is the God that gives in love.

This love really underlies the whole work of redemption, the whole history of it, the eternal history of it. Who gave it? God, in love to His dear people. God chose His church. To whom did He give it? His beloved Son, a precious Christ, and it was given to Him in love, and Christ took the church in love. He so loved it. So from the beginning to the end, we see what the word *charity* really means: the love God gave

to His church. She was lost; she was ruined; she was absolutely filthy; yet He gave her in love to His Son, and it was love that brought Jesus from heaven to earth to redeem her. The whole work of grace is the work of love and it is given simply and completely and absolutely by God. Man has nothing to do with the giving of it.

So looking at it in its broadest sense, we see the God of love who gave the church to Christ. Jesus left the glories of heaven. He came to this sin-cursed earth in love. He laid aside His glory, became flesh of our flesh, a real Man, the Son of man, yet the Son of God. But He came in love, and it was love that fulfilled the law of God. The great command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." None of us here can do that, but love has; Christ has fulfilled it completely. He has totally fulfilled it in love to God the Father for His people. The dear Lord, after fulfilling the law, weaving the glorious robe of righteousness, the robe of love, went to Calvary, and there you see love in its most glorious form, as He suffered in the place of His people. That was love given by Christ for His unworthy people. There He still loved the Lord His God with all His heart, mind, soul and strength, unyieldingly as He suffered and bled and died for His people. He is now ascended in glory and He reigns in love or charity, and He still gives love to His children. So that is a little of the background.

But then more; each of His dear people, each of the redeemed whom God gave to Christ, are brought to know something of His love personally. This marks them out as Christians. They know what it is to receive love. Some of us here have been brought to stand in all our guilt and shame and sin before God. We call it conversion, which it is. And there as a guilty, wretched sinner we stood. At the time we did not realise, beloved, that love brought us there. No man cometh unto Jesus except the Father draw him. It is love again, drawing us – where? To Christ in all our need. We have had to stand in our sin and shame, unable to do anything, lost, ruined, finished, standing in our guilt, yet love revealed the Saviour. The love of the Spirit revealed a precious Christ. O the blessed views that faith has of Christ, when we stood guilty, finished, shameful. Then what happened, beloved? Wasn't it love, His love that flowed? It flowed from heaven into our souls. The love of Christ, forgiving love, the cleansing blood, the glories of His righteousness – and I am speaking of something which comes from without into the soul – love given, the sweet experience of it. There is nothing to be compared with it. It passeth our understanding. That is charity, love, given. There is nothing like the love of Christ, nothing compared with it. We do not deserve it, did not expect it, but it was given from Christ into the soul. The wonder of it! I think a few of you

here can remember that day when love dropped from Christ into your poor heart and set you free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Well that underlies, really, what we have before us. Here we have the apostle – where was he? He was standing before, or rather writing to, addressing, a troubled church. If ever there was a church in the New Testament that was riven by trouble, it was the one at Corinth. They had known this love, some of them. If you go back to the first chapter, the way the apostle addresses them: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: grace be unto you, and peace" (1 Cor. 1. 2, 3). And so he opens with that most beautiful salutation. They were once a healthy church, but things had changed. There were schisms, divisions, taking one another to law, the Lord's supper turned into a feast. You go on a few chapters: the doctrine of the resurrection denied. O the terrible place it was in! One old commentator said, "If you did not know better, you would think this was never a Christian church."

This is so applicable for today – schisms, divisions, no unity, no binding together. Surely, beloved, this is what is lacking: the love of God. It is all that is needed, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. The apostle then stands in the midst of trials and sorrows. The dear man was so troubled and anxious. He has to stand and preach. This is where we have to stand, those who labour in the gospel. Things have not changed, but it is this one thing, "One thing is needful." It is the love that God gives. It unites; it humbles; it breaks us down, brings us to the feet of Christ. That is where we prosper and nowhere else.

So with those few remarks in mind, let us just look at a few points in the chapter of which the apostle speaks. Just look at the first two words: "Though I." The Apostle Paul was not a man who just pointed his finger at his hearers and said, "You." He said, "I." He began with himself. He started there. "I." You see that through the epistles — "We," "I." He always addressed himself. "Though *I*." That is where the preacher should ever begin. That is where every child of God should begin. "I." Where do I stand? Where do I stand in relationship with the God of love? Have I, like some in the Corinthian church, lost His love? There is no life in our souls without it. "Though I speak." What was the great thing that the apostle was called to do? Preach. It comes first. "Though I speak." He was a great preacher. He did not reckon himself to be a great preacher. I think probably that is said of most poor preachers. He said, "Though I speak." He was called to speak. Every truly-sent minister is.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men.” He is speaking of speaking in tongues, that is other languages, and he breaks into this beautiful portion. It is beautiful. I do not know about some of you here, but I find it most searching. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.” He could speak in other languages. Some commentators have tried to work out how many he spoke. He was a learned man. I leave that. But he speaks of speaking like an angel. In other words, eloquent, as preachers sometimes can be. He ordered his sermons in a beautiful way. “And have not charity.” If I stand and speak, and I have not the love of God, what am I? Nothing, absolutely nothing. If love is not in the ministry, it is nothing at all. What is it? “I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” I understand from the original it would be like a man with a few pieces of metal in his hand, jangling them about, making a noise that is totally unprofitable, and cannot be understood, and you do not know what they are saying. That is what I am like unless I have the love of God in my heart. This is something I need to possess, not just preach about, but have the sweet experience of it. Yes, beloved, I know the preacher does not always feel it, but if God sends him, He will grant that unction. We sometimes sing,

“Let the unction of redemption
Supple every conscience well.” (H. 697)

Both for the preacher and the hearer.

But charity is a gift. It is something to seek after, and only God can give it. The Apostle Paul knew what it was to be “instant in season, out of season.” This love flows, and we do not always know it. Sometimes we are utterly amazed that it ever flowed. We are earthen vessels, like cracked pots. One breaks and another one comes along and replaces it in the kitchen. It is like that in the ministry: we are poor, cracked pots. “But we have this treasure” – where? — “in earthen vessels.” That is the treasure, the love of God in Christ. If that is not preached, the sermon is worthless; it is empty; it is like a tinkling cymbal, pieces of metal being rattled about, no good at all.

So you see the vital necessary of charity, the love that God gives. He will never send a man to preach without this. It is that love that makes him willing to go, the love of Christ. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5. 14. You will see love with the apostle there. In its context the Apostle Paul is speaking of the sufferings of Christ, but he writes, “For” – for what? What helped him? “The love of Christ constraineth us.” That is why he endured tribulations, sorrows, anxieties, oppositions. There was something in his heart that was constraining him and it was the love of Christ, that love which Christ gives.

When I saw those first few words, “Though I speak,” it does not just apply to the gospel ministry. It is applicable to the conversation of the Lord’s people. “Though I speak,” with the love of Christ. That is what it ought to be. “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another.” Where was it recorded? In heaven? Why? The love of God. It must have been, for it would never have been recorded in heaven without it. If the Apostle Paul had to reprove, what must underlie it? The love of Christ, always, this constant stream that flows from heaven freely, in love. The church should pray for it, desire it. Charity – the love that God gives.

Then he goes on. “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith” – that is a great understanding of many things. There is much religion about today, but with it all, if I “have not charity” – the love that God gives – “I am nothing.” In other words, we are nothing without it, nothing at all.

Then he continues: “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor” – everything I have – “and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” Anything done, beloved, anything, without the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit is vain, empty.

Let us look at charity again. I see a gracious order here, I trust prayerfully; it is a gospel order. First, the ministry; second, knowledge; third, faith; fourth, feed the poor; fifth, self-sacrifice. “Though I give my body to be burned,” and it can be done, and has been done, but without the love of God, it is nothing. If I give up something for Christ’s sake, for His love’s sake, then it is done so willingly and so freely. But if it is just strength of character, somebody else’s opinion, without the love of Christ, it is no value at all. Everything in the church is founded on it, the love of Christ. That is the foundation of the church: Christ crucified, and without it we are nothing. This is what searches me out, and I think some of my brethren in the ministry and some of you who profess Christ. It is to do all for love’s sake, the love of Christ. If not, it is nothing, empty, vain, worthless.

So the Holy Spirit here speaks of the vital necessity of the love of God in the heart. Paul opens, “If I have not.” It is something that is without him that he needs within. It is the love of Christ, and our profession is vain, utterly empty, without it. This is something of which we cannot have too much. There is so much matter for prayer: that I might know the love of Christ, might know that love we have just sung of in that beautiful hymn:

“Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows.” (H. 1075)

It is to possess it, and it does pass knowledge, because when it is felt, you cannot explain it. The poor sinner in front of you remembers many years ago feeling it. I could not understand why such an unworthy wretch could ever feel it. I did not deserve it, and we do not. I kept asking the dear Lord, Why, why, Lord, why? One day He answered me according to Deuteronomy 7. 8: "Because I loved you." This is the foundation. It is what can be lacking, and it is what is vital. There is nothing without it, the love of Christ in the soul. May we desire it in the want of it.

And Paul continues with what it does not do. What does it not do? It "doth not behave itself unseemly." It never does that; it cannot do it. It "seeketh not her own." It never does that; it cannot. "Is not easily provoked" — it humbles. It "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It is an enduring thing, the love of Christ. It is so rich and free. It does everything. It puts everything right in the soul; it puts everything right in the church. It put everything right in the Corinthian church, if you go to 2 Corinthians 7. 8-11, and see the repentance that was poured on them. So, "charity never faileth." It does not fail to give life to the soul, liberty to the soul, power to the preaching. It is not the preacher who does it; it is God and His love, His mercy.

He goes on (verse 11). Even knowing that love, we are still like children. We still see through a glass darkly. We do not know it all. When will we? Those who have a hope for glory, when will we? It will be in heaven. He comes right to: "*And now.*" He speaks of the present. It is still the same. "And now" — today — "abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Why? Because it is eternal, everlasting. Dear child of God, we have to venture on in faith, faith in a precious Christ; in hope, the hope of glory, in hope of eternal life.

It is like this to me. If you go to the last chapter of Ephesians, where the apostle speaks of the weapons of our warfare, faith and hope (1 Thess. 5. 8) are two of them, they are principal graces; great ones, two mighty graces that help the child of God along. We walk by faith. Our hope is in God and from God. But when a child of God, a redeemed soul, comes to the end, when He comes to those golden gates of glory — how many of us will get there? These two weapons, faith and hope, will be laid aside at the gates of glory. What are they? But the golden gates are open because the love of Christ has opened them. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Psa. 24. 7-10). And what does the soul enter into? Love, free love, the love of God which "shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7. 17). That is beyond our sight. This is the end, love. The love

that began it all will finish it all, and the poor sinner will enter in, washed in the blood of Jesus and clothed in Christ's righteousness. Eternal love, charity, is the greatest, the love of God in Christ and His work in our souls that ends in everlasting glory.

"Charity never faileth."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Rutt for his timely, encouraging address. The benediction, hymn 500, was sung.

REGENERATION AND CONVERSION ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

By John Brine (1703-1765)
(Continued from page 176)

Secondly, I would now *show what regeneration, conversion and sanctification are, or wherein they consist.*

I. *Regeneration* is the infusion of a new principle of spiritual life. Naturally men are dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore in order to their acting in a holy and spiritual manner, a living, holy principle must be communicated to them. Hence the saints are said to be quickened, that is to say they are inspired with life. And this is a new life and is a spring of new actions. It is called a new heart, and a new spirit, and a heart of flesh. Grace is not our old nature made better and excited unto spiritual acts, but it is a new nature produced in our minds by the infinite power and grace of God; for which reason we are said to be new creatures. Something now exists in us which had no being in our minds before. Nothing short of this comes up to the scriptural account of this matter. No excitations, no impulses, no aids, however forcible and great they are supposed to be, reach the intention of the Holy Spirit in those phrases which He uses on this subject. Besides, our corrupt nature is not a fit subject for heavenly excitations, nor is it possible to bring it in subjection to the obedience of Christ. The carnal mind can never become subject to the law of God. A bitter fountain will as soon send forth sweet streams, which all know is impossible. Regeneration does not consist in acts, but in the production of a principle disposed to action holy and well-pleasing to God by Jesus Christ; and therefore this work is instantaneous and wrought on the mind at once.

II. By *conversion* I understand what may be called the primary actings of the regenerate principle. In conversion may be observed the following particulars:

1. The mind perceives or has *a conviction of its guiltiness and impurity*. The soul is impressed with a piercing sense of guilt, and it is directed to look into that fountain from which have sprung all its sad,

criminal actions. And it discerns therein a disposition to violate the law of God in as great a variety of ways as our reasonable nature is capable of exerting itself. This is what the apostle designs by the revival of sin upon the entrance of the law into the soul: "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Moreover, that spiritual light which is communicated in regeneration, enables a man to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. He becomes now really acquainted with the malignity of sin in its nature, as it is contrary to the holy law of God, which is a transcript of His infinitely-pure and holy nature. And from that arises an abhorrence of it as a most vile and loathsome thing.

2. *The demerit of sin is also discerned*; that the wages of it is eternal death, or the loss of divine favour and suffering a dreadful and terrible sense of anger of God, and that for ever; from which arise many bitter self-reproaches and most keen reflections on account of sin committed. And the equity of the constitution in the law, that sin shall expose to such terrible punishment, is heartily acknowledged. Thus a person's mouth is stopped, and he confesses himself to be guilty before God, or justly liable to His awful vengeance for his numerous transgressions and the plague of his heart. Hence he cries out: "What shall I do to be saved? In what way may I escape my dreadful doom and obtain life and happiness?" Rest and peace are at the greatest distance, and it is vain to hope for them in this state, says a person under this conviction.

3. The poor sinner is convinced of *the absolute impossibility of contributing in the least degree to his recovery* out of this miserable condition. Many ways are usually suggested to the mind; but as none of them are safe for a person to trust unto, by the light of divine grace the poor sinner sees the vanity of them all, and that it would be acting a most egregiously-foolish part in him, to propose placing any confidence in the flesh; that it would be building on the sand, and that therefore the fall of the superstructure must be certain in a time of temptation and trial.

4. God, in infinite goodness and compassion, *by His Holy Spirit discovers Christ* in His suitableness, ability and tenderness as a Saviour to the poor, trembling sinner. The merit of His obedience, the merit of His sacrifice, and the treasures of His grace, are presented to the view of the soul for its encouragement, support and relief in this distressed condition. And the prospect of a Redeemer, under a sense of its guilt, its nakedness, pollution and want of holiness as a meetness for heaven, prevents the mind overwhelmed with grief from sinking into despondency.

5. Hence *desires after an interest in Christ* spring up in the mind, and it resolves to look for salvation in no other way. For it is fully

convinced that security can only be had in this, and it also discerns in some measure the glory of this method of salvation. And though the poor sinner heartily acknowledges that Christ might very justly reject him and refuse to show him favour, yet he will not hearken to what carnal reason may tender for his peace under this trouble.

6. Therefore he humbly *applies to Christ as the only way of salvation* and of escaping divine vengeance. A man reasons thus with himself: "If I continue to go on in the practice of sin, certain destruction will be the consequence of it; and if I yield the best obedience I am able, that cannot justify me before God and give me right to eternal life, because it will not be such as the law requires to those ends; and therefore ruin, and that for ever, is unavoidable in that way." He argues after much the same manner as the lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria, and said, "If we sit here we shall die; if we enter into the city, the famine is in the city, we shall die there; if we fall into the hands of the Assyrians and they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we can but die." So says the broken-hearted sinner: "If I gratify my lusts, I am sure destruction will follow; and if I perform duty and depend on that, nothing but endless misery is before me. Christ is the only way of peace and safety; unto Him therefore will I apply myself. If He shows me compassion I shall live, if He refuses so to do, I can but die; and therefore I will throw myself at His feet, and, 'If I perish, I perish,'" as Esther said when she went into the presence of Ahasuerus without an order for it.

And this application unto Christ is made with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and with speed as a manslayer hastened to the city of refuge for security from the avenger of blood. Hence faith is expressed by fleeing for refuge (see Heb. 6. 18). Hereby we are preserved from entirely sinking into despondency, and in this trust we remain fully satisfied, and some hope arises in our souls that we shall meet with a kind and gracious reception from Him, whose encouraging language always expressed His heart, and who has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6. 37). A precious and gracious declaration indeed! Sufficient it is to answer all objections which are formed in the mind from the consideration of our guilt and impurity. Many thousands of poor, convinced and sorrowful souls have had reason to adore the compassion of a tender Saviour, which is so strongly expressed in those blessed words of His. And that invitation wherewith the sacred Canon is almost closed has afforded great encouragement to multitudes: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22. 17). Under the benign influences of the Spirit of God, the soul is by these sweet

declarations and invitations encouraged to apply to Christ for pardon, peace, righteousness, grace, wisdom and strength; yea, for everything necessary to its welfare and happiness.

And herein sometimes great importunity is used, with a most frank and full acknowledgement of our vileness and unworthiness. It is with us as with the Canaanitish woman, who upon a repulse from Christ, not out of unkindness to her, but to try her faith, said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." So we, in this application to a Redeemer, confess that we are so vile and so unworthy, that no name of reproach is too severe to be applied to us; but notwithstanding that we are determined to lie at the feet of Jesus and implore His help, who came into the world to save the chief of sinners. "O," says the soul, "I am justly described by that character, and therefore it is fit I should abase myself in the very dust and eternally own that shame and confusion belong to me! But O, precious truth! Christ came to save even such, and therefore it may be that I may obtain mercy and find favour with Him. However, in Him alone will I place my hope."

7. This act is a *receiving of Christ as a Saviour*. Sometimes by a reception of Christ and His benefits, we intend a man's appropriating Him and His salvation to himself, or his concluding upon it that Christ is his, and all saving blessings that flow from Him. This is faith grown up into assurance. But that is not what I here design; but a person's choice of Christ to be his Saviour, his approbation of Him in that character, not only from the consideration of the necessity of an interest in Him in order to his safety, but also from an apprehension in some measure of His fitness to deliver us from ruin through His blood, righteousness and grace. Upon this view, although we may be attended with many doubts and fears relating to our interest in Christ and His salvation, here we fix all the hope we have, and are fully resolved never to embrace any other object for our trust and confidence, let what will be the issue. Now this is a real and true reception of Christ as He is proposed to us in the gospel; or it is believing in Him and taking Him for our Saviour, if saved we shall be. And those who are assisted thus to apply to Him for salvation from sin and all its dismal effects, have no reason to doubt of the truth of their faith, nor of the love, compassion and care of a tender Redeemer, who will not cast out any that come unto Him.

8. This act *grants to God the authority of His law and the rights of His justice, and it greatly honours Christ*, though the soul, for want of skill in spiritual things, may not discern it.

i. There is in this act a hearty acknowledgment of the just authority of God in the law, as He commands perfect holiness, and condemns the creature for the want of it.

ii. That it would be equal and righteous in God to recompense the evil of sin with the evil of punishment. The poor sinner has nothing to

object to the justice of his eternal damnation, and this he freely confesses, and it is supposed in his application to Christ for salvation; for it is only on the ground of free and sovereign grace and mercy.

iii. Christ receives from us in this act that glory which is His due in the character of a Saviour from sin, both in its guilt and power. For herein we look to Him alone for remission, peace, acceptation with God, and sanctification, or for strength against every sin, and for grace to dispose and quicken us unto the practice of every duty. If we duly considered how much we glorify God in this act, and honour the blessed Jesus, we should not be so disconsolate and mourn, as sometimes we do through temptations, jealousies, fears and questionings about our safety; but we should rather rejoice in that in some degree we glorify God and do honour to a dear Redeemer; and with some measure of cheerfulness we should proceed to a renewal of such solemn and humble acts of application to Christ, our precious and only Saviour. It is a certain truth that Christ is precious to those who believe, and it is equally true that those to whom He is precious really do believe in Him.

Other acts also flow from this principle, namely repentance, which is sorrow for sin and abhorrence of it as sin, with an earnest desire to forsake it and to be completely delivered from it. There is also an approbation of the law as holy, just and good, and fear and reverence of God. These I call the primary actings of grace which immediately follow upon regeneration and are true conversion, or a turning from sin, self and Satan unto God, which we have seen is necessary to future blessedness. They are included in that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

(To be concluded)

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 191)

Fifthly, when thou didst attain unto joy and peace in believing, though Christ was the peace-maker, yet who was the peace-bringer? It was the Holy Ghost: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15. 13). All that "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1. 8), that "peace ... which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4. 7), whereby we "glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5. 3), and are "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8. 37), to whom is it to be ascribed? Whose operation is it? The Holy Ghost's.

It is particularly appropriated to Him; and therefore it is styled, "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14. 17). "The kingdom of God is not meat and

drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14. 17; see also 1 Thess. 1. 6). And the consolations we have are called “The comfort of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 9. 31), as being the Author and Diffuser of them into our hearts, etc. In which sense our praying is in like manner said to be in the Holy Ghost (see Jude 20), as the Indicter of our prayers (see Rom. 8). And it is also thus termed joy in the Holy Ghost, by way of eminency, in difference from all other joys which have ever entered into the heart of man; and in comparison with which all other joys are but as the crackling of thorns, the fuel they are fed with being earthly. It is a joy “not as the world giveth” (saith Christ, speaking of His peace). And it therefore hath the peculiar character of glorious joy, as being joy of another kind, and also unspeakable for degrees and abundance; more joy than the time when their corn and wine, increasing never so much, afforded (see Psa. 4. 7). And though Christ bequeatheth that peace and joy as His last legacy, He being the Purchaser of it by His death, yet it is the Holy Ghost that is His Administrator and Executor of it, to perform it, and execute His will. He it is that maketh known to us that love which hath lain hid in the heart of God the Father towards a particular soul, in choosing him at first, and then giving him to Christ, and giving His Son to die for him. It is He who displays that love which is laid out in infinite wisdom, contriving and ordering all about every man’s particular salvation who is saved. It is He likewise that takes of Christ’s, and shows and brings home His love in giving Himself for every such soul, and causeth it to “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;” which He did vouchsafe to our apostle; “Who loved me,” says he, “and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2. 20). In Romans 5. 5, you have it thus expressed: “Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” And so He sheds it abroad (as the word here is) into every chink and cranny of the soul, thirsting after this love, and brings it as fresh as the mother’s milk comes into the child’s mouth or stomach; and His love so shed into us by the Holy Spirit, is digested or turned into love in us, and returned on our parts towards God and Christ again.

Sixthly, if we consider all the fellowship and communion we have with the Persons of the Father and the Son, we shall find that this Holy Spirit is the Introducer of us into it, and the Manager and Transacter of it in us, and for them with us. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son” (1 John 1. 3). By means of which it is that our joy mentioned is a full joy (see verse 4). And all this fellowship is through the help and manifestations of the Holy Ghost: “If any comfort in love” – which is peculiarly attributed to the Father – “if any fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2. 1), who communicates both these. This place seems to speak, in the matter of it, somewhat parallel to that of the same apostle: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the

communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13. 14). Now it is the love of the Father which ordained Christ and salvation for us; it is the grace of Christ which works our salvation by redemption, as you read how grace is in that sense and respect attributed unto Christ (see 2 Cor. 8. 9). But yet it is the Holy Ghost imparts and conveys all things that the Father or Son hath. He takes them and reveals them to us, and so glorifies them both unto us: “He shall glorify Me,” said Christ, “for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16. 14, 15).

Seventhly, all the evidence and witnessing of all or any grace wrought in us (though not accompanied with joy unspeakable and full of glory), as a love in us to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, they are all of His working, and from Him. Do our own consciences witness to any eminent holy disposition that is written in our hearts, such as the apostle professeth he found in his own heart, even to a willingness to be accursed from Christ, for the glory of God, and the salvation of his own country-men the Jews? The evidence of this to his conscience was from the Holy Ghost, without whose testimony joined to that of his conscience, his conscience would not have witnessed it. Natural conscience witnesseth the things of the law naturally in man (see Rom. 2), yet gracious dispositions it cannot. In 1 John 5. 7, 8 you read of six Witnesses, “three in heaven,” and “three on earth,” who are Witnesses of two things:

1. Christ to be the Son of God;
2. To believers’ hearts of their own salvation.

Now you find there in these seventh and eighth verses, that the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, is mentioned in either catalogue; first, among the Witnesses in heaven, “The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,” and yet again this Spirit, that is a Witness in heaven, is yet numbered with those that bear record on earth, too. “The Spirit, the water, and the blood” (verse 8), and He, the first, and as the principal of these on earth, is set before water and blood. “It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” It is He therefore that bears the name of Witness, as being the “Spirit of truth,” as Christ also calls Him. And thus He is the great Witness, both of heaven and of earth, to this of our being the sons of God.

Eighthly, as thus in respect of evidencing our graces to us, and His joining with God the Father and Christ in their testimonies also to us, the Spirit doth the work so as to lead us into all truths of the Word and secrets of God whatever, which in this life are revealed; it is He whom God sends to discover and convince us of them all: He “searcheth all ... the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2. 10). He is the Keeper of all those archives of eternity, and they are all committed to His custody, and He

lets us into the view of them, and reveals what is revealed of them unto us “as He will.” There is not a thing that God hath prepared for us that love Him (see verse 9) – which is spoken of the hidden things of the gospel (verse 7) – but He is the Manifester of it to one or other of the saints; it is He leads into all truth: “Hold fast the form of sound words ... which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1. 13, 14). But, alas might they say of ourselves, we are apt to let them slip and leak out (as Heb. 2. 1), and to be “carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4. 14). This we are prone to be, therefore He adds, “That good thing” – so He calls the truth of the doctrine of wholesome words – to “keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Tim. 1. 14), who also brings them home to our remembrance when we have forgotten them (see John 14. 26). And as these matters, in point of faith, and assurance, and joy, and all communion with God the Father and the Son, are transacted by this Spirit, together with the revelation of all truths, so,

Ninthly, if we view all and the whole of the work and works of sanctification that are wrought in us, or proceed from us, it will appear that it is He that works them all in us and for us. This is the third part of the application of salvation to us; according to that distribution which Christ makes, and which He attributes to the Spirit, “When He is come, He will reprove the world ... of judgment” (see John 16. 8, 11), that is, of true holiness, sanctification and reformation of heart and life; as in the Old Testament frequently, and in the New, that word judgment is used, as Matthew 12. 20. That Christ shall “send forth judgment unto victory,” citing verse 18 out of the Old, viz., out of Isaiah 42. 1, “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” And in respect of His working herein, He hath this denomination made appropriate to Him, viz., “a Spirit of judgment,” purging away the filth of sin in His people (see Isa. 4. 4). And holiness is called “the sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1. 2, and 2 Thess. 2. 13). And for this cause He bears the name of the Holy Spirit, as the eminent efficient of holiness in us.

And accordingly as men have grown up into, and increased more and more in holiness, they have been said to be “filled with the Holy Ghost,” as it is said of Elisabeth the mother (Luke 1. 41), and her child John the Baptist; and His eminent holiness is expressed by this: “He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1. 15). And the same strain of speech goes on in the New Testament: Choose men “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6. 3). Of Barnabas it was said, “A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 11. 24); and the super-excelling fulness and eminency of Christ’s graces is set out by this measure, that He had “the Spirit above measure” for this Spirit’s indwelling in Him was the fountain and standard of His infinitely-transcending holiness.

Abridged

(To be continued)

THE LORD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY SHOWN TO ONE OF HIS SHEEP

The spiritual experience of Arthur Thomas Hawkins (1886-1940), as recorded in letters written in 1924 to his future wife, while he was in Ohio, U.S.A., in connection with his work. He had previously been married to Georgina Gould, who died after ten years of marriage, following which he married Ruth Bond (nee Frost) who had lost her husband, James Bond, who was killed in action three weeks before the end of the war.

I cannot, as some can, point to a particular spot, or a particular word that cuts one down. As far back as I can remember, between two and three years old, and when I had no knowledge of good or evil, as I look back, I can see I brought forth the fruits of sin. I need no one to prove to me the doctrines of original sin, for I was proof of it myself. When older, I became mixed up with companions of my own age who had not been taught as I had been by my dear parents, the difference between good and evil, and I became partaker of their evil ways, cursing, lying, stealing, etc. I was in haste to do evil. I remember on one occasion an ungodly man stopping me in the street and reproving me for words which I had spoken, which made me think a little.

I had a dream when quite little; I was in a large field full of lovely flowers and butterflies, and there was a very narrow, winding path through it. Someone came to me and told me I was to walk through the field, but that I must keep to the path as it was dangerous to go off it. As I started off, my mind was soon attracted by the beautiful butterflies etc., and off I went after them, but as often as I strayed from the path someone came and lifted me up and carried me back to the path, but it seemed that I was more often off it than on. It made an impression on my mind, and I have never forgotten it, and it has proved to be true, too, for how often am I ensnared by the vanities of this life and get into by-paths, bringing myself into trouble and sorrow, but it is a mercy that someone comes and brings me out of these places. I think sometimes that no-one has wandered away so much as I have, and were I in the hands of men, I should have been abandoned long ago. O, what a great mercy it is that God is unchangeable and that, "Whom once He loves he never leaves, but loves them to the end," in spite of all their wanderings and sin. I think sometimes if ever I get to heaven, I will have cause to sing the loudest.

I remember when I was about eight or nine years old, my mother was taken suddenly very ill. I could see by the anxiety on my father's face that it was serious, and I began to tremble, for I thought she was going to die as they carried her upstairs. Then I thought what I had been told about Jesus healing people of their diseases, so I ran upstairs to my

little bedroom, and with a heart full of grief and eyes full of tears, I asked Him in my childish way to come and heal my dear mother, and He heard my prayer, for she very soon recovered.

When I was about twelve or thirteen years old and out as usual with my companions, this thought suddenly struck me: "You will go to hell if you go on like this," and I knew I should, because I believed what my parents told me. That made me think a bit more, and I tried for a time to mend my ways, but I found then, even as I do now, that my own heart and the devil are too strong for me. So I soon returned to my old ways, yet I was not comfortable in them and I felt at times a wish that I could be a better boy, and sometimes at family prayer my father would ask that the Lord would put His fear in the heart of my sister and myself. I have said to myself, "O, I wish He would," but in spite of this my life was not altered, and so I went on for some time, until I think I was about fourteen. I was riding my bicycle past the village church where we lived (Hurst, Berkshire) and it seemed as if someone spoke to me: "You will go to hell now; there is no escape." It made me tremble, for I felt it was true, and I felt and knew how helpless I was. About this time my sister had gone in to Reading to a boarding school and in one of her letters home she mentioned something about prayer. I cannot remember exactly what it was, but when I read it, I wept bitterly, and I thought of that passage where it says, "One shall be taken, and the other left," and felt that I had been left.

I had no deep convictions of sins, but just a numbed helplessness and I wished many times I had never been born, and often envied the beasts.

After a time, I went into Reading to work, and sometimes used to go to the prayer meetings. I could not tell why I went, for I was utterly miserable. I used to think sometimes if I could only feel as I had read of others, my sins such an intolerable weight, there might be some hope for me. I remember one prayer meeting Mr. W. Lee (a minister over eighty years old), when praying for the young asked the Lord to plough up their hearts with the ploughshares of conviction; how I wished that prayer would be answered in my case. About this time my father (Shadrach Hawkins, 1857-1943) had started to preach and on one occasion I went with him to a little chapel at Swallowfield, near Reading, and that hymn was given out, the last verse of which reads:

"Dear Lord, may I a mourner be,
Over my sins and after Thee," (H. 263)

and he spoke a little about that verse and I believe if I ever prayed that prayer, I did then.

Well, I went on like this until about the year 1901, when standing at my lathe in the factory where I was employed, these words dropped with power on my heart one Wednesday morning:

“Do not think thou canst be lost,
 Thou art graven on My heart;
 All thy wastes I will repair;
 Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
 And in thee it shall appear
 What the God of love can do.” (H. 273)

The only way I can describe my feelings is that it was like being brought into the beautiful sunshine after having been in a dark cave for years. O, I did dance for joy in my heart and I sang too as I worked; I could not help it. I was amazed, I could hardly believe it, but they kept coming over and over again. I did not know where the words were and did not remember having seen or heard them anywhere. I went to the prayer meeting that night with very different feelings from what I had before. I was looking through the hymnbook to see if I could find the words that had come to me, and when looking in the index the words, “Pensive, doubting” seemed to strike me, and upon turning to the hymn, I found the words I had been looking for. From that time I seemed to see everything in a new light; the Bible and hymnbooks were different, the preaching and prayers seemed different. It was as if I could understand things now that I had not before, but I was soon to have an answer to that prayer,

“Dear Lord, may I a mourner be
 Over my sins and after Thee,” (H. 263)

for in a short time my sins began to rise as they never had before and I was driven nearly to my wits' end, the vows I made that I would not do this and that only to be broken time after time. There was not that looking for hell, but an intense grief that I should so sin against Him that my soul loved. I was being taught by bitter experience my utter helplessness; I always want to be doing something and do even now. Ah, it is a hard lesson to learn, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” I continued to struggle with all my might against sin, but proved that,

“The more I strove against its power,
 I sinned and stumbled but the more.” (H. 144)

The bondage and guilt it brought one into, until I thought I must give it all up as it was all a delusion. If I had started right I would not have had all this to contend with, but my sins would have been subdued, I thought. This went on for a considerable time, until the Lord was pleased to show me my utter helplessness in anything that is good, and His all-sufficiency.

I remember somewhere about this time I went to see a friend who had a situation as engineer on a gentleman's estate. I thought if I could have a job like his, away from the factory where I was then apprenticed, I should have more time to think about the things of God, and that the

world would not take up so much of my thoughts. I asked the Lord that He would be pleased to give me a situation like that. Well, He heard and answered in giving me my friend's place, and in making the way clear for me to go, as I had not finished my term of apprenticeship, yet no objection was raised to my leaving. Now, I thought, I shall be better. Ah, how foolish and ignorant was I; I found instead, that I was ten times worse! I think, while memory lasts, I shall never forget the few years I was at the Honeys, Waltham St. Lawrence; truly I learnt that I was as a beast before Him and that my heart was a cage of unclean birds, yet I was not without some shinings through the clouds.

About this time I felt a drawing towards Georgie [Georgina] Gould, which was much against my inclinations, and I tried as much as possible to put her out of my mind, but I found I could not; and I prayed that I might not have my affections set on her, but it was no use; they became stronger and I believe I was led to realise that this was the Lord's doing, and that I should not kick against it. (The way I had to walk in respect to this is so entwined with my religion that it cannot be separated.)

At this time there was no affection on her part towards me, although we used to correspond a little. One thing I was much exercised about was that I wanted to know if she was one of the Lord's dear people. I hoped it was so, but I wanted to know definitely, and I thought if the Lord would assure me of that, then I should know it was His will for us to come together. I well remember the spot where that prayer was answered. This word was spoken so powerfully to my heart: "She shall be Mine ... in that day when I make up My jewels." Well, that was just what I wanted, and it set my mind at rest, so having got that far, I thought I (big *I* again) must win her over to me, and I did try; it caused me many errands to the throne of grace because I had no success; in fact it was a real trial to me.

I remember on one occasion when trying to pray about it, and beginning to feel that I was deceived in what I had had in relation to her and as a consequence my religion must be wrong, as if one was wrong the other must be; and feeling my inability to pray and the uselessness of it, those words darted into my mind, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." I put them from me immediately, as I knew I was not righteous; I was too great a sinner. At once such a light shone into my heart and I saw plainly that I could only be righteous through Christ's righteousness. He came right into my heart and told me that He had swept all my sins away, had washed me in His blood and clothed me in His righteousness, and that I was clean in His sight. I looked round for my sins, but I could not find one; I kept saying "I'm clean, I'm clean," but could hardly believe it for joy. I believe I had real communion with the Lord Jesus that afternoon; there is even a sweetness now as I think of it, but words can never express what it was then.

I still tried hard to win my dear one's affections, and although I was sure it would come about one day, I was much tried about it. I remember walking along a country road feeling very cast down. I had lost the sweetness of the dear Lord's presence, and I sat down on a bank with my head in my hands mourning over these things, when the last two verses of hymn number 297 were brought with power to my heart, and truly that seventh verse has been fulfilled and I believe the last has in a measure and will be to the full one day.

Well, I went in the strength of that for some time, but a while after was to come a time of deeper trial. Perhaps it may not seem so to you, but it was to me. I had kept up a correspondence with Georgie, but that was as far as it went, until one day I saw her walking out with a young man who came to chapel, and the same evening I received a letter from her saying she thought our correspondence should cease as she had no affection for me. The devil was not behind in giving me some more: "Where's the God now that's going to do such wonderful things for you? Where are all the promises you think you've had? Where's your religion?" and so on. Truly, I could not find any religion or anything but sin; all through that night I paced up and down the room with the devil at my side. I was in despair, not a gleam of hope. I have heard some say they do not think one can get into a place where they lose all hope. Well, I do not know; I could not see any in this place. The only thing I could see was the devil dragging me as I thought down to the pit. As I look back now, I think it is the blackest spot I have been into; I came near to one like it several years ago, but I did not quite lose all hope. How I got to work the next morning I do not know. I know Satan went with me, and when I got there, I could do nothing but pace up and down the engine room, but the time was soon to come when the devil was to flee, and I was to prove once again the almighty power of God.

Well, after a time my thoughts seemed to turn, and my mind was drawn to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, and I pictured them walking perhaps in despair, for all they had hoped for had apparently come to nought. I reckon they had not any hope left, for they said they had "trusted that it had been He," etc., and, yes, "Beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done." As I thought on these things, a little light seemed imparted and a little hope sprang up, as I thought, they were sad because God did not bring things about as they expected, and it seemed I was just the same. As I pondered on these things, the darkness gradually faded away, and I saw that what was impossible with men was possible with God.

No word was spoken to me, but the peace of God which passeth all understanding, yes, and cannot be described, flowed into my poor, broken heart. O what a calm after the storm, and how I saw then that,

“’Tis He who appoints me my pathway,” and I was enabled to leave Georgie and everything else in His hands, feeling sure that “He knows just what is needful and best,” and that He would bring all to pass in His own time and way. I never after that had one moment’s fear that we should not become man and wife, but at the same time I never afterwards raised a finger to bring it about, but the Lord brought it about a year afterwards in His own way.

In September 1913, Georgie and I were married by Mr. W.E. Fuller, at Zoar, Reading, and came to Clapham to live. Things went along now fairly smoothly; and I began to get into a cold, carnal state. I was taken up with the things of this life, and sin abounded. I think upon that time with shame. Then the Great War came and the seriousness of it and the terrorising air raids we used to have made me think, and brought me to my knees in all my guilt and shame. O, the remorse I felt that I should so sin against a God who had been so good and gracious to me, but He was pleased to put away my sin and to give me once more a little communion with Himself. I was fearful lest I should be brought into some great trouble as a punishment for my sins, for I knew I richly deserved it; I deserved hell, but I am still out of it.

(To be continued)

THE JERUSALEM SINNER’S CONFESSION

I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
 Or to defend His cause,
 Maintain the honour of His word,
 The glory of His cross.

Jesus, my God, I know His name,
 His name is all my trust;
 Nor will He put my soul to shame,
 Nor let my hope be lost.

Firm as His throne His promise stands,
 And He can well secure
 What I’ve committed to His hands,
 Till the decisive hour.

Then will He own my worthless name
 Before His Father’s face,
 And in the new Jerusalem
 Appoint my soul a place.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

**THE VITAL PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE
BELIEVER'S HEART**

“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psa. 51. 11).

In three successive verses the psalmist David pleads for the influence and power of the Holy Spirit in his soul: a right spirit, the Holy Spirit, Thy free Spirit. In solemn repentance and remembrance of his backslidings, he is greatly concerned lest the Holy Spirit should leave him and never return.

Those who believe that faith is at our fingertips might say, “David, you should not pray like that. To whom once the Lord grants His Holy Spirit, He never takes that precious gift from them.” But God’s children are not fatalists. They know that their God will be enquired of to do these things. “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek. 36. 37). The Lord Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11. 13).

But David also knew that if the Lord were to deal with him as he deserved, according to his sins and backslidings, that the Holy Spirit would withdraw never to return. So it is on the ground of mercy that he earnestly pleads that this essential gift be maintained in his soul. He knew that the Holy Spirit was grieved at his backslidings. Paul says, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4. 30). Backsliding souls are taught to mourn over those sins which have caused the dear Spirit feelingly to withdraw for a season.

“Return, O Holy Dove! return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.” (H. 958)

David also from time to time experienced periods of great darkness in his soul when the comforts of the Holy Ghost were not in living exercise. No living child of God can be long at ease when that is so. When David wrote those prophetic words in Psalm 22 concerning the

sufferings of Christ, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”, these words were wrung out from the very depths of his soul when he himself was in some measure participating in anticipation in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. What a comfort it is to desolate and feelingly-deserted souls that the Redeemer trod this dark path as He suffered the Just for the unjust on Calvary’s cross.

How precious are those times when the Lord returns to His children in the spirit of Isaiah 57. 18: “I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.” When we hear the Comforter say, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake” (1 John 2. 12), then we are in the path of David in another Psalm. “He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psa. 23. 3).

A TOKEN FOR GOOD DESIRED

*Notes of a sermon preached by Herbert Dawson, at Union Chapel,
Bethersden, on September 9th, 1956*

Text: “Shew me a token for good” (Psa. 86. 17).

This is a word which welled up from the psalmist’s heart long ago, and it is a word which shows that he was exercised unto godliness, desiring to get some good for his never-dying soul, and it is a mercy if you and I know something of such a concern.

The word *me* in the text is important, for everything hinges upon you and me obtaining a token in our own soul’s experience. “Shew *me* a token for good.” The people of God around us may be granted tokens for good, but that will not satisfy *our* soul, or build us up in our hope in God. I would like to feel that many of you gathered before God at this time can echo the psalmist’s petition: “Shew me a token for good.” Show *me*, who feels to be such a failure as a Christian; who am so often wayward, so rebellious, so prone to wander, and who has solemnly to confess: “The good that I would do I do not” – show *me* a token to assure *me* the root of the matter is found within.

I said the psalmist was exercised unto godliness, and that exercise is evidenced in how he says: “*Shew me.*” The psalmist says in another Psalm: “Open Thou mine eyes” – margin reading: “reveal to mine eyes” – “that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” The things of God can only be known by *revelation*. “God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit,” says Paul to the Corinthians. Can you say so? Can I?

As the Lord shall enable me I will say a little about the tokens for good that sinners taught of God desire.

A token *for good* means one that is of God, one which has heaven's hallmark upon it, and a "Thus saith the Lord" to give it authority. Also, a token for good will be effectual for time and eternity too, for it is eternal in its nature. "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him," says Jesus, it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Every token for good shown to us causes a springing up in our soul's feelings – a springing up of faith, and hope, and love, and confirms us that God has indeed begun His good work within us.

Some of you may say, "I hope I have been shown some small token, but I do desire a big token." Yes, it is good that you should desire such a token, but I want to emphasise that, rightly understood, there can be no *small* tokens, inasmuch as every token shown to a poor sinner born again, is the outcome of what was done for him on Calvary's cross, and the Holy Spirit bestows it through that sinner being washed in the precious blood of Christ. What you describe as a small token is an unspeakable mercy, and priceless in its value. Who can estimate the worth of a cry for mercy wrought in one's heart by the Holy Spirit, for it is the token of being ordained to life eternal. Job says, "Thou hast granted me life"; no small token, yet often only manifested by a cry, a sigh, a groan, or a desire.

I would look at some tokens recorded in the Word of God which were outstanding, to encourage some of God's people in times of trouble.

What a token David obtained to encourage him in his warfare against the Philistines, as we read in 2 Samuel 5. 23, 24: "And when David inquired of the LORD, He said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall *the LORD go out before thee*, to smite the host of the Philistines." David obeyed and the token was given, and the Lord granted him a victory over his enemies. What was the "sound of a going"? It was not the wind blowing among the trees. No, we must remember that Satan may use the wind for his hellish purposes, and he did when he sought to undo godly Job long ago. This was not wind, but a convoy of the angelic host at God's command to assist David at this time, unseen by him, or his warriors, and so it is recorded *the Lord* defeated the Philistines.

Did Rahab ever forget the token she was given when the spies whom she sheltered in her home in Joshua's day, said, "Bind this line of scarlet thread in the window," and ultimately it brought safety to her and her house when Jericho was destroyed?

Gideon also had a token, a two-fold token regarding the work God had ordained for him to do in delivering Israel from their enemies in his day. You will remember how God gave him his request concerning the

fleece being wet, and the ground dry, and then again the fleece was dry, and the ground was wet, and thus his hands were strengthened in his work. I have thought sometimes upon this matter in regard to my attempts to preach. Sometimes I have felt specially favoured and happy in my labours, and afterwards I have thought I should surely hear something whereby some hearers had got some help, but I have heard nothing. It seemed the fleece was wet in the pulpit, but the ground was dry in the pews. Then again, I have laboured in preaching, and have felt so ashamed of my poor attempts to proclaim the gospel, that it seemed almost impossible the hearers could get any good, and then, to my amazement, I have had testimonies from one and another how the ground was evidently wet, although to my feelings the fleece in the pulpit was dry – such are the dealings of God. “*I will work and who shall let it?*”

Another aspect of the fleece being wet and the ground dry, is when you as a hearer hear those around you telling of blessing obtained in hearing the gospel, and you, having heard it also, remain in a barren, dry state in your soul. This is a painful experience known by the people of God, and sometimes Satan uses it to cast them down, yet the sense of disappointment felt in your soul being unprofited, as you feel, is one token for good. It is the *living* who will lay these things to heart; and it is not what you are by nature that keenly feels your dried-up state and miss of a blessing when others were blessed. No, it is what you are by grace that feels like that. The dead know not anything of such feelings, for such sorrow of heart is known only by the living.

Sinners taught of God desire various tokens for good – life tokens, grace tokens, love tokens – I would summarise some of these.

To be found under the gospel desiring to hear it *for yourself* and know the joyful sound thereof in your own soul is a token for good. “Blessed are your ears, for they hear.” And when you hear God’s servants telling out what you have known and felt in your own soul’s exercises, this is a confirming token to encourage you still to follow on to know the Lord.

To be going up to the house of prayer with *willing feet* is a token too, as this enables us to say with the psalmist, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” And it is good to be able to say:

“We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honour dwells;
The joy of Thine abode,
All earthly joy excels.”

Arising out of this exercise of mind there is another token such as when through affliction, or duties pressing, or necessities, you cannot be found in your usual place in the house of prayer and *this* brings into your soul

a sense of loss and disappointment. Then you can join with our hymn-writer:

“O Zion, when I think on thee,
I long for pinions like the dove;
And mourn to think that I should be
So distant from the place I love.” (H. 1021)

“Blessed are they which do *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

When it can be said of a poor sinner, “Behold, he prayeth” – what a token for good this is; and also that sure sign of being born again: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Yes, “He that loveth is born of God.” A confirming token is when one is given answers to prayer. Hannah said long ago: “For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him.” What a token for good was Samuel (meaning “asked of God”) in her eyes. Yes, and some among us would humbly declare,

“That Christ is God I can avouch,
And for His people cares,
Since I have prayed to Him as such,
And He has heard my prayers.” (H. 31)

“Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me,” said the psalmist, and when you can say so too it is a sure token for good.

Sometimes a poor sinner is concerned to get a special token, but such tokens are only given in special circumstances – remember that! As a rule God is pleased to bestow tokens for good in the means of grace. “In all places where I record My name” – *there* – “I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” Sometimes in His sovereignty God grants an unusual token, but it is usually the outcome of an unusual exercise of mind.

I knew a godly minister many years ago who, when he was passing through solemn convictions of sin as a young man, was greatly distressed for want of a token for good. One dull, rainy day he was passing over a river bridge in a large town, lamenting his sad state, when he said to himself, “There seems no more evidence in my soul of hope in God than there is of the sun shining at such a time as this.” As he said this, the clouds parted, and a shaft of sunlight shone down upon him for a few moments, and then the sun was hidden again. He stood amazed at this special token granted to him, and joyfully said, “There is hope in God for me,” and he ran on his way, so that the passers-by must have thought he was mad. No, he was being made wise unto salvation. This minister died in the Lord some years ago.

Think also of William Hunter, the boy martyr of Brentwood, who experienced a like token when at the stake. It was a very dull day, and as the pile was lighted, he cried out: "Sun of Righteousness, shine on me," and to the amazement of the spectators, the sun broke through the clouds, and shone down on the young martyr. Who could question but what also the glorious Sun of Righteousness shone into his soul, enabling him to rejoice in hope of life eternal.

Sometimes in a particular exercise of mind God will grant a token for good that He is working out some special plan in one's life. Joseph must have regarded the dreams given him by God as tokens concerning his future life, and so they wonderfully worked out in God's own time.

When I was engaged in the printing trade, and lived in Croydon, I was one day walking in a street when I met a grey-headed member of the church I belonged to then. I was recovering from an illness, and after enquiring how I was, this good man said to me, "I want you to answer a question. Are you concerned about the work of the ministry? I feel sure you are." This was a surprising question, as I was concerned about such a work at times, and I told him a little of what my thoughts were about it. Ere our talk ended, he said to me, "I would remind you about Joseph, who had to wait long for his dreams to be fulfilled, and that the psalmist says, 'Until the time that his word came: the Word of the LORD tried him'; and it will try you." I went on my way, after meeting this friend, and I found a desire in my heart that, if he had been led by God to speak to me as he did, our Pastor might be directed to preach from those words at the week evening service on that same day. To my encouragement those were the words he announced as his subject, and I felt it was indeed a token for good that I should one day labour upon Zion's walls.

Sometimes poor sinners are much cast down for the want of another token for good, especially as all their past tokens seem hidden, and they say, "We cannot see our signs." It is good to remember then how Elijah long ago sent his servant up to the top of Mount Carmel to look toward the sea to observe if there was a token to indicate God's favour was about to be manifested to guilty Israel. The servant obeyed Elijah, and returned and said: "There is *nothing*." Elijah said, "Go again," and he said it altogether seven times. The seventh time the servant returned, and said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." This was the token Elijah desired, and it told him that God was about to send an abundance of rain after a long drought of three-and-a-half years.

This incident is recorded to encourage poor sinners to wait upon God amid all discouragements concerning their soul's welfare, and to assure them that, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Think on Jonah's case: "I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

"See a poor sinner, dearest Lord,
Whose soul, encouraged by Thy Word,
At mercy's footstool would remain,
And there would look, and look again." (H. 1056)

There is a good word in Joel to inspire one with hope in God concerning our past experience, when all seems to be in obscurity, and in darkness: "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you." Yes –

"All thy wastes I will repair;
Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
And in thee it shall appear
What the God of love can do." (H. 273)

Many other tokens for good might be named such as when one obtains help in times of trouble, and it is evident God is for us to deliver us; and especially when sanctifying grace is given. To be able to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in all His dealings with us is what one can only do as a grace token is given; and to be able to acquiesce in all the Lord does, and say, "It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Sweetly to feel that Jesus Christ is precious in our soul's esteem, and solemnly to avow:

"To *me* *Christ* is more precious far
Than life, and all its comforts are" – (H. 174)

is a token highly to prize, and numbers one among the people of God.

And Solomon describes one token given to all taught of God: "Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart." Yes:

"Each heart, once hard as steel,
Now made for sin to feel,
Bears tokens of a ransomed soul." (H. 371)

Although God has granted us a number of tokens for good, and a good hope through grace arising therefrom, our plea will still be, "Shew me a token for good," and the psalmist's petition will not grow rusty for want of being used. No, poor sinners need again and again to be confirmed in their souls that "it is well"; and the word in Hosea is very salutary: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." Our soul's salvation is a matter of such unspeakable importance that every day we would be exercised unto godliness, like the psalmist was, and be begging: "Shew me a token for good," that we may be assured, again and

again, that we are what we desire to be: “pilgrims to Canaan bound,” and our religion is that of which God is the Author.

The Lord bless you and me with sure tokens for good, yea, tokens from God. Amen.

A CRY FOR THE POOR AND THE NEEDY

*Extract from a sermon preached by Neil Cameron (1854-1932)
of Glasgow*

Text: “Why hast Thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it” (Psa. 80. 12, 13).

Since the days of Abel the church has been poor and afflicted. This world has been from that time hating “the poor in spirit,” and treating them sometimes with derision, at other times with cruelty. Whenever the church took sides with the world, the Lord hid His face from her and immediately troubles followed. At such times the unconverted flowed into her communion and trampled upon her most precious jewels and left nothing but ruins within her walls. The true church deploras this in many parts of Scripture, and very particularly in this Psalm. We find here the voice of the living in Zion raised to the ear of the Shepherd of Israel in their extremity: that He would incline His ear to their cry, that He would shine forth from off the mercy seat, and that He would stir up His strength to deliver them from their backsliding and breach of covenant, as well as from men who, like wild beasts, destroyed all that was dear to them.

THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF THE HIDDEN WORD

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psa. 119. 11).

What an aggregate of guilt and misery is comprehended in this short word, “sin” – the greatest curse that ever entered the universe of God, and the parent of every other curse! Its guilt is aggravated beyond the conception of thought. Injury to a Superior – a Father – a Sovereign! It seems impossible to rise in our conception, so as to give an adequate idea of its infinite malignity. Its power is misery, wherever it extends in the heart – in the family – in the world. In eternity its power is unrestrained.

Sometimes the death bed scene casts a fearful gleam of light upon the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched (see Mark 9. 44). But what besides experience can develop its full-grown horrors? How supremely important, therefore, to secure the object of our preservation from sin! And how wisely adapted are the means to the end! That *word* – which the man of God had just before mentioned as the guide to the cleansing of his way (see verse 9) – he hides within his heart, that it may be ready at hand for every moment of watchful conflict and resistance of sin.

It is not therefore the mere acquaintance with *the word*, that will prove an effectual safeguard from sin. There are many cases, indeed, where Satan shuts out its entrance, or catcheth away that which was sown. But even when it finds a passage, its impression is too often transient, and utterly uninfluential for permanent benefit. In many cases also is it choked by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, and it becometh unfruitful. But whenever it falls on good ground, the honest and good heart *hides it*, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience, unto perfection (see Luke 8. 15, with the whole parable). Here it dwells richly in all wisdom, as a treasury to be resorted to, when need and occasion require, as a principle of holiness, a covering from sin. In this view it is recommended by one who had well studied its uses, and acquainted himself with its value: “My son, let not them” – the divine precepts – “depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble” (Prov. 3. 21-23).

David also gives us the same experience of the power of this safeguard: “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa. 17. 4). And it was probably the recollection of many instances of preservation, united with a sense of continual danger, that suggested the prayer, “Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (verse 133).

This *hiding of the word in the heart* is a blessed means of walking with God in the hurry, business and temptation of the day. The Saviour’s love, as manifested in *the word* – what power does it realise to beat off the incursion of the tempter! What a restraint from wandering thoughts – what a keeping of the heart in communion with God – is the presentment from *the word* of some motive to Christian simplicity – some matter for ejaculatory prayer! So also in a moment of more direct temptation – whether from the insinuating bait of pleasure, or some entangling hindrance of obligation – how seasonable is the warning of *the word hid* in the heart. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God!” (Luke 9. 62). So, in the more

spiritual conflict, let this *word*, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6. 37) be hid in the heart – what a preservative is it against unbelief!

Again, supposing the unbelieving believer (if the expression may be allowed) is alarmed by ridicule or persecution; what says his Saviour’s *word*? “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15. 18). He fears that he shall never hold out unto the end; but the *word* assures him from his God, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13. 5). He trembles lest his sins should rise up to his condemnation; but *the word* again speaks: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1. 7).

And then as to duties. Let his Saviour’s word rebuke his indolence and unwatchfulness: “What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26. 40, 41). Let the sorrowful story of His agony in the garden, and His death on the cross, be treasured up in the heart that “sin may appear yet more exceeding sinful.”

But how is *the word* to gain entrance into hearts like ours? How shall it be “hid” in so unkindly a soil? No power of man surely could plant it there. The Holy Spirit’s almighty agency must be diligently sought; for in proportion as we are filled with His gracious influences, shall we be armed, as was our Master, for the effectual resistance of our spiritual temptations (see Luke 4. 1, 2).

Lastly, connected with this subject, mark *the Christian’s character*: “In whose heart is My law” (Isa. 51. 7); *his security*: “None of his steps shall slide” (Psa. 37. 31); *his happiness*: “O how I love thy law!” (verse 97); *his victory*: “The Word of God abideth in you, and ye hath overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2. 14; see Eph. 6. 17) – all infallibly provided by the covenant promise: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer. 31. 33). O let us not then be afraid of a close contact with the word, though the cost may be the cutting off a right hand for the saving of the life. No better test can be needed of the security of our state with God, than a willingness to come to the searching light of His holy Word (see John 3. 20, 21).



When John Newton, the famous preacher and author of the hymn, “Amazing grace! how sweet the sound!” was in his last days, like many old people, his memory was badly failing. However, he said that, forget what he might, there were two things which he never forgot: “Firstly, that I am a great sinner; secondly, that Jesus Christ is a great Saviour.”

THE UPPER ROOM

*Communion Address given by William Fay (1885-1965), Pastor at
Zoar Chapel, Norwich*

For some time after going into hospital I was unable to read my Bible or have it read to me. When I did feel able, I asked of the Lord to be directed to some portion that should be of profit to me. I opened on this 14th chapter of Mark, but nothing caught my attention until I came to this 15th verse: "He will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared."

This attracted me as it opened to my mind that it could have a heavenly meaning, that it was according to His word in the 14th chapter of John: "In My Father's house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you." An upper room prepared and furnished by Jesus Himself for His dear people, as He says in verse 25 (of Mark 14): "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

"Things new and old laid up in store,
To cheer the faint and feed the poor."

Much is said in Revelation of the marriage supper of the Lamb, and every dear child of God has this blessed prospect to look forward to, of which this service is a sweet and sacred type.

But we notice in particular that this is a service of remembrance. The fact of the bread and wine, broken and poured out, sets forth the broken body and shed blood; brings before us the atonement made by the Lord Jesus. It is to remind us of the awful sufferings and death of our dear Redeemer. He came under the curse of the law, which was our due, and satisfied it, and thus brought in redemption for all His dear, chosen people. "This is My body which was broken for you." We are to remember this.

Does it not also show forth a sweet union to His people in His humanity. I do not think any of us would like to think we are soon forgotten. It is as though He says, "Do not forget Me!"

"Do this," He cried, "till time shall end,
In memory of your dying Friend!" (H. 1121)

"This do in remembrance of Me."

Again, can we not see the tender regard He shows for us in this service? As though He knew His people would sometimes be cumbered about with much serving, which seems at times to shut out all spiritual things. Not only the cares of this life, but many exercises and castings down about our eternal standing are with us. He has left us this service that we may turn aside for a short time from worldly things to meditate

on the purpose, and share in the exercise, of this communion with one another. "Come ye yourselves apart ... and rest a while."

May He graciously be with us now, remove all other things from our minds and help us each, making it a sacred service to us all.

SELF EXAMINATION

Extracts from a letter by William Tiptaft (1803-1864)

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," says Paul. There are many and grievous causes in our day to make us question who shall stand in the great day. And shall we stand? Are we right in doctrine, experience and practice? Sin works in such various ways to carnalise our minds and to deaden our souls. How we need wisdom from above to direct us in all our steps and ways. The Lord knows how we need help and strength; and what a mercy to have prayers indited by His Spirit to bring down heavenly blessings.... What a very great mercy to have a religion that will stand "the fire" which "shall try every man's work of what sort it is." How blind, dark, and ignorant we are by nature. How pride reigns, and how arrogantly and proudly do we talk.

I wish that I could love Christ more, and could exalt His name more highly.

W. Tiptaft

Abingdon, Oxfordshire
September 7th, 1859

SANCTIFICATION ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

By John Brine (1703-1765)

(Concluded from page 223)

III. *Sanctification* consists in what, I think, may be called the secondary actings of grace, and is inclusive of the primary acts of the spiritual principle which are mentioned above.

1. Sanctification consists in a *denial of our corrupt inclinations*; or in an abstinence of sin out of a regard to the authority of God in the law, which evidently supposes an approbation of both the precepts and prohibitions of that law; or a liking of what it commands, as good and holy, and an aversion to what it forbids, as evil and vile. This latter is usually called mortification, and is one considerable branch of

sanctification, wherein we ought especially, in a very strict manner, to regard the principles and views upon which we act in our opposition to sin. For there may be an abstinence from acts of evil without a grain of holiness in the heart. If we forsake sin only from some prudential considerations, or through the influence of legal motives, concupiscence maintains its rule in our minds, and will continue so to do. If we are engaged in a spiritual manner in this most necessary branch of our duty, our minds will take into consideration the evil nature of sin; the many obligations we are under as Christians to leave every vice, that we should be “holy in all manner of conversation and godliness”; and from the great and numerous acts of goodness He hath put forth in our favour, from a sense of the manifold benefits which we receive from Him merely on the foundation of kindness unmerited. Never let us think that we are any farther holy than we act under the influence of such-like considerations and motives; for if we do, we shall form a mistaken opinion of ourselves.

2. The other branch of sanctification consists in *an attendance to holy duties, and the exercise of grace therein*. The performance of duty without the exercise of grace brings no glory to God, nor any spiritual advantage to our souls. We may maintain the practice of religious services in a regular manner, and yet be very far from that spiritually and heavenly mindedness which our profession calls for. Regeneration is sanctification radically. The advancement of spirituality in our souls is our sanctification following regeneration. The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of it. As grace in the principle is His production, so the vigour and increase thereof is effected by His benign influences. And many precious considerations He suggests to the mind to strengthen and invigorate the gracious principle in us, namely, the love of God to us; the tender and intense affection of the blessed Jesus; the greatness of that salvation which we enjoy through His obedience and sacrifice; the dignity that is conferred upon us as we are constituted sons of God by a sovereign act of His immense goodness; the title we have to all spiritual and eternal blessings in consequence of our being brought into that relation. Our union with Christ is another consideration whereby our hearts are excited earnestly to desire a conformity to Him in meekness, lowliness, patience, submission to the will of God, and in every other grace. Moreover, the divine Spirit gives us views of the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel, whereby we are changed into the heavenly image from glory to glory. He that expects an increase of grace and holiness in any other way, will certainly find himself sadly mistaken in his expectations, let his endeavours be what they may. The new creature cannot be nourished and improved, but by feeding upon and digesting spiritual food, which is Christ the Bread of life. Unless we receive the nourishing milk and generous wine of the gospel, we shall

languish and decline in our spiritual part. The want of this, through one cause or another, is the occasion of that leanness of soul which most complain of at this time, and it is to be feared not without great reason.

THOUGHTS UPON REPENTANCE

By V.M.

What is this repentance, and from whence doth it come, and how is it obtained? Is it from heaven or from earth? Is it from God or from man? If it is from God, then it is His work, and not the work of the creature; but if it is in the power of man to repent by his own free will, then salvation, so far as repentance is concerned in it, must be by the will and power of the creature, which contradicts Paul's assertions when he saith, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

There are three different kinds of repentance spoken of in the Word of God:

First, there is natural repentance, or that which is sometimes to be seen in men that are in their natural estate, and know no more about God savingly than the brutes that perish. Witness the case of Nineveh. The Lord sent the prophet Jonah to cry against the city, because their wickedness was come up before the Lord, and the message sent was this: "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," and they believed the prophet's prediction; and when the heavy tidings reached the ears of the king, he proclaimed a fast, and commanded every man to be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; and they obeyed the king's voice; and when the Lord saw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways, He repented of the evil He said He would do unto them, and did it not. For temporal mercies they prayed, and this they obtained. When they saw their city was doomed to destruction for their sins, they repented; they prayed for the preservation of their city, and for their natural lives in it, and the Lord heard their cry and spared the city; but it is one thing to spare men's lives, and another thing to save their precious souls from everlasting destruction. Many experience the former mercy that never experience the latter. Something of this kind of repentance may be seen in Ahab, that monster of iniquity, and in several others.

Second, there is what the apostle calls the sorrow of the world, which worketh death; and this kind of repentance in some amounts to desperate sorrow, as may be seen in the case of Judas, one of the twelve; for after he received the sop, Satan entered into him, and he went out and covenanted with the priests, and betrayed Christ into the hands of sinful

men. When he saw that Christ was condemned, his sins stared him in the face, his conscience accused him, and the wrath of God was let loose upon him. Then when he saw, and felt too, that his sin had procured the wrath of God, he repented of what he had done, and went and confessed his sin to the priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that," and he went out and hanged himself. Thus his repentance was the sorrow of the world that worketh death; and there is much of this kind of repentance to be found in some of the professors of religion in this day that have a form of godliness, but not the power, a name to live, but are dead, in words professing to know God, but in works denying Him; who, having made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, are concerning both faith and good works reprobates. Such are led captive by the devil at his will, and are overcome and held captive by every besetting sin, so that, notwithstanding their knowledge and profession, sin still reigns in their mortal bodies, and they are holden in the cords of their sin. So when their conscience accuses them, and their sins stand in battle array against them, and God appears as a swift witness against them in judgment, and the rebukes of the Almighty within them make them afraid, then they repent and cry like Esau, with exceeding great and bitter cry. But as soon as there is a little cessation, then, like Pharaoh, their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and like the sow that was washed, they turn to their wallowing again in the mire; and thus they go on sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, all the days of their life; and, after all, it is but the sorrow of the world that worketh death.

But the third kind of repentance is what the apostle calls a godly sorrow, that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, or sorrowing after a godly manner. This repentance is not natural but spiritual, neither is it the work of man, but the gift of Christ; as it is written: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5. 30, 31). And again: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11. 18).

Now, if repentance is the grant of God and the gift of the Saviour, it is evident it is not the work of man or in the power of the creature, for nothing short of the power of Christ can work this in a perishing sinner, as I think the following parable fully shows: "Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went." But how came he to change his mind? Why, the psalmist says, that the hearts of all men are in the hands of the Lord, and that He

turneth them as rivers of water whithersoever He will. Thus repentance to life was granted unto him, and the power of God was displayed within him, and he was made willing thereby to go and do the will of his father. And there are two things which will always lead to repentance. The first is a manifestation of the mercy and goodness of God; as saith the apostle, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" And this, I think, was verified in the character of Ephraim. The Lord smote him, but this smiting did not produce repentance; for he went on frowardly, in the way of his own heart; but by and by the Lord said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will ... restore comforts to him and to his mourners."

Then the next account we hear of Ephraim is this: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Thus it appears that it was not the Lord's smiting of him, but His mercy and goodness towards him in healing his backslidings, that led him to repentance.

The other thing that will do it is a believing view of Christ crucified, as saith the Lord: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." And Job was a living witness of this truth, for he says, "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." Job saw Him as his crucified Saviour, for he saith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth ... and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Thus, upon the whole, it appears that a revelation of the wrath of God in the conscience of an ungodly sinner produceth the sorrow of the world that worketh death; but a manifestation of the mercy and goodness of God to a perishing sinner, and a believing view of Christ crucified, nothing short of this will produce godly sorrow, that worketh repentance to salvation that needeth not to be repented of.

So I believe, and so I write, for so I have found it. And there are three things that always attend a godly sorrow, and are fruits brought forth meet for repentance.

The first is, confession of sins: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight," saith the prodigal; "We have sinned, both we and our fathers," saith Ezra; "Woe unto us, that we have sinned," saith Jeremiah; "I have sinned against the LORD," saith David; and again: "I said, I will confess my transgressions"; "I will be sorry for my sin."

The second is a humbling sense of our unworthiness: "I am not worthy to be called thy son," saith the prodigal; "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies," saith Jacob; "Who am I ... and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" saith David.

Thirdly, self-loathing and self-abhorrence: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself," saith Job. "And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed," saith the Lord. But do these things attend the sorrow of the world that worketh death? I answer, No; but things just the reverse; namely, rebellion and desperation; as it is written: "And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward." Thus they set their mouths against the heavens.

Secondly, despondency and despair is another thing that attends the sorrow of the world: "My punishment is greater than I can bear," saith Cain. And thirdly, a tearful looking for of judgment; for the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

Now, hear what Christ says of those that repent with a godly sorrow: "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance." These just persons are those that are clean in their own eyes, and pure in their own sight, although they have never been washed from their own filthiness. It was persons of this cast to whom Christ said, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent" – ye that think you have no need of it – "ye shall all likewise perish."

Now, as repentance is necessary to salvation, Christ commanded it to be preached; for thus it is written: "And thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. And John said, "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye." And when the word preached is attended with the power of God, it is quick and powerful; sinners are convinced by it, and fall before the force of it, as may be seen in Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost: "They were pricked in their hearts, and said ... Men and

brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” With the word there went the power. Repentance unto life was granted unto them. They were made willing in this day of His power; for they gladly received the word, and there was added to the church about three thousand souls.

Compare what I have said with the Word of God. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

“BUT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH THEE”

Extract from the diary of Rhoda Gosden (1872-1962)

I want to write of the Lord’s goodness and mercy to my soul, and do desire the Holy Spirit’s teaching that I may say of God the thing that is right. For several months I have felt my need of a distinct word from the Lord concerning my case. This concern has been deepened in my heart from time to time under the ministry of dear Mr. Popham. Often when he has been speaking of forgiveness and justification, and the application of truth to the sinner’s soul, my very soul has gone out after those things. For always there seemed a coming short in my own experience, and sometimes I sank very low, fearing I should never know these vital realities for myself.

Once particularly in July when coming out of chapel, such despairing feelings filled my heart, it seemed hopeless to look for good any longer. I could not go to my dear friends, but came home full of misery. On that Lord’s day evening when alone, I do feel it was the Lord who spoke this kind word in my heart: “Although thou sayest thou shalt not see Him, yet judgment is before Him; therefore trust thou in Him” (Job 35. 14), which gave me great encouragement to go on seeking the blessing. Yet after this sinking very low until October, when I seemed given up to the power of the enemy, I truly seemed nearing destruction, and if the Lord had been strict to mark my iniquity, I should now be where hope and mercy never come. How miserable I was in myself and conscious of the misery I was causing my friends; yet my heart was so hard and I seemed powerless to confess or forsake it.

In this wretched state was I when my dear friend and minister came over to see us on November 1st. How I wished (in a certain sense) that he was not coming! For I felt he would cut me off from the least hope in God’s mercy; it seemed impossible any good could come to me. But when he read the 130th Psalm and began to speak of the depths into which the Lord’s people come, it took such a powerful hold upon me.

How I felt to enter into the 3rd verse: “If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,” etc.! Then as he went on to speak of the latter verses, how sensibly I felt as one drawn up out of the pit and set on good ground for hope! O what a sweet hope filled my soul when he spoke of the Lord’s free mercy and plenteous redemption!

After he was gone, as soon as I was alone in my room, I fell on my knees and said, “Lord, is there mercy for *me*? Can there be forgiveness for *me*?” When He came so powerfully into my heart and by the application of His precious blood to my conscience I *felt my sins were all put away and forgiven*. How distinctly did the dear Lord speak these words in my very heart: “The LORD hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven” (cf. 2 Sam. 12. 13 and Luke 7. 47). Such sweet repentance filled my heart, and sweet tears did I shed with the joy of forgiveness. I tried to look for my sins, but they were gone. Peace and pardon filled my heart. Divine happiness took possession of my soul.

CHRIST AS PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

By J.W. Sperling-Tyler (1912-1989)

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek” (Isa. 61. 1).

“And they were astonished at His doctrine: for *His* word was with power” (Luke 4. 32), and when His word comes to your heart, according to the degree, it will relieve, comfort, sustain and deliver. It will do all for you that you can conceivably or inconceivably need. It is the will and pleasure of God that His dear people should enjoy to the maximum all the office characters of Christ in the new covenant. His office is Father, Bridegroom, Husband. It is when you are like an orphan, bereaved of many things, that you enter more abundantly into His Fatherhood, and the dear One who is your Husband.

Then, Advocate. Put your heavy, difficult case which is beyond you, into His blessed hands to manage and see the triumphant issue. We have here the prophetic office of our Lord Jesus Christ: great High Priest, glorious King, and Prophet. If you feel cast down, consider the glory of Christ, your Saviour and Friend. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4. 15); “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2. 18).

And He is King. “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob” (Psa. 44. 4).

THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN

By J. Spaans (1930-2009)

In the days we live in, there is so much confusion between the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God, because man does not understand how that actually man has become totally depraved. Does that make man irresponsible? No. But many – and then I have seen it, I have met it in this week with a man who said, “There is something missing in your church. There is something missing because we never hear about joy. There must be joy.” This was from an older man. Oh, I said, poor man. When we are speaking about the text, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1. 30) and you say there is no joy? Oh, I said, the joy of the church, of the living church, the true church, is not to go springing over the world with a high hand, thinking of nothing else than the happy joys of a modern Christendom, no. But to be delivered out of the total depravity of the human nature, to be brought back in the image of God, yes. And this is called “a sick religion.”

Oh, my hearers, we have to understand the total depravity of man, our wretched state through the Fall, and then the proclamation of deliverance – not to have a name to live, but to be brought back, and that is the core of difference. Not only to have a name, “I am a Christian in this world,” to have an office in the church or be a member of the church. That is all an outward show. But to be brought back by the free and sovereign grace of God in the communion of God is for the child of God true joy, to receive back what I have lost in Adam. Then I have to know what I have lost. And if we only pull the blanket over it, and talk about an outward faith and an outward responsibility, and Christ is offered to us, and we have to accept it, then we do not understand the total, total depravity of man. We have to learn that there is not one particle of good any more. Man is completely corrupt; not only some of the branches are evil, but the total root is corrupt to the very bottom. When we may understand that, by the instructing light of the Holy Spirit, then it will be the cry, “Oh, my Maker, think of me.”

James Hervey, a much loved preacher and writer in defending the truth, was once greatly complimented by a person who had read his works. He replied: “Oh, Sir, you would not strike the sparks of applause, if you knew how much corrupt tinder I have within!”

Colonel Gardiner, a godly soldier of the 18th century, was once challenged to a duel, to which he replied: “I fear sinning, though you know, Sir, I do not fear fighting.”

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Continued from page 226)

Let us go over the several particulars of that work.

1. Habitual holiness, and all the principles of holiness. I have shown afore that they are wholly of His operation, and this our baptism (which is the seal of regeneration, or of the new creature) doth signify in a special manner. This imports not simply to wash, or to be washed, but to be dyed also. It is also taken from the dyer's vat, into which what clothes are dipped, they carry away in them a new habitual tincture. The Holy Ghost takes a man's heart, and dyes it anew, changeth it. As a cloth goes into the vat of one colour and comes out of it of another, "so is He who is born of the Spirit": He goes wholly flesh, comes out spirit in a good degree, "which two are contrary" (Gal. 5).

2. Mortification of sin and to the world is ascribed to the Spirit: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8. 13). It was prophesied by Malachi that Christ coming after the Baptist, should "purify the sons of Levi" by "fullers' soap," and "a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3. 2, 3). Now who is that refiner's fire but this Spirit, as appears by comparing Isaiah 4. 4, where He is styled "the Spirit of burning," and "the Spirit of judgment"; the Spirit of burning, consuming and purging out our dross and filth; and there also is the prophecy of Christ's coming to "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," as the Baptist expounded it; the Holy Ghost, as it is spoken, partly because what remaining filth his baptism of water had not cleansed out, Christ's Spirit, as fire, should do it; for (see Num. 31. 23), the fire is made a stronger purifier than water and even of the Baptist himself and his ministry (the Spirit of God accompanying it), it was foretold by Isaiah, chapter 40, that the glory and beauty of the whole creation should be blasted, and caused to fade and wither, as flowers of the grass are by a wind, in and to new converts' hearts, and deadening their souls, being deadened unto it, when the voice of the crier should come and preach repentance to the people, and the glory of the Lord (Christ, namely) should be revealed. The grass withered, and the flower faded (see verse 7) in such men's hearts as were savingly wrought upon by His voice and cry. And how came this to pass? It is added, "The Spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it." And the Apostle Peter expounding this prophecy, says that all believers wrought upon by his and the apostle's ministry, had purified their souls (see 1 Pet. 1. 22), by the preaching of the gospel, and then referreth us unto this very place in Isaiah: "Being born again" (verse 23). "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and

the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (verses 24, 25).

3. There is in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost the implantation of all the contrary graces, which are so often compared to flowers and the gardens of them, and unto trees in orchards and beds of spices, planted artificially by a florist (which is an allusion the Holy Ghost delights to use in that Book of Canticles); the fruits and flowers whereof shall never fade (as the flower of grass doth), but grow up, and flourish to eternal life, which flowers, etc., because planted in her heart, the spouse there calleth her garden, as also Christ calls it His garden, and both in that one verse (see Song 4. 16), which, as appears by verse 12, was her own self: “A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse,” says Christ of her, “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” And verses 13 and 15: “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates ... a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon”; which is certainly an enumeration of particular graces in their distinction and variety, if we knew how aptly to apply those similitudes in each to what is proper to each. But however, it serves in general to instruct us, that there is such a variety of graces in our hearts, as here of trees in the spouse’s heart, and that the heart of every saint is an orchard to such spiritual plants growing therein; and in like manner, a garden to a like variety of flowers. And various graces are meant by either. And the planting and bringing forth these are all ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as Christ’s chief Planter.

4. As the planting, so the drawing them forthwith into act, both bud and fruit, and causing them to grow, is His work also:

The drawing them forth into act, or the acting of them, or the causing them to shoot forth, is ascribed to Him. He is that wind which, blowing upon our graces, causeth them to flow out, even as His blowing upon the flower of the grass (as you heard out of Isaiah 40) withers and mortifies the flowers or glories of this world to new converts. And this follows in the next words of the same chapter: “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden,” says the spouse, “that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits” (Song. 4. 16). There are two prayers in those words: the first to the Spirit, “Come, Thou south wind, and blow,” and the second to Christ Himself: “Let my Beloved come into His garden,” when it shall be thus blown upon. First, the wind there apparently is the Holy Ghost (see Ezek. 37. 3 and 14, compared with 5 and 6). “The wind bloweth where it listeth ... so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The Spirit is a quickening wind (the breath of the living God and of Christ), who coming upon a man doth regenerate Him, and infuse a new spirit into Him, as Christ had there said. And after He is thus quickened and

born, a soul new born of the Spirit, then by blowing thereon the same Spirit doth cause Him to operate and act as such a new creature, who is so high born, should in some measure do. Insomuch as all and the whole of him who is truly born again is from this Spirit, not only His first begetting, but His after actings; which latter Christ also involves in saying, "So is He that is born of the Spirit," supposing Him first to have been begotten anew.

There is not so much as the least good thought, nor the least bud which we with all our inherent graces are able to bring forth, unless this Holy Spirit efficaciously blows upon us. It is the Spirit (says He) that quickens and gives life (see 2 Cor. 3. 6); and He speaks this of the Holy Spirit joining with the gospel, even the Spirit of the living God, whom He had under that title mentioned afore in verse 3. And that His quickening relateth unto all and everything of the Spirit of life within us, even unto the production of but one, a single individual one action, though it also be but the least good thought, is expressly said in verse 5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God"; that is, unless God (the living God) by His living Spirit (as in verse 3) do form it in us, and although the matter of a good thought were cast into our minds, yet as seed thrown into a barren soil, it would instantly become a dead work, such as all the works of unregenerate men are (see Heb. 6. 1). So that our eyes should be fixed upon and entirely ascribe all that is good in us to this Spirit as the Author. And though we and our wills do concur in the acting also, yet He is the efficient of that concurrence in us, causing us to do; yea, and is the cause of every degree of that goodness in our actings, "dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12. 11).

5. The Spirit produceth all the spiritual strength we receive, when our hearts are ready to be overborne with temptations, or a lust; or when we want strength to do such and such a work or duty; to suffer, that we may be able to endure in such a trial. It is the Spirit gives strength to the inner man (Eph. 3. 16, compared with Col. 1. 10, 11), like as the Spirit fell on Samson, and gave him strength, who of himself was otherwise but as other men. It was He made Elias so bold and courageous, and the prophet Amos after him: "Truly," says he, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3. 8). The like He gave John the Baptist to tell Herod of his sin, which cost him his life. It was because he came in the power and spirit of Elias.

Take the weakest heart that is as weak as water (as the prophet speaks), and let the Spirit join with it, and mingle Himself therewith, and it is too hard and strong for all the world; it will snap asunder tentations, as Samson did His withs. There is a "supply of the Spirit" (Phil. 1 19),

comes in with fresh forces, when we are near to a yielding up the fort, and being led captive, and so He rescues and delivers us. In all our walkings with God, He is our Guide and faithful Companion, to see to us and keep us out of harm's way. And often when we stumble, He puts under His hand, as the psalmist's word is. And a little help keeps up a man that is falling or reeling, or recovers him again when he is falling.

And thus the apostle seems to intend that speech, who "helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. 8. 26). And those infirmities there are not to be limited to the infirmities that belong to and accompany our prayers only, but which accompany us in all our ordinary walkings. The word supposeth it to be the case of a weak man in himself, who yet further hath a weight or a burden hanging on him, which presseth him down (as of our corruptions, especially some, or such as are more proper to us, as the apostle expresseth, Heb. 12), who yet having a friend to accompany him in his running the race set before him (as there the apostle's allegory is), he perceiving the weakling's aptness to sink under the weight, does continually relieve him; and not only shores up and sustains the man, but himself takes the other end of his burden (and the far heavier end), and so helps him to bear it, and go on along with it. And this the apostle expressly there attributes to the Spirit; and if so be it chanceth that we fall, He is still at hand, a present help (as a present help, as David says), to take us up; yea, then when we fall into the foulest mire and dirt, and grievously defile ourselves, it is the Spirit that cleanseth us, according to that of the apostle: "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1. 22). And according to that of David: "Create in me a clean heart" – after he had so foully fallen into uncleanness – "and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psa. 51. 10, 11). In this case this gracious Spirit says not (as the harsh spirits of men would say), Even lie there still, since you would needs fall, sprawling in your own filth. Not so this good Spirit: but as if a man (a brother) be overtaken with a fault, those that are spiritual are to take on them to restore, and often do restore, such a man in the spirit of meekness; how much more will and doth this blessed Spirit, who is He that makes spiritual those that are such, and endues them with that spirit of meekness, out of His own dove-like meekness, restore such an one, and take care of him for ever after, lest he fall so again.

Abridged

(To be concluded)

As saints have groanings unutterable, so they have joys unutterable.

John Mason

**THE LORD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY
SHOWN TO ONE OF HIS SHEEP**

*The experience of Arthur Thomas Hawkins
(Continued from page 232)*

Mr. Hawkins spoke of various helps in providence, particularly in connection with his employment, and continued:

The point where I have got to now seems to mark a definite line in my life; it seemed that things that I was led to pray for were given me, not always at once or without trial, but they were given, and usually worked for my providential good, but after this point, although prayer was answered, it was, as Newton said, "in such a way as almost drove me to despair." I believe it has taught me this: that God is a sovereign and will do with us as He pleases, and that what He does with us must be, and ever is, best. I feel that I know so little of these eternal realities, I do want to be like a little child, for Him to do all for me. If I attempt anything myself, which I am prone to do, I always do the wrong thing, and there is so much in me that hankers after the things of this life.

After I was commissioned in the Royal Flying Corps, I was posted to Hendon Aerodrome which meant that I remained where I was doing the same work. Somewhere during this time, I remember being on top of a bus near Hendon and thinking things over in my mind, and I thought, Well, I have got almost all I could wish for, and yet, I could not feel a thankful heart for it, and so I began to wonder if I was really in the right way at all, for I read that the way to the kingdom is through *much* tribulation, and I was having a fairly easy time. Oh, I felt I did want to be right in God's sight whatever it cost. How little we stop to consider what the cost is, do we?

Well, soon after this Georgie was suddenly taken ill. I thought it was a heart attack which would presently pass off, but she got worse and at 10 p.m., I had to run for the doctor. He gave her an injection and left some medicine; he said I only just called him in time. Well, instead of getting better, she got worse, until I thought she would die, and the doctor said he could do no more. O, that was a time of trial; poor Georgie was so dark in her mind, which was a greater trial to me, I think, than losing her. I remember I used to kneel beside her bed before I went on duty and try to pour out my heart to the Lord on her behalf, but He seemed not to hear, the heavens were as brass. I said many a time, "Lord, I've never prayed to Thee in vain yet, and I never want Thee more than I do now"; it just seemed as if in my greatest extremity and need that He had left me. I remember one morning my heart was ready to burst,

and I could not keep up any longer. I burst into tears, and said, "He won't help me, He won't help me"; it seemed it was the only place I could expect help from, and that had failed just when I wanted it most. I have thought since that the Lord Jesus must have felt something like that, only much more so, when the Father left Him, to bear all the wrath due to His people alone. In His greatest extremity and greatest suffering, He felt the absence of His Father; no tongue can tell what that was.

Well, after this Georgie began to get a little better, and the doctor suggested that she should go into a nursing home for a time, to be absolutely quiet and away from all worries. At first she was very averse to it, but by and by the Lord said to her, "Daughter, go in peace," and that was enough for her; it was also a comfort to me, as it showed me the Lord had not forsaken us. My mother, who was with us, had this: "Come ye yourselves apart ... and rest awhile," so everything was arranged, and she went. It was the means in God's hands of restoring her to a great extent, although she was never the same afterwards. I believe the dear Lord visited her often in that home; she was alone all the time except when I went to see her twice a week, and from what she told me, I believe that time was one of peace and comfort to her soul. So you see the Lord did hear my poor petitions; it was with a heart full of gratitude that I went to fetch her out of that home, to her own home.

There are some things in my life which seem to stand out above others, things which have been real deep waters, where there is no standing, and where we must sink but for the everlasting arms of the mighty God, and where it seems, for the time, that "all around my soul gives way." But we have proved in the end, although not always able to feel it at the time, that "He then is all our hope and stay." This time was one of them. I have got so much dirt and dross and it wants so much burning out, and if I do lose a little of it, I soon seem to gather some more. I wonder sometimes if there is any gold at all. I do know this: if there is any at all it is not mine, but Jesus Christ's. I have got a lot to thank and praise Him for and yet how little of a spirit of gratitude do I feel! It goes to show that in us, that is in the flesh, there is not the least bit of good.

I remember the first time Georgie was able to get to Gower Street after her illness, Mr. Booth was preaching and he took for his text, "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That was good to me then, because I felt I did want an advocate, and Mr. Booth opened it up so nicely, how that it was not once only, but again and again. That is what I feel: I want to prove His power not once, but daily and hourly.

Following a period of trial on returning to employment after leaving the Air Force, Mr. Hawkins wrote:

One thing I must say, that during this time, in spite of all the worry and anxiety, Georgie's health was fairly good. It was one of the most wonderful things to me; you see the Lord did not lay on us more than we could bear, although sometimes when fresh troubles have overtaken us I have thought, if anything else comes, it will be more than I can bear; I must sink, and I felt very near it at times. But I found that strength was given as each fresh trial came and it was needed.

All this while I was very slowly learning one lesson: my utter helplessness, and His all-sufficiency, and that He "has an undisputed right to govern me and mine." Yes, He answered my prayers, but in such a way that nearly drove me mad.

When I left the R.A.F., I had marked out a path which led to earthly advancement. You see, I imagined I had the will and power to do it, but God's way, starting from the same point as mine – answered prayer – led through fire and water, until I was stripped of everything, and last of all of the one I hold the dearest on earth, and then, when I had nothing, He saved me Himself. O that was worth going through fire and water for; no mortal tongue can describe it.

I must mention another instance which shows that the Lord may answer our prayers, but as His thoughts are not our thoughts or His ways our ways, the ends we have in view are often widely separated until we begin to think we have asked amiss; yet His way always brings us nearer to Himself, while our way would lead us from Him. I asked the Lord very definitely to give me the contract for some work, as it meant employment for a considerable time. He answered that prayer and all went well for a time, until the firm went bankrupt, and this left us in debt which we had not been before, so our last state was worse than at the beginning. I had had a definite answer to prayer, and yet that very thing had served but to increase my load. Truly we were at our wits' end, and every day wondered what fresh trial was coming. The devil told me many a time it was no use praying as I only got into worse trouble, and at times was almost ready to give it all up, but somehow I could not. I had to fly to the Rock for refuge; it was the only place I could find comfort. Many a time I have poured out my heart with all its sorrows and trials before Him and He has listened I know, although perhaps no word has been spoken, yet I have felt at times such a peaceful calm amidst all the storm, and I have been able to talk with him as a friend. Yes, I had some blessed times during those trials, and they began to come now one on top of the other.

Two parties sued me at court for money wrongfully. One I had expected as they had tried to get it by assault, but the Lord gave me this

word: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God ... to fight our battle." And that word was fulfilled to the letter.

When I appeared in court, there were, I think, seven of them ranged against me, and I thought as I saw them, that is the arm of flesh, and I was enabled to rest on the word I had had. I did not say a word in the case, and some time after, they abandoned it, but they left in court the money which they owed me. Thus the dear Lord literally fulfilled that promise.

The other one turned out altogether different. I shall never forget the night when the writ was served on me. It was a great shock to us both, as it was unexpected. We had no sleep that night; it was spent in groans and tears. We thought we should lose our home and everything we had. As I look back on that night, I do not think I could live through another one like it. We were truly given strength to bear this fierce fire, especially Georgie. I got up early and went downstairs, and if ever I wrestled with the Lord I did then. I spread out the writ before Him and felt I could not let Him go until He had given me some word to rest on and assure me that He would be with me in this trial. I wept till I had no more power to weep. The Holy Spirit truly did help me to wrestle that morning. By and by He spoke these words so clearly and powerfully to my heart: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper," and I was enabled to rest on this, and to thank and bless Him for His mercy to unworthy me.

Well, I rested on this promise, thinking of course that my enemy would be defeated, and when I went into court, I found that his own solicitor did not expect to succeed. When the judge came to give his decision, to everyone's surprise he found it in favour of my enemy. I cannot attempt to describe my feelings, "I was dumb ... because Thou didst it." Poor Georgie, when I got home said, "The Lord has forsaken us altogether now," and I thought so too. The devil told us the same and said, "Now where is the promise you had that no weapon should prosper?" O, it shook my religion all to pieces, and yet I believe I had a little hope that still clung to the Rock, I was not left quite in despair, but it was a terrible time for us both. We could see no way of saving our home now; £88 had to be paid somehow. I could not pray, all was dark and dead, and I began to think I must be deceived. I suffered hell in my feelings. Truly I was sorely wounded. The loss of the case did not worry me half as much as the mysterious way in which I had been led. I had leaned my whole weight on that promise which I was certain the Lord had given me, and yet when I had most needed it, it apparently failed. It

was worse than not to have had anything at all. I think sometimes that it is a mystery that only the last day will unfold. At other times when I think about it, I believe I can see perhaps why it was: before the case came to court, I, naturally perhaps, took great pains to leave no stone unturned to prove my case clear, instead of leaving the Lord to work for me. I always want to be doing something to help myself! In the other case I was enabled to leave it more in the Lord's hands and not meddle with it.

It was a long time before I recovered from this trial, and I had not much strength left to fight the devil's suggestions about it, I can tell you. However, although this was permitted, the dear Lord graciously and wonderfully appeared for us so that we did not have to part with one piece of our home. It caused us to hope that the dear Lord had not quite forsaken us. After all, how necessary these things are for us. I know how soon I wander into forbidden paths, and sometimes I dread being left alone. I do want the Lord to hold me and keep me in His way. We shall be here but a little time at the longest and there,

“Then love everlasting *our* griefs shall repay,
And God from *our* eyes wipe all sorrows away,” (H. 297)

and we shall see that dear Man, whose “way was much rougher and darker than mine.” O when we look at His way, how small our trials appear. He suffered as we can never suffer all the way; we do get some periods of ease, don't we! He suffered being sinless, we suffer very much less than our sins deserve and yet how often I grumble and repine with blessings in my hand.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

The King of Kings: Meditations on the Coronation; paperback; 136 pages; price £4.90 plus postage and packing; obtainable from Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN; ettrickpress@gmail.com.

This is essentially a reprint of the 23rd Annual Conference of the Sovereign Grace Union held in May 1937, the year King George VI was crowned. George V had passed away the previous year, succeeded by Edward VIII for a short time until his abdication, so in the space of a few months three kings had occupied the throne of the United Kingdom. Drawing from various denominations faithful to our Protestant heritage, the chapters are devoted to extolling the King of kings and reminding the readers of the importance of our reformed heritage, especially in relation to the coronation oath, to which King Charles vows to be faithful. Among the contributors are John Raven, a former

editor of the *Gospel Standard*, and George Rose, both faithful ministers in our churches at the time.

This book is highly recommended and is a salutary reminder of the allegiance, justly demanded to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's dear Son. Also, a timely reminder of what a truly Protestant reign should be. We hope this book may be sent to the King and Queen, in the hope that they may read it and under God's hand realise the solemn responsibility they have now on their shoulders to maintain our Protestant heritage and the freedom of those who fear God to exercise their faith without hindrance from the state.

The Three Marys, by Alexander Moody Stuart; paperback; 307 pages; price £7.95; obtainable from Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh, EH12 61L, or bookshops.

Alexander Moody Stuart was a minister, highly esteemed in the reformed Scottish churches, in the middle to late 19th century. This is a reprint of a treatise first published in 1862. It looks in detail at the lives and background of the three most prominent Marys in the New Testament: Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany and Mary of Nazareth. It brings to light many points often overlooked in the lives of these three gracious women, their example as close followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and above all their unreserved love for Him who is worthy of our best esteem, often displayed under trying circumstances. We believe our readers would find much to instruct in reading this book.

Refreshment for the Soul: A Year of Devotional Readings from the "Heavenly Doctor" Richard Sibbes, compiled and edited by David B. MacKinnon; price £17; and obtainable from Banner of Truth Trust (as above).

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) was one of the most highly esteemed of the Puritans of his generation and his works have been valued by God's people for many generations. His was a Christ-centred ministry and this is apparent in these devotionals.

The compiler, David Mackinnon, is a retired minister in the U.S.A., and has in many ways ably presented the readings, with an interesting preface highlighting what is known of Sibbes' life and times. The one defect, however, in this otherwise excellent publication, is the use of the inferior E.S.V. rather than the time-honoured King James Authorised Version which one feels is much to be preferred and surely the one with which Sibbes himself would have felt most comfortable!

Cotswold Pastor and Baptist Hymn Writer: The Life and Times of Benjamin Beddome, by Stephen Pickles; hardback; 472 pages; £20 plus £3 postage; published by and obtainable from The James Bourne Society, Rivendell, Popes Lane, Upham, Southampton, SO32 1JB; richardknel@gmail.com

This is an extensively-researched, detailed and well-written treatise of the life and times of "an able minister of the New Testament" whose godly life and ministry had a profound influence both in Bourton-on-the-Water, where Benjamin Beddome is most remembered as a pastor, but also further afield in the days of the Evangelical Awakening when giants in the faith such as George Whitefield were being used of God to extend His kingdom in Great Britain and North America.

Tracing his ancestry, boyhood, call by grace and to the ministry, and pastorate at Bourton-on-the-Water, Stephen Pickles gives a fascinating and detailed account of the spiritual state of the nation at the time, and the success attending the ministry of Beddome and also his contemporaries, and those who were the fruits of his labours.

Among many things that could be said, these stand out:

First, the many hymns penned by Beddome, some of which are in our own Gadsby's hymnbook. Stephen Pickles draws attention to the spiritual experience of Beddome displayed in this way. As Martin Luther said: "Temptation, meditation and prayer make a man a minister," so these hymns demonstrate that it was so in the life and exercises of Beddome. Deeply taught, the truth was engraved in his heart, which truth he delighted to preach and desired to be found in the hearts and lives of his many hearers.

Second, the preciousness of the Word of God and Beddome's desire to see it propagated among the nations. To Beddome the Scriptures were his rule of life, and the plumbline which he let down in his ministry and profession of the Saviour whom he loved and whose cause he desired to see prosper. He strongly supported and took an active interest in the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen.

Third, Beddome's active interest in the social and political issues of the day. The slave trade, wars with France, and the American War of Independence were issues with which he was prayerfully concerned. The author draws from the writings and sermons of many other contemporaries of Beddome to give a fascinating picture of both the spiritual and social life at the time.

Sadly, deep division at Bourton-on-the-Water, instigated by the unwise behaviour of his assistant pastor, marred Beddome's last years, and continued after his death until the appointment of Thomas Coles, who was the fruit of his labours, as pastor.

On September 3rd, 1795, Benjamin Beddome entered the rest that remaineth for the people of God, when his ransomed soul was taken to glory. Among his last words were these: "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" and, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Though some readers might find its detail challenging in places, it is a pleasure heartily to recommend this book, especially to those who have an interest in the times in which Beddome lived and laboured.

When George Whitefield was at the height of his popularity, one of his contemporaries, Lord Clare, asked him to put in a good word for him to the voters in Bristol, where he was standing in a general election. George Whitefield replied: "In general elections I never interfere, but I earnestly implore your Lordship to use diligence to make your own particular calling and election sure."

Sir Isaac Newton said, not long before he died: "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and amusing himself in now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than usual, while a great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

THE MASTER IS COME

(John 11. 28)

“The Master is come!” precious words full of life –
His coming is always the end of our strife;
The end to our darkness, for He is our light,
The bright Morning Star that shall chase away night.

To Martha and Mary He came when in grief –
They wept for their brother as sisters can weep;
And such the compassion of Jesus our Head,
He groaned and He wept at the grave of the dead.

“Behold how He loved him!” the Jews wondering said,
“Could not He have saved this man from the dead?”
Ah, short-sighted sinners, they knew not the power
The Father would give to His Son in that hour.

We often have wondered in life’s weary way
That Jesus should tarry, and make such delay,
When some mighty sorrow our spirit has crushed,
And fond expectations have crumbled to dust.

And as we sat silently nursing our grief,
How oft has He sent us a word of relief,
A message by brother or sister maybe –
“The Master is come, and He calleth for thee.”

Then quickly we rise like poor Mary of old,
The grief of our sorrowful tale to unfold;
We hasten all weary the loved One to meet,
And sink with our burden of woe at His feet.

As one whom his mother can comfort and bless,
He gathers our souls to His own loving breast;
Our burdens, our sorrows, how quickly they flee!
“The Master is come, and He calleth for thee.”

E. Hake

When Philip Melancthon, reformer and friend of Martin Luther, was converted and sent to preach the gospel, he thought that it was impossible for his hearers to withstand the power of the truth in the ministry of the gospel. After a while, he complained: “That old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.”

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

SEPTEMBER 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE TEMPTATION OF ABRAHAM

It is imperative to believe that “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man” (Jas. 1. 13). On the other hand, He does try the faith of His people, and possibly no child of God has been put to such a test as Abraham was in Genesis 22.

The previous chapter tells of the sad departure of Hagar and Ishmael from the tent, the Lord finally undoing the mistake made years before, when Abraham’s faith wavered in the barren years of Sarah’s womb. Now only Isaac, the son of promise, is left. Perhaps Abraham thought that his life would become less troubled and peaceful. But suddenly a new trial from a most unexpected quarter comes. Abraham’s God, and none other, commands him to take Isaac, his only son, in whom the promises of future blessing lay, and offer him for a burnt offering on a mountain which he would be shown. How true are John Bunyan’s words: “No sooner is one trouble o’er, another doth him seize.”

In Abraham’s response to this unlooked-for trial, we see four commendable features.

First, his prompt obedience. He rises early in the morning, saddles his ass and takes with him Isaac and two young men. Unconditionally and without question Abraham obeys. He believes the command came from his God, his best Friend, and that He would never command anything unreasonable and without the sufficient grace and strength to go with it. What inner exercises occupied his mind and soul in the long trek we are not told, but we can safely assume that it was a journey accompanied by much prayer, pleading and self-examination.

Second, his priority. In the whole of this trial, his God came first, before Isaac and himself. To Abraham, it was as with the apostle: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1. 21). It was this priority that the Lord commended when the trial was ended. “Them that honour Me I will honour” (1 Sam. 2. 30) was most strikingly fulfilled on top of Mount Moriah.

Third, his faith. We are told in Hebrews 11. 17-19 that Abraham believed that even if the knife had been plunged into Isaac’s heart, and the fire had done its work, that Isaac would accompany him down the mountain side. He had said as much to the young men who remained at the foot of the mountain. “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and

come again to you” (Gen. 22. 5). Abraham’s faith was not always so strong as on Mount Moriah. As with all of God’s people, he proved that faith is not only God’s gift in the initial imparting of it, but also that God is the only Maintainer of its strength. It was the same God that enabled Job to say: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13. 15), that supported Abraham’s faith with an unseen hand. Like Moses, “he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11. 27).

Fourth, his confidence. He declared to Isaac halfway up the mountain, when asked where the lamb for the burnt offering was, that “God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22. 8). Thus just when and where it was needed, the ram caught in the thicket is seen, and a suitable substitute without blemish found and offered up. No wonder Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh, meaning “the Lord will provide” (verse 14).

In conclusion, we should not forget the faith and unquestioning obedience of Isaac in submitting to be bound on the altar, expecting the knife to be plunged into his heart any moment. He was, no doubt, a strong lad, physically stronger than his father, and could, no doubt, have resisted. In both these eminently-godly men we see, in Abraham a faint yet distinct type of God the Father, who spared not His own Son, and in Isaac the type of the unreserved obedience of the Saviour, caught in the thorny thicket of His people’s sins, for whom there was no voice from heaven to stay the hand of justice smiting Him, nor a substitute worthy to take His place.

THE DYING THIEF

*From a sermon preached by J. C. Philpot at Oakham
on February 2nd, 1847*

Text: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23. 42, 43).

God has given in His Word some astonishing instances of the freeness and sovereignty of His grace, but I do not know that we have a more striking instance than the one before us. It is true indeed that every called and saved vessel of mercy is an astonishing instance of the sovereignty of God’s grace – and I believe every truly-convinced sinner who is brought to the footstool of mercy, and made to receive salvation as a free gift, is convinced in his own experience that he himself is one of the most marvellous instances of sovereign grace. Yet there are

several instances in the Scripture that seem to shine forth with more distinguished lustre. For instance, look at the case of Paul, and compare it with that of the thief on the cross. I do think that all through the Scriptures we can scarcely find two more striking instances of the fulness and freeness of sovereign grace than these two – one a complete Pharisee, the other a thorough profligate. Which was farthest from heaven? We can scarcely say. And yet the same sovereign grace, which could arrest the bloodthirsty Pharisee on his way to Damascus, was able also to snatch from death the expiring malefactor.

In looking, then, at these words, we will endeavour to consider,

- I. The character of the man before he was called by grace.
- II The sovereignty of God in calling him.
- II What the man was after he was called by grace.
- IV His prayer. And, if time permit,
- V. The Lord's answer to it.

I. First, then, let us consider the *character of the man before grace called him*. When do you think grace called him? There are some people whose eyes, like owls and bats that cannot bear the full light of the sun, have been so dazzled by this glorious effulgence of sovereign grace that they have endeavoured to show that this man was not so bad as the other, and that there were some marks in his character which were not to be found in the other malefactor. In the saving of the one and in the leaving of the other there is such a display of God's electing decrees that these owls and bats could not bear its full lustre. But I think, if we compare the parallel places in the other gospels, we shall find that the thief who was saved was not one whit better than he who perished. For we read, "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth" (Matt. 27. 44). So that it appears up to the moment when sovereign grace touched this sinner's heart, he could unite with his brother thief in reviling, blaspheming and casting reproaches on the Redeemer. "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us."

It would appear that this man who was being executed upon the cross for his crimes was not a common malefactor, but one of an extraordinary nature – for it seems that the Jews selected two of the vilest wretches they could pick out, in order to throw the greater disgrace on the Lord. So great was their enmity, so intense their hatred against the dear Son of God, that to cover Him with the lowest disgrace two malefactors were chosen, and He was put between them, as though they should thereby loudly declare, "Here are three criminals, and the One in the middle the worst of the three."

But there is another reason why we may suppose both were hardened characters. In those days history tells us that Judaea was much infested with highwaymen, and these two men seem to have been

companions of Barabbas, of whom we read, “And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection” (Mark 15. 7). Then here we have a hardened malefactor, a wretch who was justly dying upon the cross.

II. Observe *the sovereignty of God’s grace in calling him*. Try to represent to your mind these two malefactors, each on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, reviling and blaspheming with their tongues, and thus hoping to find some little relief in railing upon the Lord of life and glory. Well, can you see any difference here? These two men are writhing on the cross, a few hours will close the scene, here is a hell opening her jaws to receive them; here is the wrath of God ready to burst forth. What should there be in one man more than the other? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Why, then, did one pray, and the other not pray? How is it one was called, and the other left? Why, wholly and solely – let men cavil and blaspheme as they may – because sovereign grace interposed, and God’s electing decrees were carried out in the salvation of one and the ruin of the other. But then someone might say, “Was not God unjust?” How can that be? Would not God’s justice have left them *both* to perish? But His mercy interfered in the behalf of His child, whom He had decreed eternally thus to call and save.

III. But we will now look a little at *his character after he was called by grace*. This is a very important point. The man was not saved and taken to heaven without a change. The words of the Lord must ever stand: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3. 3). And thus this dying thief must have had a new birth, that mighty revolution wrought in his soul, or else he never could have been with Jesus in paradise. Regenerating grace touched his heart, the scales dropped from his eyes, the veil of unbelief was taken from his heart, faith was given him, and repentance unto life. And what was the fruit of it?

1. We will look, first, at the man’s *faith*. I believe we have scarcely through the Scriptures such an instance of strong faith as this. It may be said, “Abraham’s faith was very strong.” It was. When he offered up his son Isaac, his faith was strong, perhaps as strong as the dying thief’s. But looking at all the circumstances of the case, I think that, except the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of believers, we have scarcely one instance of faith so strong as his. Was there not everything in the circumstances to damp and extinguish faith? Look at His own disciples: they all forsook Him and fled. His own followers, who had walked with Him for years, deserted Him in the last extremity. But to believe and acknowledge that Jesus had a kingdom when He was dying as a malefactor, O what strong faith must God have given him! When he

looked on the agonising body of Jesus – to believe He was the Son of God, and had a kingdom to bestow!

For was there not everything without and within to damp and extinguish faith, so that no sooner (so to speak) did faith lift up its head, than everything conspired to destroy it? Like a man drowning, when his head is just got above water, there comes a high wave and dashes him back again, yet he stretches forth his hands again, in spite of death and hell – so it was with this thief on the cross. There was everything to destroy his faith, yet it survived. Might not this have been the language of the man on the cross: “If indeed He be the Son of God, would He not deliver Himself?” No! faith triumphed in spite of all without and within, in spite of all the infidelity and unbelief of his heart, in spite of all those outward circumstances which would seem to have extinguished the strongest faith in the world.

2. We see also his *repentance*. It was not naked faith, but there was repentance mixed with it. See how he reproved his fellow malefactor: “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds” (verses 39-41). Here was repentance unto life, the acknowledging of God’s righteousness in bringing him to die on the cross.

3. But we see in him another grace of the Spirit – *prayer*. He had not time or strength to pray very long. But what virtue there was in his prayer! How it entered into the ears of the Lord Jesus! And what an answer of mercy, peace and salvation it brought out of Him to his soul!

IV. And this leads us to consider *his prayer*: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” “LORD.” Here he acknowledged the Godhead of Christ. O what a wonderful thing was this, that the Lord was pleased to raise up such faith in his soul that he saw the Godhead shining through His agonising humanity! Others saw it not. His enemies could revile and blaspheme Him. But this poor, writhing malefactor had faith given him to believe that He on whom his eyes were fixed, suffering the same accursed punishment, was the Lord Almighty. It is very easy to talk about these things: but could we put ourselves for a moment into his circumstances, what strength of faith was here!

But we see in him not only faith, but confession. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10. 10). He said, “Lord.” He thus worshipped Him, and owned Him as Lord. He looked to Him, though in his feelings he was indeed at the ends of the earth, and cried. What faith was there in that cry!

But what did he say besides? “Lord, *remember me.*” Religion with him was a personal thing: the salvation of his soul was his chief concern. There were but a few hours before his eyes must close in death, and what an eternity was about to receive him! This he felt – this was deeply wrought in his conscience – and this brought out the cry from his soul, “Remember me.” As though he should say, “Lord, whomsoever Thou forgettest, remember *me*, think upon *me*, save *me*, deliver *me.*” And is not this the feeling, the cry of every God-taught soul? “Remember, think upon me; do not forget me. Let my name be precious to Thee, before Thine eyes and in Thy heart. Thou hast many things to think upon, Lord: but, Lord, *remember me.* I am a perishing wretch, a guilty malefactor, a condemned criminal deserving to die a thousand deaths, and to suffer a thousand hells. But think on me, do me good, cast me not away.”

And observe also that this dying malefactor knew that *the Lord had a kingdom.* What faith is here! Yes, and that He would one day come into that kingdom. And when He came into His kingdom, surrounded by all His saints and angels, then the cry and desire of his soul was that Jesus would remember him. And observe he did not ask for a high place in this kingdom. What do people go to heaven for? to sit on high seats? God forbid! “In My Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14. 2), but not exalted seats, one above another. All are equal there. What is their joy? To see Christ as He is, face to face, and to have done for ever with this wretched body of sin and death. I believe every living soul will be brought there. O, could there be degrees in heaven, what confusion there would be! But when those who are saved are saved as this poor malefactor was – by sovereign grace, by the blood of the Lamb – this takes away all contention and jealousy about the highest place, and makes the soul thankful to be saved at all.

V. This leads us to the last point – *the answer that the Lord Jesus was pleased to bestow.* And O what an answer it was! How encouraging it is to poor souls! Can you find by searching the Scriptures a single instance where a soul earnestly, honestly and sincerely cried to the Lord Jesus Christ when He was upon earth, and He turned a deaf ear to his cry? It is true, when some came to Him and said, “What must I do?” and so on, the Lord sent them to the law. But we never find a poor, guilty wretch who came to His footstool crying and sighing for mercy that He turned away.

And what was the answer? “*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*” In a moment the word came, “Verily!” It is the faithful Amen that speaks the word; what He says may be depended upon. There is great force in that word, “Verily” – “Amen, I say unto *thee*, thou malefactor, thou standing with a thousand crimes, thou fearing the wrath of God, thou awaiting a justly merited doom – I

say unto *thee*.” O how the words must have dropped like honey into the poor sinner’s heart! What peace and joy must have flowed into his soul as the words fell from the Redeemer’s lips! “Verily I say unto thee.” And immediately faith doubtless was raised up in his soul. He received the promise, felt the sweetness of it, and died in the enjoyment of it. Blessed man! blessed faith! but above all, blessed Redeemer, who gave the faith and saved the man!

“Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” “*Today* – before the sun sets, before night comes on, on the very day that the words are spoken to thee – shalt thou be *with Me*.” What could he, what would he, want more than to be with Jesus, the Lord of life and glory, in the sweet enjoyment of His love, to see Him face to face, and be ever blessed with the manifestation of His presence? In spite of sin, in spite of death, in spite of Satan, the Lord said, “Today shalt thou be with Me – safe in My arms, safe in My bosom, safe under the wings of eternal love.” What could he want more? That fills all.

“In paradise.” There have been various opinions about it. Some have thought that paradise means the place of departed souls, at least of happy, departed souls, before they go to heaven to be with the Lord for ever. But I think the safest way is to see what the Word of God says. Man’s opinion is of little weight, unless established and confirmed by the Word of the living God. The Word of God says, “I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth), such an one caught up into the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise.” Here we have paradise identified with the third heaven. So that wherever the third heaven is, where God is pleased to manifest His glory, there Jesus took the thief, there he was with Him in paradise, in bliss. It is true that the Lord Jesus Christ had not then ascended up to where He was before, visibly in His body, but the soul of the thief was with the soul of Jesus in paradise.

But what does the word *paradise* signify? Paradise was the garden where Adam and Eve were placed when created. And thus it seems to signify in the language of the Jews (and the Lord saw fit to use the same), the eternal abode of the blessed, where the tree of life grows, where the face of God is seen, and where all joy and happiness are to the very full. That very day he was with Jesus in paradise, and he is in paradise now, in the happy enjoyment of the face of God, bathing his ransomed soul in the streams of the waters of heaven; and there he will be for all eternity.

Is not this very encouraging to the Lord’s poor, self-condemned, sin-harassed people? Whatever more can we want than such a free and

full salvation? Is not sovereign grace what your soul longs at times earnestly to enjoy? Depend upon it, whether you feel it or not, that you need the same salvation that he did: nay, you need it to be received in the same way, and to be manifested to you in the same manner. And if the Lord has ever humbled you, and made you to feel the guilt of sin, and the evils of your heart, you have not a stone to throw at that crucified malefactor: but in your feelings are every whit as bad as he. Nay, I believe there are thousands in hell who have not been half such sinners as you and I. I can say so for myself. Therefore let men talk of merit as long as they please, let this be all our hope and all our expectation – to be saved freely by the manifestation of sovereign, distinguishing grace. I am sure it is the sweetest song a sinner can sing upon earth, and the sweetest song a sinner can sing in heaven.

What discordant notes there would be did any get to heaven by works! We should have discord in the very court of harmony itself. Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus, Peter, the swearing fisherman of the Galilean lake, the thief upon the cross, and thousands of double-dyed sinners would be singing. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and power and glory!” And there would be a semi-chorus of workmongers shouting, “Worthy are we to receive honour and glory and blessing, because we have got to heaven by our good works!” But such discord will never be heard in the courts of heaven, where harmony and bliss and peace must ever reign. If you recollect, no man could learn to sing the new song but the hundred-and-forty-four thousand who were redeemed from among men (see Rev. 14. 3). What taught it them? The manifestation of sovereign mercy and distinguishing grace, pardoning the sins that lay upon their consciences.

May the Lord, if it be His gracious will and purpose, encourage any poor, self-condemned sinner here. Remember, my friend, remember the thief on the cross: was not his case as bad as ever yours can be? You say your heart is so bad. So it is: worse than you have ever seen it. Your sins are so great – you have never seen a thousandth part of them. Your heart is so full of evil: full, yes, fuller than ever you saw it, or ever will see it. Yet sovereign grace has saved hundreds as bad as you. O may this encourage some of the Lord’s despairing saints to lift up their eyes and hearts, and believe that the same grace which sufficed to save the dying thief is sufficient for them. Depend upon it, if they had the same faith that inspired his heart, they would say, “Lord, remember *me*.” And they will have sooner or later, if not the same words, yet the substance of them, spoken to their hearts, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.”

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF BEING READY

By Jesse Delves (1891-1980)

“And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Matt. 25. 10).

It is a most solemn parable (Matt. 25.1-12). To my feeling it is one of the most solemn parables, if not the most solemn, searching parable, that the Lord Jesus gave utterance to in the days of His flesh. He often spoke by parables, so that those who heard them often did not know what was His meaning in the parable because of the hardness of their hearts. But He spake in parables; and there are many parables. But here is a parable which, to my mind, constitutes a most pertinent warning, showing the danger of a mere form of godliness where there is no power, no life, no reality. It is in the power of nature to put on a profession of religion; it is in the power of nature to say, “We believe that,” or, “We do not believe that”; but it is in the power of grace alone to implant that divine life that must issue in the salvation of our never-dying souls. At the same time, it is a solemn point to observe how far some may go in a profession of religion and seem – *seem* – to be right, and yet have no real root to their religion.

So in the Scriptures we have to notice a dividing line between the pretensive and the real, the false and the true, the lost and the saved. And here in this parable we read of “ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” They all had their lamps, you see. There was no apparent, open, manifest difference then. They all had their lamps. It was not a case of the five wise having their lamps and the five foolish being without them. Oh, no, they all had their lamps; and they all went forth to meet the bridegroom. They went forth together. It was not a case of the five wise going forth to meet the bridegroom and the five foolish tarrying behind. No, they went forth to meet the bridegroom all together; and they all slumbered and slept while the bridegroom tarried; and they all heard the midnight cry: “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” So that up to now there seems to be no external difference to mark the wise from the foolish. This is a very important consideration, is it not? It seems to me to go to show how far we may go in a dead profession of religion, with everything so far commendable, externally viewed. Oh, how solemn this is, is it not? So it came to pass that a difference began to reveal itself.

There will be a day when the Searcher of all hearts will bring to light where we really stand. What a mercy to possess a religion that consists in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart. This marks the real difference between a professor and a possessor in the things that concern our eternal peace.

So it is said: “They that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” Some poor things will be found ready, while to many high, towering professors in religion the Lord will say: “I never knew you: depart from Me.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY COMMITTEE

As there may be some misunderstanding with some of our loyal supporters regarding the function of the Gospel Standard Committee and its role among the churches, we set out the following below, hoping that this may be helpful in clarifying the responsibilities of the Society, the Committee members and the subscribers.

Question 1: What are the origins of the Gospel Standard Society?

Answer: The Gospel Standard Aid Society commenced in 1875 – to give regular support to needy ministers who are members of churches who subscribe to the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith. This support is extended to their widows in the event of the passing away of a minister. In 1878 the Poor Relief Society was formed – regularly to support needy members and those who regularly attend a Gospel Standard listed chapel. Together with the Gospel Standard Convalescent Fund, all three charities were amalgamated in 2007.

Question 2: What is the primary object of the Charity?

Answer: The Gospel Standard Society has several functions and responsibilities according to the Trust Deed. Primarily its “core business” is the distribution of funds to those in need.

Question 3: Are there other similar connected charities?

Answer: Yes, there is the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund. This Fund supports “one off” grants to attendees of Gospel Standard listed chapels. This usually takes place at the end of each year but, sometimes, additional assistance may be given to others in need of financial help during the year. The Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund, the Gospel Standard Trust and the Gospel Standard Baptist Library are independent charities.

Question 4: How is the Gospel Standard Committee formed?

Answer: The Gospel Standard Committee is formed of male members from Gospel Standard churches. They are appointed for a term of three years in rotation. The subscribers are asked to endorse (or otherwise) their individual appointment prior to the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee has the authority to add to its number

between Annual General Meetings, these appointments to be confirmed prior to the next Annual General Meeting.

Question 5: Who appoints the Editors of the denominational magazines?

Answer: The Committee is responsible for appointing Editors for the (monthly) *Gospel Standard*, the (monthly) *Friendly Companion* and also the *Perception* magazines.

Question 6: Who is responsible for the list of ministers shown in the *Gospel Standard*?

Answer: The maintaining of this list and its integrity is the responsibility of the Gospel Standard Committee.

Question 7: So the list of ministers and churches is *voluntary*?

Answer: Yes, the Committee is not a ruling synod and in handling the Gospel Standard list it recognises the scriptural independence of the ministers and churches. It does not have powers, nor does it seek the powers, to interfere with the independence of individual churches.

Question 8: I understood that the Committee instigated the process where a minister's name was added to the list?

Answer: No, that is not correct. It is for the churches to initiate recommendations, either the "home church" (i.e. the church at which the minister is currently a member in good standing when the application is made), or other churches where the minister has preached the requisite number of times.

Question 9: What is the "requisite number of times" you have mentioned?

Answer: The criteria are that the minister shall have been preaching for at least three years, and the application shall be initiated by the church of which he has been a member for at least three years and is still a member, or by a church where the minister has taken at least seven preaching services during the last three consecutive years. In addition, at least two churches in whose congregations the minister has preached not less than seven times during the last three consecutive years, are required to unite in the application.

The Gospel Standard Committee members have been concerned for some years that there are several ministers whose ministry is very acceptable but whose names have not been put forward for inclusion. The Committee believes that for the unity of our churches – now numerically much depleted – the list should represent as many as possible of those faithful ministers who have been well received by those who hear them preach.

Question 10: How is a church added to the list of Gospel Standard churches?

Answer: To maintain the integrity of the charity there is a need to maintain the list of churches who have *voluntarily* agreed to the basis of faith and order of the Gospel Standard Articles, and to comply with them. Churches who are in agreement with the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Society, and who observe strict communion, are encouraged to make application for inclusion.

Question 11: Why does the Committee sometimes remove a minister's name or a church from the list?

Answer: This is, sadly, one of the more difficult matters that the Committee members are sometimes required to attend to. While seeking to maintain the integrity of the Society, together with the unity of the churches, they are acutely aware that each church is independent, and thus the Committee has no right to interfere in local church matters. As stated earlier, the Committee does not have the powers of a synod. However, the churches are scripturally interdependent and sometimes the decision of one church may have repercussions which impinge on other churches with whom they are in fellowship. Occasionally the Committee has been asked to advise in difficult circumstances where an event may compromise the doctrinal foundation and scriptural New Testament order. This has sometimes required the Committee to take a decision relating to the list of ministers and churches which, sadly, has often been misunderstood. Such decisions are only taken as a last resort when all efforts have failed to bring about an honourable reconciliation. There are also occasions where a minister or church has requested that their details are removed from the list. The Committee would obviously honour the request.

Question 12: How do I become a subscriber to the Society?

Answer: A subscriber must signify, in writing, their agreement and adherence to the 35 Articles of Faith. The subscription is a minimum of £5.00 per annum per person.

Question 13: So what are the benefits of being a subscriber?

Answer: There are several benefits and responsibilities. It shows support for our denominational charity which distributes to needy cases among our churches. There is a responsibility to vote on any major issue of doctrine or practice which might arise affecting the standing and integrity of the Society, and by extension our denomination, which is bound together by agreement with the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith. A subscriber is entitled to vote at any meetings arranged by the Committee – annual or special – and they have the right to speak and to ask relevant questions at such meetings. To give time for prayerful

response, subscribers who have substantive questions they may wish to raise at such meetings, are asked to submit such queries before the meeting. The Charity is ultimately responsible to its subscribers.

Question 14: As a subscriber I am unable to attend any meetings, can I still “have a say” in any proceedings?

Answer: Yes. A request for a proxy vote would be honoured. Particularly the Committee encourages any subscriber who knows of any person in financial need who attends or is a member of one of our churches to bring it to the attention of the Committee at any time.

Question 15: How can I exercise my right if I wish to have a Committee member removed?

Answer: As already stated, any subscriber, before each Annual Meeting, has the opportunity to vote on the members of the Gospel Standard Committee who are elected on a term of three years on a rotational basis. The voting takes place in a secret ballot.

Question 16: My husband is a subscriber. Does that include me as his wife, or vice-versa?

Answer: No. Every subscriber is an individual and the spouse must be a subscriber in her/his own right.

Question 17: With the decline in the numbers attending our chapels, compared with former years, is there any point in becoming a subscriber?

Answer: Yes, we would encourage, particularly those younger in years, and others who are in sympathy with our group of churches, to become subscribers. There has been a gradual decline in the number of subscribers due to older friends passing away. It is important that we maintain a healthy number of subscribers as they would be the ones to vote in the event of any major issue of doctrine or practice which, as before stated, may arise potentially compromising the standing and integrity of the charity. “Ye also helping together by prayer” (2 Cor. 1. 11).

Question 18: I already pay my annual Subscription for the *Gospel Standard/Friendly Companion/Perception* magazines. I thought that this covered the Gospel Standard Society as well?

Answer: That is not correct. The subscription for the denominational magazines is entirely separate from the Gospel Standard Society subscription.

Finally, we would add that we would encourage readers to contact the Secretary where they may be unclear on any points mentioned above.

We trust that this article will clear any possible misunderstandings regarding the responsibilities that fall on the Committee members, who have been invited to become the stewards of the Society. The members of the Gospel Standard Committee trust that they have been placed there by the Lord. The responsibilities and burdens are great – and they are only men who value your continued prayerful support.

We ask that the churches prayerfully lay the matters alluded to relating to the Gospel Standard Society before the Lord. May it please the great Head of the church to bind us closer together and also revive us again (Psa. 133; Psa. 85. 6).

Gospel Standard Society Committee

GOOD WORKS THE FRUIT OF AN INNER WORK OF GOD

By Joseph Caryl (1602-1673)

“That He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers” (1 Kings 8. 58).

Those works that flow from a good principle are pleasing to God ... thus we see the necessity of regeneration. Christ says in John 3. 3, “Verily, verily.” There is a strong and double asseveration [positive or earnest declaration/affirmation]: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We are not born with this pure heart, with this good conscience, with this faith unfeigned, which are the realities of a good work. We are not born with these, for, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14. 4), not one among the children of men. A pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned are the issues of the new birth. Education cannot make the heart pure; it must be revelation which makes the heart pure. Good education may change the life and the conversation. As they say, to study arts and philosophy, it takes off the roughness that is in man’s nature, and does smooth men, and frame them very much for excellent uses. Good literature and education may civilise, but it cannot spiritualise. It may change a man’s course, but it cannot change his nature; that is only done by regeneration.

Now I say, a man’s state, his nature must be changed; he must have a pure heart, which we never have till our natures are changed. He must be good before he can do good spiritually. Mark that word of the apostle, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2. 10). Mark it, here are good works. But how do we come to these good works? Why, we are His workmanship, says He. God works

in us before we can work for Him. He makes us good before we can do good. He says, "We are His workmanship." And then, created, or so created in Christ Jesus to do good works. We by union to Jesus Christ come to have a spiritual principle to carry us out in the doing of all good works. You must be new creatures, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, before you can do them.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST
57TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Colnbrook Chapel,
on Saturday afternoon, May 20th, 2023*

The well-attended meeting commenced with hymn 360. The Chairman, Mr. D.J. Christian, read Psalms 84 and 87 and asked Mr. H. Philpott to ask the Lord's blessing. The Secretary then introduced the 2022 Annual Report and Accounts. He mentioned the net outflow of funds for the year at over £42,000 which primarily related to Publications. He explained the General part of the Trust's work was particularly concerned with the legal duties of trustees and churches, and highlighted the twenty-five sections of information provided to help with these on the website. Guidance had been provided in recent months on various matters including the employment of a pastor with the need to operate PAYE, exception from charity registration, health and safety issues and sadly, the procedure to be followed on the closure and sale of a place of worship. Much time is connected with trustee appointments, first registrations of land and the administration of funds and graveyards or properties leased by other groups. It is a great help to have a chartered surveyor, Mr. Philip Pocock, on the Committee to help with the latter.

He reminded those who were trustees to ensure they knew the provisions of their trust deeds or at the least to have copies of them. He also reminded them of the power under the Charities Act 2011 to change the administrative provisions of trust deeds. One example currently being dealt with gave the power to appoint new trustees to only the male members of the church. That is not much help if the church is brought low and there are only ladies left. So it is advisable for that to be changed to give the power to the whole church. The upper and lower limits for the number of trustees can cause problems and it is worth changing the requirements in some cases.

The sale of Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, dragged on, but it was hoped contracts would be exchanged soon. The trustees would then have the responsibility of dealing with the proceeds. The Trust also administers the Providence Chapel, Croydon Charity. Total grants agreed totalled

over £1m of which around £700,000 related to chapels. A small balance of about £20,000 was not reserved for specific cases.

Turning to Publications, he noted that *Olney – the Home of Amazing Grace*, by Graham Chewter, had sold well. Encouraging feedback had been received from one reader regarding *The Gospel Pointing to the Person of Christ*, by Andrew Bonar, “that this is one of the best things Gospel Standard Trust Publications have brought out for a while, a very helpful and refreshing book.” Two new books were mentioned: *The Desires of a Living Soul – the Life and Poetry of Clive Jefferys*, a Wiltshire farmer who attended Little Zoar Chapel, Studley, all his life until his death in 1987; *The Life and Letters of William Boorman* was particularly interesting to the Secretary – D.J. Playfoot – being a member of the church at Lamberhurst. Mr. Boorman was the pastor for forty-five years at Lamberhurst and gave good counsel to many of the Lord’s people in the ups and downs of life. The Trust was greatly indebted to the late Mr. Ramsbottom, whose books continue to form the lion’s share of books sold by the Trust.

The Committee was greatly concerned on how to continue to operate Trust Publications. A number of points stood out from the accounts – the stock of books remained high at over seven years’ purchases, the low sales value and margin over direct costs contributed little towards overhead expenses, and the number of books sold slowly declines – over the last ten years the average number sold each year has been 8,000, whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, 20,000 books or more were sold each year. There is the level of deficit to consider at around £34,000 on page 24 and the Committee had to ask itself whether this was a right use of the legacies kindly left for book publishing. We did regard this as a valuable ministry to the churches. He mentioned the very encouraging address given by Mr. Ramsbottom at the Trust AGM in 1971 on Books and Reading, and advised copies of the address were available at the meeting.

He explained the Trust was there to help trustees and churches. The Committee appreciated the continuing support of the members of the Trust and said that new applications from those with an interest in the welfare of the churches would be welcomed.

There were no questions, and the Report and Financial Statements were received by the Trust subscribers present. The three members of the Executive Committee retiring in rotation, Messrs. D.J. Christian, A. Crowter and H. Sant, were re-elected. The appointment of Mr. M.J. Lee to the Executive Committee was confirmed and Mazars LLP re-appointed as independent examiners.

The Chairman expressed appreciation to the Secretary and his secretary for all the work done for the Trust throughout the year. Mrs. Lydia Buss was thanked for her work on the membership records. He also thanked the Publications Manager for all he has done on behalf

of the Trust. The Publications Manager had retired, but was still working unofficially for the Trust. A presentation of the two volumes of *The Confessions of the London Baptist Meetings* and a voucher for Byfords B&B had been made to him before the meeting. He also thanked the members of the Committee for the work they do, especially Mr. M.J. Hyde, who had taken over a lot of Mr. Skelton's duties. In conclusion, he expressed thankfulness to the Lord for sustaining the work and sought that His presence and blessing might still rest on the work of the Trust.

After Hymn 512 was sung, Mr. M.J. Hyde gave his address entitled, "The Church."

Mr. Hyde explained he wished to base his address on two things: first, to speak of the English word, "The church," and its root; and then second, to notice the word that is used in scripture for, "The church."

Traced back to its Greek roots the word "church" simply means, "the Lord's." The church is the possession of Jesus Christ. His people do not choose to become members of the church; they are made members of the church. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15. 16). The world does not like anything that has control over them, but grace enables the church to fall into the hands of the living God and say, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

Mr. Hyde brought out three practical points from the meaning of the word, "church":

1. Are we mindful of the fact that the glory of the church is not man's, but it is the glory of Jesus Christ?
2. Are we remembering that it is not man that sets the standards, but Jesus Christ? and,
3. Are we resting alone upon the comfort that that truth brings?

The word that is used in scripture for, "the church" is the root of the word "ecclesiastical" in English. In the Greek, that word could be summed up as "out gathered." Therefore the church means those whom the Lord has drawn out of this world and brought together.

Mr. Hyde highlighted five things the holy Scriptures say about the church.

First, the Lord's people have to be called out of the world. This calling out or sanctifying is a lifelong process, until at last they are called to leave the world forever to live with Jesus in that place where they shall never sin. Practically, the church should be visibly separated from the world in their life and witness. Mr. Hyde put the searching question: do people know by our life and witness that we are truly separated members of His church?

Second, this "calling out" is a gathering together to Jesus. It is an evidence that we have been called out, when we find a drawing to the

Lord's people. Christ's special presence is promised to the gathering together of His people. That is the basis of the local church, to be found together regularly where the Lord gathers His people and promises His presence. He asked if we were exercised to see the Lord yet working to gather in more precious souls to the churches?

Third, where there is a gathering together, Jesus Christ unites the church as one. He is the Head and we are the body. He asked if the unity of the church was a great concern to us? For further reading he mentioned *The Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland*, by James Durham, the Scottish Puritan, a book on the sin of schism. Mr. Hyde believed we should only risk the unity of the body over matters of truth, and then it would be with fear and trembling. The unity of the body is so precious! What a mercy the Head of the church is able to unite, and able to bring back (Psa. 133).

Fourth, when we are united in the church, it will lead to fellowship with one another. He quoted the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church," and "the communion of saints." The Apostle says, "To communicate forget not" (Heb. 13. 16). Do you pray for and exhort one another in the church? So often problems get out of hand. Why? Because we did not pray and exhort one another. What grace is needed to walk together in love and bear one another's burdens as the church is called to do. "And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2. 16). What a mercy the Head of the church gives grace sufficient to walk "worthy of this calling" (2 Thess. 1. 11).

Fifth, the Lord gives a name to the people He gathers to Himself. Some of the commentators say the name that He has called His church by is, "Thou art Mine" (Isa. 43. 1). He puts the Holy Ghost within His people and they become the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6. 19). It is a high privilege. This is the only comfort of the believer in life and in death – they are not their own, but Jesus owns them. "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3. 23). He asked church members if they prized church membership? The glory of grace – that the Lord should have put His name upon you, and said, "Thou art Mine." Those asking and seeking earnestly for this privilege may feel that it is an impossibility and God echoes it: "How shall I put thee among the children?" (Jer. 3. 19). However, it is not upon the grounds of what they can do or deserve; it is all upon the grounds of His free grace. One description given to the church in the Word of God is: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5. 32). It is to such sinners that He gives this glorious title, "Thou art Mine."

The spirit of the world today is "individualism," and sadly that spirit has crept into the church of Christ, breaking the communion of the

church. May the Lord be sanctifying us and taking away that spirit from within His church that He might be uniting us together as one.

In closing, Mr. Hyde briefly spoke on “denominationalism.” The Scripture knows nothing of denominations. We cannot exist as a lone entity – a single church. There will be that concern over other gatherings of the Lord’s people and there will be that desire to walk together in love. Mr. Hyde quoted a passage from the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, which beautifully expressed the relationship of the churches one to another.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Hyde for his very thought-provoking address and reiterated the desire that the Holy Ghost would indeed return. The meeting concluded with hymn 248 and the benediction.

D.J. Playfoot

Mr. Hyde’s full address is available on The Gospel Standard Trust’s website. Paper copies of both this and Mr. Ramsbottom’s address given in 1971 on Books and Reading are available on request from the Secretary.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SALVATION

By Thomas Goodwin (1600-82)

(Concluded from page 256)

6. He is a Spirit of counsel, powerfully instructing and convincingly teaching how to act and walk, for He directs us to set right steps, and to walk with a right foot, and thereby prevents us of many a sin, by seasonable instruction set on upon our hearts with a strong hand, as Isaiah 8. 11. For, as the same prophet says, He is “the Spirit of counsel and might” (Isa. 11. 2).

i. Of counsel to direct.

ii. Of might, to strengthen the inner man.

Such He was to Christ the Head, of whom it is there spoken. For instance, in that agony (on the determination of which our salvation depended), and conflict in the garden, when He prayed, “Let this cup pass,” it was this good Spirit that counselled Him to die; and in Psalm 16. 7 He blesseth God for it: “I bless the Lord that hath given Me counsel.” It was that counsel that in that case caused His heart to say, “Not My will, but Thine.” When we are out of the way, He recalls us, and is “a voice behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it,” and not only thus directs us, but taketh us by the arm, and teacheth us to go (see Hos. 11. 3). “Thy Spirit is good; lead me,” says the psalmist (Psa.

143. 10). And therefore it is a usual phrase in Romans 8 and Galatians 4, our being led by the Spirit. And not only so as to direct and lead, but effectually to cause us to walk in His statutes and ways.

7. As all the principles and the production of the acts and fixing the will, so our whole growth in grace, from first to last, is attributed to this Spirit also: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses" (Isa. 44. 3, 4), or streams. There are two things that cause the springing up of grass and growth in willows.

i. Sufficiency and plenty of water, either rain from heaven or streams of rivers, when trees (as willows) are seated by them.

ii. The sun and the sweet influences thereof (see Deut. 33. 14). And for this latter we have elsewhere our Lord Christ compared to the sun in this very respect: "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall ... grow up as calves of the stall" (Mal. 4. 2); as the sun causeth trees and plants to grow, so beasts too, which latter allusion He prosecutes there. But in that of Isaiah 44, He compares the Spirit to the floods and the rain, which, increasing the sap within the root and body of the trees, causeth them to grow up and bring forth fruits, even to old age: "I will pour floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed."

8. The whole edification of every saint, by the means of grace, which are the ordinances and other means whatsoever, all flow from the benign influences of this Spirit accompanying them, and bedewing men's hearts by them. And for the proof of this in general, you have that passage, "Then had the churches rest ... and were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9. 31). And so it is said of churches walking in all the order and ordinances of Christ, as the Author of that edification and comfort by those ordinances.

I shall instance particularly in the main ordinances of our salvation, and show how our profiting by them is from the Spirit. In the preaching of the Word we receive not only the fruits of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit Himself, by the hearing of faith, that is, by the hearing the gospel preached, which is the doctrine of truth: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. 1. 5). The Holy Ghost creates the fruit of the lips, peace, and teaches thee to profit, namely, by the lips of those who by office are said to "keep knowledge" (Mal. 2. 7). All which profiting is attributed to the Spirit: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12. 7). It is the profit both of a man's self and others. And the Holy Spirit's care is very great herein; to oversee the overseers

of the flock, and to see to it, provide the fittest stewards for every flock: “The flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Acts 20. 28). And He furnisheth them with such gifts as shall best serve and most suitably agree unto their capacities, and the bore of their understandings, and to work on their hearts; and in providential grace disposeth of them and their gifts as shall be most agreeable to their spirits and spiritual condition. As some ministers are fitted for the profiting of the weak, so others to the wise; even as the apostle says he was a debtor to both (see Rom. 1. 14).

And then He takes a further special care of their forehand meditations and preparations, to suggest such materials and notions for their sermons as shall be a food most convenient for men’s souls. They are stewards, that “give them meat in due season” (Matt. 24. 45). He fills the breasts of ministers (their spiritual nurses) with consolations and other truths, suitable to the temper and constitution of their stomachs, and instructeth them to speak words in season; and this very often unknown to themselves that speak them, they not having any aim at thee or any other man in particular in such passages, which also are utterly unexpected to or perhaps not prayed for by him whom yet they greatly concern, when yet the Holy Ghost knew whom to direct those passages unto, and had set up thy heart as the mark to shoot those arrows into it.

9. And lastly, to draw to a conclusion of the whole work of the Spirit upon us, for we are now come to the brink of eternity, the consummation of all. With respect to death, this Holy Spirit, the Comforter, all our life long feeds and maintains by faith, more or less, a lively hope within them that are regenerate: “Blessed be the God ... which ... hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1 Pet. 1. 3); which, according to the degree of it in any, allays that fear of death, the king of sorrows (i.e. the king of terrors – see Job 18. 14); the fear of which all men (which have not this Spirit) are subject unto the bondage of all their lifetime (see Heb. 2. 15); from the dominion of which bondage the Spirit of adoption frees us (see Rom. 8. 15), so as to have our spirits supported by faith, so far as ordinarily to be able (when put to it in earnest) to venture or cast our souls into the hands of God as a Father. And this the Scriptures attribute unto this good Spirit.

In 2 Corinthians, fourth and fifth chapters, the apostle treats of a believer’s dying, and comforts himself and them against it; for upon occasion, as the times then were, he and other saints were in continual hazard of death. Says he, that “we are always confident” (2 Cor. 5. 6); always, which extends both to all along our lives, and also at our deaths, so that when we come to die, or that the time of death approacheth, and is coming upon us, this Spirit is given to support us. For if always, as the

apostle even now said, and at all other times of our lives, and upon other occasions of fears and distress, He is given to help our infirmities (see Rom. 8. 26), then especially when we are weakest, as at death (to be sure) we shall be, when our flesh fails, etc. (see Psa. 73. 26).

And at the last day of the world, who is it shall raise thee up, having kept thy bones, dwelt in thy dust all this while, as Christ's Godhead did His body, which therefore though in the grave David calls the "Holy One"? (Psa. 16. 10). It is this Spirit: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8. 11). It is brought in as the comfortable consequent of this Spirit dwelling in us; and having raised thee, leaves thee not, but is the Author of all thy glory and communion with Father, Son and Himself for ever (see 1 Pet. 4. 14). He is in that respect termed the Spirit of glory; not of grace only, but of glory: "Happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you"; that is, you possess for ever this fountain of all glory, this Spirit of God, therefore the promise of the Spirit is made adequate to the whole blessing (as being the mass of blessings) which was given to Abraham: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles though Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3. 14). The whole is termed the promise of the Spirit.

Abridged

THE MINISTRY A DIVINE AND SPECIFIC CALLING

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

But why should not the ministry lie in common? "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses?" (Numb. 12. 2). Why should not one preach as well as another? I answer: Because God (who is the God of order) has made the work of the ministry a select, distinct office from any other. As in the body natural the members have a distinct office, the eye is to see, the hand to work; you may as well say, why should not the hand see as well as the eye? Because God has made the distinction. He has put the seeing faculty into the one and not the other. So here, God has made a distinction between the work of the ministry and other work.

Where is this distinction? We find in Scripture a distinction between pastor and people. "The elders" – or ministers – "I exhort.... Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5. 1, 2). If anyone may preach, by the same rule all may, and then what will become of the apostle's distinction? Where will the flock of God be if all be pastors?

God has cut out the minister his work which is proper for him and does not belong to any other. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine ... give thyself wholly to them," or, as it is in the Greek, "Be thou wholly in them" (1 Tim. 4. 13-15). This charge is peculiar to the minister and does not concern any other. It is not spoken to the tradesman that he should give himself wholly to doctrine and exhortation. No, let him look to his shop. It is not spoken to the ploughman that he should give himself wholly to preaching. No, let him give himself to his plough. It is the minister's charge. The apostle speaks to Timothy and, in him, to the rest who had the hands of the presbytery laid on them. And, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2. 15). This is spoken peculiarly to the minister. Everyone that can read the Word aright cannot divide the Word aright. So that the work of the ministry does not lie in common; it is a select, peculiar work. As none might touch the ark but the priests, none may touch this temple-office but such as are called to it.

But if a man has gifts, is not this sufficient? I answer, No! As grace is not sufficient to make a minister, so neither are gifts. The Scripture puts a difference between gifting and sending. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10. 15). If gifts were enough to constitute a minister, the apostle should have said, "How shall they preach except they be gifted?" but he says, "except they be sent?" As in other callings, gifts do not make a magistrate. The attorney that pleads at the bar may have as good gifts as the judge that sits upon the bench, but he must have a commission before he sit as judge. If it be thus in matters civil, much more in ecclesiastical and sacred, which are, as Bucer [German theologian of the Reformation period (d. 1551)] says, "Things of the highest importance." Those therefore that usurp the ministerial work without any special designation and appointment discover more pride than zeal. They act out of their sphere and are guilty of theft. They steal upon a people, and, as they come without a call, so they stay without a blessing. "I sent them not ... therefore they shall not profit this people at all" (Jer. 23. 32).

No task or office can be so honourable as to write or preach for the glory of God, and the good of His people. I hope I can say with a clear conscience that this is my desire. There is something very precious in the truth of God, something very blessed in the Person of Christ, His atoning blood, finished work and dying love. There are no subjects of meditation so sweet, so blessed, or so profitable.

THE LORD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY SHOWN TO ONE OF HIS SHEEP

*The experience of Arthur Thomas Hawkins
(Continued from page 261)*

Following further business troubles, and the commencement of new employment, he wrote:

We now began to get on more comfortably and were enabled to begin to pay off some of our debts, but Georgie's health was very poor and she was under the doctor a great deal. My heart was heavy on this account, although I could not bring myself to believe that she would die. I thought the Lord will surely hear our prayers and bring her through as He had done before. These words kept running through my mind: "Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," but as they came with no particular force, I put them from me. I could not bear the thought of being separated from my loved one, and now I can see the dear Lord's mercy to me in keeping me from seeing what He was about to do.

Well, she remained much about the same, sometimes a little better and other times not so well, until June 19th, 1923. She was well enough then to go out and do a little shopping, but had a bad night, and had great difficulty in breathing. I gave her oxygen all that night, which I was so thankful I had, as it eased her breathing considerably.

In the morning I rang up the doctor and telegraphed for mother to come as I was afraid to leave her. She got out of bed and washed herself and then got back for when the doctor came, which he did at 10 o'clock. I hesitate to write any more of that terrible and yet, I must say, blessed time, but I feel I must. After I had seen the doctor out, I went back to her. I was stunned to see the alteration in her face as she said to me, "I'm dying, do pray for me." What I felt cannot be described; my heart literally pained me as if it had been cut. I knelt down beside the bed, but words would not come. I just managed to groan out, "Lord, do help us now; do help us now," and He did help me then. He brought such a wonderful calm into my poor heart, and I believe I was enabled to leave all things in His hands, but I did want to know that it was all well with my dear one.

I still continued giving her oxygen, but presently that gave out, and her struggles to breathe were painful to see. After a while she said, "Goodbye, Mother," and became unconscious as I held her up in my arms. O I was grieved to think she was going without leaving a word behind that she knew she was safe, and I begged of the Lord to give her a token that all was well and that I might know as well, and He heard one

at that time. What a good God He is, isn't He? She regained consciousness and looked up into my face and said with a smile, "I'm going home," and a few minutes afterwards her happy spirit flew to the arms of her Saviour, and she realised then that He was hers and she was His. At the moment of her last breath, when her head dropped into my arms, these words dropped with such sweetness and power into my poor heart: "She's gone in endless bliss to dwell." O, it was balm to my wounded spirit, and I was given strength in that hour of deepest need. I did not need someone to tell me that religion, true religion, is a real thing, for I knew it, in the experience of it.

Had it not been for the gracious support and comfort that filled my heart, I should, I believe have gone mad with grief, for I loved her dearly. As the Lord had so wonderfully given her to me, so when He took back His gift, He enabled me by His grace to give her back to Him freely and willingly, and to bless and praise Him for doing it; these things are not of the earth but of heaven.

When my mother arrived about one o'clock, two hours after my dear one had gone, I met her at the back gate. I could see her heart was full, and she said, "My poor boy." I said, "Mother it's alright," and we went indoors, and I was enabled to tell her of all the dear Lord's wonderful goodness to me. I went to bed that night and slept soundly all night, which I had not been able to do for many months. As soon as I opened my eyes in the morning, my dear Lord Jesus came Himself right into my heart. O words cannot describe it. I believe I was given to taste, yea, I am sure I was, the unspeakable, ineffable joys of heaven that my dear one was enjoying to the full. I wanted to sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name." I felt I could not praise Him enough; I did try, but how short I felt I came. My soul longed to fly away to my precious Jesus; how it seemed to flutter against the bars of this vile body. I said, "Precious Jesus, I do want to praise and bless Thee, but I can't in this vile body. Do come and take me to Thyself." O, I had a taste of the unspeakable love of Jesus and I knew, yes I knew, that He loved me, poor, sinful me. One says,

"The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

And I wanted to be where He was, to be for ever with Him. "Forever," ah, it is a sweet word, is it not? I thought sometimes He was going to take me, but He has not seen fit yet, and even now sometimes when He shows me His dear face I have an intense longing to leave all below and to be with Him.

The Sunday following, Mr. Snow was preaching at Gower Street, and I told him of all the Lord's goodness to me and mentioned that I

should like the 730th hymn to be sung, which they did in the morning. That was good to me, and if ever I sung with my whole heart and soul and being, I did then. I felt I wanted everyone to praise Him.

When the undertaker had screwed the coffin down, I was struck with the words on the plate and I can see the dear Lord's hand even in this. It read, "Georgie Mary Hawkins, aged 36, 'At rest,' June 20th, 1923." The words "at rest" so exactly suited my feelings I could not but feel that she was now at rest from all her sufferings and doubts and fears, of which she had many. We laid her in the grave there to await that glorious morning, which may not be far distant, when she, with us, will be reunited to our bodies, no longer vile, but glorious like that of the Lord Jesus, and shall dwell with Him forever. O glorious day! O I love to think of that blessed body of the Lord Jesus, that very body which was on this earth, which felt all the pains and suffering, was weary and tired, was wounded and torn, suffered untold agonies, that same dear body is now in heaven, and we shall one day see it. Isn't it wonderful!

I must mention another instance of the dear Lord's goodness to unworthy me. When He took my dear one, we had not been able to get free from debt, and the funeral expenses had to be found, but before I called He answered. My manager was away from London at this time, but as soon as he returned and heard of my loss he came to see me, and asked if he could do anything for me. I said, "No, I didn't think so," and thanked him, but he seemed disappointed and when going out he put some notes into my hand and insisted that I should take them. When he was gone, I looked to see what it was and found he had given me £20, so you see my heavenly Father knew that I had need of this money and He intended I should have it. Had it not been for this I know not how I should have paid for the funeral.

Concerning this time, he wrote later:

I was thinking yesterday, what is there in it all? Death is stamped on everything. O to have a hope beyond the grave, and I believe I have. I dare not think what I should be like if I had not. I have wished many times that He would have taken me to Himself when He brought heaven into my poor heart when He took my dear one to glory. Yes, I have had a taste of heaven here, and I do not believe He will shut me out now, but while I am here I do want Him to come and talk to me, for I know "He kindly listens while I tell, the bitter pangs I feel within," the sin, the heart wanderings, the worldliness. I want Him to take me to that garden where my sins caused Him to shed great drops of blood. I believe I have been there twice in my life. O the tears I shed over the dear Lamb of God, to think that my sins caused all that suffering. Ah, this is

“... the place
 Where pride cannot intrude;
 For should it dare to enter there,
 ’Twould soon be drowned in blood,” (H. 287)

and I think that is the only place it does not intrude. Oh, if I could always live in that spot,

“I’d creep beside Him as a worm,
 And see Him bleed for me.” (H. 950)

But ah, I have got to come out into the world, and how soon it seems to drown any little, sweet feelings we have, although not always; does it not make us long for that glorious day when He will come Himself to fetch as from Meshech and carry us home, never any more to sin? Can you believe it, can you imagine what it will be to be without sin? No, we cannot imagine it; it is beyond comprehension.

At the time, I thought I will never doubt the dear Lord again, and felt that all He did was right, and so it is. But when troubles and trials, small or great, come along and we cannot see our way, how we begin to tremble and wonder what the end will be, at least I do. How I look at the trial instead of looking to Him, and then I look at my sinful, worldly, fleshly heart, and I say surely I am too black, too vile for the Lord to take any notice of me, especially after all the wonderful things He has done for me. O, if I only had one grain of faith, why it says, I could move mountains, and yet I have not faith enough to even think good thoughts; you see I am looking for a faith that will move the trial, that will shift the cross. True faith looks to Christ alone, in spite of all the sins and trials that we experience. There is that in me that always wants to do something; true faith rejoices in Jesus’ merit, yet continual sorrow bears, it “credits contradiction, talks with Him one never sees.” How we do want to see our steps and our way. “Cries and groans beneath afflictions yet it dreads the thoughts of ease”; it “hopes our guilt’s removed, though we feel it rise within.” “It lives and labours under load; though damped, it never dies.” What a mercy it is, that although we often cannot see our faith, yet however small, the Lord knows it is there, and He will never leave us to sink at last. I think sometimes I will never learn that lesson, that “in myself I nothing am, but have all things in the Lamb.” When I am stripped of everything, then I feel my helplessness and fly to Him. When He gives me a little, then I begin to get proud, and so I go on. I think sometimes no one is quite so unstable as I am.

What a mercy it is that we have not been left to choose our own paths, although sometimes the path appears to lead us away from that place where we long to be. Yet when we come to the end I believe we shall see that the leading was right.

“And if our souls the end could view,
We should approve the pathway too.”

The dear Son of God came into my poor heart when my dear one was taken. While memory lasts, I shall never forget it. I believe I felt and knew a little of what heaven was in reality, and even now sometimes, although the blessedness and glory that was felt in the real presence of the Lord Jesus is gone, when I think of it, it brings an intense longing to be forever with Him and away from the body of sin. Such was the blessedness I felt that I could not keep silence, I really thought that the dear Lord would soon come and take me to Himself, and I felt I must tell what He had done for unworthy me.

So I wrote to Mr. Riddle at Gower Street, and he asked me to meet the deacons after one of the services, which I did and was enabled to tell them a little of God's great mercy to me. They then proposed I should come before the church a month after. In the meantime, for the most part, I felt the presence of my blessed Redeemer, but sometimes when I thought of what I had undertaken, like Peter I began to sink, and trembled as I feared I should be able to say nothing, especially seeing I am naturally nervous and cannot speak to a number of people. As the time drew near, I trembled more and more, and I did beg the dear Lord to give me something to go on.

On the Sunday before the church meeting, Mr. Snow was preaching. I did hope that he would be led to say something that would be for me, and during his sermon he quoted these lines:

“Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down,
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O, Lamb of God, I come.”

That verse came with almighty power to my heart, and His love did indeed break every barrier down, and I felt I could go in His strength. The next night was the church meeting, and everything went wrong during the day. I had to go on a long journey and was afraid I should not be back in time, but hurried as much as I could. When I got to the chapel the meeting had started. I was hot with hurrying and my mind was all confusion. Mr. Riddle gave out the 173rd hymn, and while they were singing, all the confusion of mind left me. That hymn was my prayer, it so expressed what I wanted. Presently I was called to the front and began tremblingly to tell of what the Lord had done for me. I know He helped me that night; I felt it. It would not have been possible for me to stand up in front of those people and talk of anything, let alone religion, in my own strength, because of my natural nervousness and inability. I

shall never forget Mr. Marriott coming to fetch me from the vestry afterwards. His face beamed as he shook my hand and said, "I feel a brother to you in many respects," and the other friends too. I was overcome with their welcome. I was not worthy, I knew, but I hoped that this too was to the honour and glory of my dear Lord. O I would not take anything to myself, for I know that in me there dwells no good thing; I do hope 'tis His honour and His glory that I seek.

I was baptized the evening of the following Tuesday week by Mr. Stonelake. I asked them to sing the 410th hymn, for I did feel that "My Jesus had done all things well." I felt sorry Mr. Wiles left out the last two verses, for I thought I should soon experience those, but the Lord has not seen fit to take me yet.

I must go back a little now. I had at many times felt a longing to join the Lord's dear people, but my natural nervousness always kept me back. I remember one occasion (and it was brought so forcibly to me when I came before the church). I was in Gower Street with Georgie one Sunday, and I felt such an overwhelming love to the Lord Jesus, I felt I could part with everything for Him (it was when we were passing through deep providential trials), and something seemed to say, "Can you part with your dear wife?" O, that did cut, but I believe the love I felt to the Lord just then far outweighed the love I felt even to my dear one, and I said, "Yes." Little did I think then that I should be called to tread that path.

What a great mercy, is it not, that we are not allowed to see our path in front. I think if we did, we should be thinking and worrying too much about the roughness of the way, a long time ahead, instead of keeping our eyes on the One who is leading us in that path and is taking the worst of the stumbling blocks out of the way. O if we could but keep close to Him, how much better we should get along, and if we could have a glimpse sometimes – when our own way seems extra hard and difficult – of His way and His cross, see His dear hands and feet, torn and bruised, and His dear face – what suffering and anguish we should see written there. Was ever sorrow like this? One glance at Him and our own way and our cross, seems as one says, "Ours a drop, but Thine a sea." Yet we understand so little of the intensity of His sufferings. Truly Hart says:

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood;
But how little's understood!
Of His sufferings so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense." (H. 154)

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEWS

Gospel Life, by John Owen; 189 pages; price £6.50; and **Gospel Ministry**, by John Owen; 189 pages; price £6.25; both Banner of Truth Puritan Paperbacks; available from all good Christian bookshops, and both volumes can be purchased as a set direct from the Banner of Truth for £11.

John Owen, the highly-regarded Puritan, is perhaps best known for some of his doctrinal treatises on *The Glory of Christ*, *Communion with God*, or his commentaries on Psalm 130 and Hebrews. But he was for many years a faithful pastor, and these two books are made up of John Owen's sermons principally preached to his church in Leadenhall Street, London, which he pastored between 1673 and his death in 1683. All the sermons are taken from volume 9 of Owen's collected works and have been lightly edited to make them easier to read today.

Gospel Life contains thirteen sermons which deal with key aspects of the Christian's life: faith, love, humility, mortification. These are important subjects. The sermon on love was preached when two congregations were united under Owen's pastoral ministry. Owen believed gospel love was vital for the unity and health of the church. It is an important message today, when the love of many appears to have grown cold. The sermons on humility are not crushing, but practical and consolatory. Two sermons are on God, the believer's Rock.

Gospel Ministry is made up of nine sermons dealing with aspects of the ministry, particularly the pastoral office. Other subjects include true worship and the beauty of Zion – and how pastors should labour to maintain it. There is a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of the ministry. The book finishes with a precious reminder that the church is ultimately in the care of Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and Owen lays out many encouragements to the church in days of trouble to plead with Jesus to shepherd them. Our readers would be wrong if they felt this was a book for ministers. The sermons were not preached to ministers alone, but for the benefit of the congregation in the pew. They are things all our readers need to hear, that we might rightly understand the ministry and the pastoral office, and therefore value it, and seek grace to uphold it.

As always, Owen is to be highly recommended. He does not hold with all our doctrinal distinctions, but read with gracious discernment there is much soul food in these volumes. Sadly, the publishers have gone too far in their modernisation and resorted to the use of the English Standard Version for Scripture quotes. Owen preached from the King James Version and had no knowledge of the critical text of the Greek New Testament. Its use puts words in Owen's mouth, and jars with the text of the sermons in places. For those that can, we recommend they read Owen's sermons without this adulteration in his collected works. But with this warning, we still believe there is much benefit to be gained through reading these books, especially *Gospel Ministry*, the message of which is timely for our churches.

Matthew J. Hyde, Brighton

Esther, by Thomas McCrie; paperback; 221 pages; price £11.90 plus postage; published by Reformation Press, 11 Churchill Drive, Stormoway, Isle of Lewis; HS1 2NP.

Thomas McCrie (1772-1835) was one of the secessionists at the time of the Disruption, exercising a fruitful ministry in Edinburgh for many years. Although known mostly as an historian, being the biographer of John Knox among others, he was also an able pastor and expounder of the Scriptures.

This is excellently illustrated in this exposition of the Book of Esther. It has come from a series of lectures on Esther which McCrie gave to his congregation, and was first published posthumously in 1838. The style is eminently readable, wholly based on the Word of God, and intertwined with many practical lessons which a casual reader of the Book of Esther would miss.

It is warmly commended to our readers.

Jonathan Ranken Anderson, the Free Presbyterian Church and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists, by Roy Middleton; hardback; 126 pages; price, £13.50 plus £3.00 postage; published by and obtainable from The James Bourne Society, Rivendell, Popes Lane, Upham, Southampton, SO32 1JB.

Jonathan Ranken Anderson (1803-1859) was a minister who laboured at first in the Church of Scotland, then as a Free Church minister after the Disruption, and then later as a separate minister. Following his early death, union was sought by his people with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, but that did not prove an easy relationship as there was a further secession of many to form a separate congregation.

Anderson was highly esteemed among the godly of his generation in Scotland, who loved experiential preaching, of which he was a "master in Israel." He was, however, very critical of the ministry of some of the ministers in the Free Church at that time, and this brought him into conflict with the Synod and eventually led to his separation from the Free Church.

As the title suggests, Jonathan Ranken Anderson held a place of high esteem among many in our churches who were favoured to read his sermons, many of which had been lovingly transcribed by Herbert Bastion Pitt of Trowbridge, deacon at the Halve church after its secession from Zion. J.C. Philpot, J.K. Popham and J.H. Gosden were among those who warmly commended his ministry.

In this interesting account, Roy Middleton has drawn from a lecture he gave to the James Bourne Society in 2022. Tracing firstly, Anderson's background, conversion and call to the ministry, Roy Middleton, while acknowledging the somewhat separatist tendencies of Anderson, brings out those qualities of doctrine, experience and precept which made him so greatly beloved by many of the godly in his generation and since.

Then we are given an interesting and informative, well-researched review of the life of Herbert Pitt and with it comes the close connection between the two denominations. It is encouraging to see how, without compromise of distinctive positions, the godly among the Free Presbyterians and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists can unite in their love of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are several appendices, one of which details the editing of Anderson's sermons by Pitt, to remove the language of the free offer, on which point the two denominations graciously differ.

This book is highly commended, not least for the balanced and warm-hearted way Roy Middleton has sought to emphasise those many points where we are in agreement with our brethren in the Free Presbyterian Church.

THE TWO HEADS

Written after hearing a sermon from Romans 5, 6. 1, 2.

My father Adam for me stood
A pure and upright man,
Delighting in the law of God
As one made upright can.

He heard for me the solemn claim
Of God enjoined on me,
To love and fear His holy name
And serve Him perfectly.

“Obedience is thy life,” said He,
“And that for evermore;
The soul that sinneth death shall see
In curses great and sore.”

O shameful guilt that fell on me
When, of his own free will,
My covenant head believed a lie,
And dared forbidden ill!

Stripped then of all my righteousness,
With nought my shame to hide,
God’s curse on me in him must press
I thus in Adam died.

But sovereign grace, how sweet the sound!
That sinners dead might live,
A new *eternal* Head had found,
Eternal life to give.

“Myself a Ransom I provide,
Thy flesh and blood I’ll take,
And God in Man once crucified
Shall full atonement make.”

He spoke the word. Who dares condemn
A justifying God?
I passed from death to life in Him,
My ever living Head.

For me He walked the perfect law
From end to end in love –
A righteousness without a flaw,
That God could well approve.

Yet since I was a sinful mass,
And He my Substitute,
A broken law did ’gainst Him press
Its all-prevailing suit.

For me His holy lips were sealed
When Justice laid her charge;
That by His stripes I might be healed,
And freely set at large.

Nailed to the cross He would not shun,
He drank my cup of wrath,
Nor till the utmost dregs were gone
Bowed His dear head in death.

For me He rose that sacred day,
No more to bear my sin;
His righteousness was my array,
And I was wholly clean.

Here’s Zion’s rest, and here alone
Doth God with sinners meet –
In Christ the sinner’s Sacrifice,
The glorious Mercy-seat.

In Him I may draw near to God,
And into peace be smiled;
My Kinsman wears my flesh & blood,
And has redeemed His child.

In self no more of good have I
Than what I had before;
But Christ doth all my lack supply,
And He’s my goodly store.

Let men deny imputed sin,
And call it but a lie,
I have no peace my soul within,
Save Jesus for me die.

Nor will I cast my comforts off
For their vain-glorious boast;
Imputed merit is *their* scoff,
But all *my* humble trust.

M.G.P.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

OCTOBER 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

“COME DOWN ERE MY CHILD DIE”

John chapter 4 relates two remarkable conversions wrought by the Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord. Although the outcome for both the woman of Samaria and the nobleman was the same, both brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the means Christ used were different. With one it began with an empty waterpot, and a request for water by Christ. With the other it began with an urgent need in the home of the nobleman, his son at the point of death. (How often the Lord has worked by proxy in His people's lives!) In this we see sovereign grace using sovereign means to accomplish salvation of sinners.

In the case of the nobleman, we see several interesting and instructive truths which have an important lesson for us.

1. God is no respecter of persons. In salvation, He deals with poor and rich, unknown and well known, old and young, all on the same ground of justice and mercy. Though it says, “Not many noble, are called,” it does not say, “not any.” The calling of the nobleman is one example of this.

2. Affliction and death can come to young as well as old. Here was a young lad who, but for Christ's intervention, would have passed into eternity to face the same Judge of all, as those of more advanced years must do. How true it is said: “that the old must die but the young may.”

3. The wealth and influence of the nobleman could not prevent the affliction, nor provide a cure. Christ intended that every door should be shut except a direct coming to Himself for deliverance. Sanctified troubles are often used by God to bring sinners to Himself, who otherwise would never come.

4. The nobleman had in his mind a plan for God to work in, as Naaman had generations before, but he had to learn that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.

5. Christ, in dealing with the nobleman's trouble, showed that because He is God, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, His physical presence at the bedside of the suffering child was not necessary to his cure. Just as Christ taught His disciples on lake Galilee that though His physical presence was most desirable, as in the first storm of which we read, nevertheless they were just as safe and secure when at

His command they went before Him to the other side. How often, like Thomas of old, we feel we must see something with our natural eye and sense to believe. But, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” To have the Word of God in our hearts, written by the Holy Ghost, brings into our experience the same truth as the actual presence of the Saviour. “The written and the incarnate Word in all things are the same.”

6. We see the power of the Word from Christ’s lips. It created faith in the heart of the nobleman to believe what He had said, at the very same time He healed the lad. How true are Paul’s words: “Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

7. How poignant is the prayer of the nobleman and suitable for us in our day. “Come down ere my child die!” Was it not the prayer of the church in Isaiah’s day? “Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down!” Are not many of our churches in the same need – on the point of death, just a few struggling to keep the doors open? How we need the Lord to come down, in the power of His Word, and command a reviving of a hunger and thirst which at one time filled those empty pews we now see before us in so many places of worship.

8. But then is there not a cause for reflection as in the case of Sardis where the members were exhorted to “strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die”? Though it was probably a numerous church, yet the Lord declares that there were only a few names there “which had not defiled their garments.”

9. But then are there not those individual paths of the Lord’s people which bring them to the borders of despair? How the cry suits such: “Come down ere my child die” – especially those who have loved ones whose eternal state is an increasing burden as they seemingly rush headlong to destruction along the broad road.

10. Finally, how encouraging to faith to believe that the compassions of God fail not towards all who, when perhaps on the borders of despair, sincerely feel their need of His omnipotent arm!

It is not for us to decide how much or how little grace and faith are necessary for salvation, nor how clear and full a hope of confidence it may be blessed with. But we know that the Lord must communicate some sense of His goodness and mercy to take away the guilt of sin, and the doubts and fears that haunt the mind. It is a very great point to be made spiritually sincere before God; to be convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit; to have some experimental discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ to the soul, so as to raise up a living faith, hope and love in Him.

BUILDING JERUSALEM'S WALLS

Sermon preached by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London on Friday, April 12th, 1985, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Societies Annual Meeting

Text: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psa. 51. 18).

What a solemn mystery is the fall of God's eminent saints! David was the man after God's own heart, yet he grievously sinned, and O what a breach there was in the walls of Jerusalem! What a mystery this is!

Beloved friends, whenever we consider a subject like this, the outward fall of a child of God, we need to approach it with the greatest of tenderness, because I discern that we are liable to a fault on the one side or the other. Here is this man, highly esteemed and gracious, and he falls. Now there are some who love him and admire and esteem him so much that they say it cannot be true such a godly man has fallen, and they begin to make excuses for him. On the other hand, there are always those who say, "O what a solemn thing! This man can never have been one of God's children." Now both of those extremes are wrong, and we need to beware of them because they do no good in the church of God. Here was a most godly man, and yet he committed a most dreadful sin.

One thing you will find when a child of God falls into sin (and this is the vital difference): the grief that he will afterwards feel. The Lord will chastise him for it. If David's sin was great, his repentance was great, his sorrow was great, his chastisement was great.

There are two great lessons that we learn from David's sin and restoration, and they are two lessons that the church of God needs today. The first is: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Are you and I better than David? Have we more grace? Are we more capable of standing? O how we need to be kept, and how moment by moment we need to pray: "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not"! The most eminent saint only stands as long as the Lord upholds him, because Satan is so powerful, and so are indwelling sin and the world. You and I are so weak, so helpless, so prone to sin, that we can only stand as the Lord holds us up. O that we might realise it! "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

The second lesson that we learn from David's fall and restoration is the wonderful mercy of God in forgiving the vilest of sinners. O the wonderful efficacy, the preciousness there is in the blood of Christ! How the Lord brings good out of evil!

What a precious inheritance to the church of God is the 51st Psalm! There is mercy for the vilest of sinners who lives to feel his need. There is forgiveness for base backsliders who are brought to repentance. But

look at the pathway: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (verse 1). It is sovereign mercy. We have this beautiful expression: “The multitude of Thy tender mercies.” Who can count them? The plea is on mercy’s ground for Jesus’ sake: “Blot out my transgressions.” It is one thing to blot; it is another thing to blot out.

“The blood of Christ, a precious blood!
 Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
 And reconciles the soul to God,
 From every folly, every fault.” (H. 858)

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (verse 2). “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (verse 7). Some stains can be washed out, but some are so deep that they need purging. There is a sovereign efficacy in the blood of Christ to purge out the deepest stains. “How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” “Purge me with hyssop.” Hyssop was a little plant which was used under the law for applying the blood; the point here is a personal interest in the atonement. “Purge me with hyssop” (may there be a personal interest in the blood of Christ) “and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” I take the point to be this. One snowy morning everything may be spotlessly white, but if you look again the next morning there is a difference. It has been defiled, and you see the dirt here and there. It was so clean the morning before, but not now. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin,” past, present and to come. A sinner (however great his guilt) washed in the blood of Christ will be presented “having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.”

So from David’s fall and restoration we have these two lessons: on the one hand the vital need to be kept; on the other hand the wonderful mercy of God in forgiving the vilest of sinners.

Now as David was forgiven, as he was restored, he prayed not only for himself, but for the whole church of God – for Zion, for Jerusalem; that is, for the Jewish nation, for Israel, and also for that which was typified by Israel, the true Zion, the true Jerusalem, the church of God in all ages. Now David, with his heart softened, prays for Zion’s real peace and prosperity, and solemnly realising that his sin has brought a reproach and a breach in Jerusalem’s walls. O what a prayer is this! Beloved friends, the burden of my heart is that many of you this evening might go home praying this prayer, wrestling for Zion’s peace and true prosperity. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” I felt the other Lord’s day morning in singing hymn 362 that whatever there was or was not in my heart, there was this desire for Zion’s peace and prosperity:

“The man that seeks thy peace,
And wishes thy increase,
A thousand blessings on him rest.” (H. 362)

“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.” The good that we seek for Zion, only the Lord can do. No one else can do it, no minister, not even an angel from heaven. If true good is ever to be done to our churches, then God Himself must do it. It must come from heaven.

The Lord *has* done good *for* His people. He has eternally in His covenant settlements of grace from everlasting; He has in His promises, and above all He has in His own beloved Son. You contemplate the finished work of the dear Redeemer, and you see that wonderful good which in love and mercy God has done for Zion. “Do good in Thy good pleasure *unto* Zion.” The Lord has done great things in Christ, and we want Him now to come once more to our churches, and we want Him to do good things *to* us.

If He does these good things in our churches, then of necessity He must do it personally in the hearts of men and women, girls and boys. When I was a boy, many of the old men used to end their prayers something like this: “And do us good.” Sometimes they used to put it like this: “Do us all the good that Thou seest we stand in need of.” It is a prayer we do not seem to hear so much today. Perhaps there was a measure of repetition in it, but it was a good prayer. There is a fulness in it. If the Lord Himself does us good, then we shall be blessed indeed.

“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion.” What is this good that we seek for our churches? Is it just an increase in numbers? Is it something earthly? Is it just that we might be honoured and esteemed? What is this good that we really seek? Well, may there be some heart searching. When we seek Zion’s true peace and prosperity, what do we really mean? Pondering over this point, my mind has gone back to that sacred occasion, the last time Mr. Frank Gosden preached at one of these annual meetings. I am sure many of you remember the text: “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high” (Isa. 32. 15). *That* is the good that we want God in His good pleasure to do to Zion, to pour out His Spirit upon us from on high. There can be no substitute for this. We live in a day of substitutes when people say, “Well, we do not have it, but we have something else; it is not the real thing, but it does as well.” There is no substitute for the Holy Ghost’s work. “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.”

If you read through that chapter it is desolation, but when the blessed Spirit is poured out from on high, there is no desolation then. “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field.” Then there is life instead of death, and fruitfulness

instead of barrenness. This is the good we want the Lord in His good pleasure to do to Zion – to pour out His blessed Spirit upon us that the “wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” We need it in our churches; we need it personally.

We need the fulfilment of the promise: “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications.” When the Holy Ghost works in the hearts of His people He gives them a gracious spirit. Now left to ourselves our spirit is not always gracious, because it is our own spirit, but when the Spirit is poured out as the Spirit of grace and of supplications, then you and I will know a gracious spirit. It will be a humble spirit, a meek spirit, a reverent spirit.

Also, if the Holy Spirit be poured out as the Spirit of grace and supplications, then we shall be made a praying people. This is the good that we want God to do in His good pleasure unto Zion, and to us personally. In one place J.C. Philpot speaks of the difference between prayer and supplication. He says something like this: prayer is as a beautiful little stream; but look at that same stream after a heavy rain, how fast it rushes, and how it overflows its banks. That he likens to supplication. It is the same stream, and it is still water, but there is a difference in the degree and intensity. Sometimes we try to pray and only seem to say our prayers; at other times we believe we really pray. What a difference when we know something of supplication: “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me”!

“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion,” pour out upon the churches “the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” Then the barrenness is gone, the deadness is gone, the hardness of heart is gone. Then there is true repentance, there is true faith and true love. There is a bringing to the cross of Christ, and “they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” There is not much mourning in present-day religion. There is plenty of laughing. The mark of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the churches will be this: “And they shall mourn.” You will see your sins as the nails and the spear that crucified the Lord of glory: you will see your sins as the thorns in His crown. You will know what repentance is then; you will know what love is then. Every grace will be active. You will be looking to Jesus, and looking away from everything else, and you will know the sanctifying effect of it. You will walk so tenderly in the fear of God. You will know the blessing of peace made by the blood of His cross. You will know something of pardon, and what it is to be cleansed in the Redeemer’s blood. Christ will be so precious to you now.

This is the good that we want the Lord to do in His good pleasure to Zion. O that we might be able to pray for it! In the 128th Psalm we read: "Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." What a mercy if that promise is fulfilled!

"Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion." What does it mean, "in Thy good pleasure"? Well, I believe the New Testament equivalent of it is: "according to the riches of His grace." If God ever does return to our churches, if the Lord blesses us with peace and prosperity, it will be in His good pleasure. It will not be because you and I deserve it, and not even because we pray for it, although He "will be enquired of" to do it. It will be entirely on mercy's ground through the exceeding riches of His grace. It will be a favour freely given, a favour completely undeserved, a favour bestowed for Jesus' sake.

"Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." David explains further what this good is that he seeks for the people of God; he speaks of the professing church with the walls broken down. His prayer is that the Lord will build them again.

1. The first thing we seek here is that the Lord will build up Zion with *new converts* (God's work, not man's work), that there might be the building up of living stones hewn out of the quarry of nature, fitted, fashioned and shaped, brought to the Lord Jesus and there securely built upon the rock foundation which is laid for sinners in Zion. Now that is the work that we want to see going on. In Zechariah's prophecy we read concerning the re-building of Jerusalem. The temple was in ruins, in desolation; everything seemed to be going wrong; there were enemies without and enemies within. How was it to be built? Yet God said that the temple *would* be built. "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel" (and this is the word of the Lord to our churches tonight), "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit.... The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it." It is God's work, and His work will go on. There will be a building of these living stones upon the eternal rock. Peter speaks so sweetly of them: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up." We desire to see God's work going on in these new converts. The point about them all is that they are all brought to feel their need of Christ, and are all brought to make Him their only foundation. "None but Jesus." Do I hear someone say,

"May I be found a living stone,
In Salem's streets above"?

(H. 215)

Do you say, "May I be one who shall join in that eternal song, singing, Grace, grace to it"?

2. The second thing here is the prayer for *restoration*. David through God's mercy proved it personally, that though he sinned, yet God restored him, and he prayed for the church of God that this divine restoration might be made known. I believe there are many of us who long for that. "He restoreth my soul." We read that He restores comforts to Zion's mourners (Isa. 57. 18). We read that He restores the joy of salvation (Psa. 51. 12); the salvation cannot be lost, but the joy can. We read that He restores the years that the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar and the palmerworm had eaten (Joel 2. 25). What a wonderful mercy it is that the Lord has this ability to restore!

3. "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." Then thirdly, this is a prayer that *the breaches in the walls of Zion might be made up*. Let us be clear. The walls of salvation that surround the church of God can never be broken down. There are no cracks in them; they are not crumbling; they stand as secure now as they ever did, and will to all eternity. *Those* walls do not need building up. But with the professing church there is a wall of separation from the world, a wall of separation from the religious world, and we live in a day in which that wall has been broken down. The cry of the godly is that the Lord will build the walls of Jerusalem, and that those breaches will be repaired.

There is a three-fold aspect of it. First of all, concerning the truth as in Jesus. His eyes are ever upon the truth. His people are commanded to "buy the truth and sell it not," that is, to hold the truth dearer than life itself. So there is this wall of truth to separate the church of God from the religious world. We live in a day in which that wall is being broken down – the vital distinction on the grounds of eternal truth.

Then consider this wall: the difference on the grounds of gracious experience. Now that wall is being broken down. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The Lord clearly sets forth that gracious experience, the work of the Holy Ghost in the new birth, without which there can be no salvation. We are to contend for it in our pulpits; we are to contend for it in our churches. That wall of gracious experience has been broken down. It is not the same as in former generations, and the godly cry, "Lord, heal this breach; 'build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.'" You know what happens when Jerusalem's walls are broken down – we have it in the fifth chapter of the Lamentations: "Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it," and they do today. If the walls of the city are broken down, then the wild beasts come in. It is easy for them to get in, but it is hard to get them out.

Then there are the walls of distinction and separation concerning our walk and behaviour. God's people never can *be* worthy, but they are

commanded to *walk* worthy of the Lord. We see this wall broken down in the way of behaviour. Where is the distinction, the clear distinction there used to be between the church and the world in godly behaviour? This grieves the godly, and their cry is that the walls of Jerusalem might once again be built. It is to Zion's peril when these walls that distinguish Jerusalem from the world are in ruins. When they are broken down, Satan delights in it, but the people of God grieve over it, and God's name is dishonoured through it.

4. Finally, we would pray for the building up, *the establishing*. I think of the ancient promise: "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the highest Himself shall establish her." He has not left it to any minister, or to any angel, but "the highest Himself shall establish her." Now what a blessing established Christians are to our churches! We have known them and loved them; we have seen them removed, and Zion is weaker for it. You see Jerusalem's desolations, Zion in all its ruins. There is a need for building up, for establishing – not just in numbers, but in grace. "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace," not tossed about by every whim and fancy, by every wind of doctrine, but solidly built upon the Rock of Ages, and by the Holy Spirit built up in the truth, in our most holy faith. It is these who are built up and established who are the pillars in the churches.

"Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." It is God's work, but He does use means. We read in the first chapter of Nehemiah, and there we see that godly man so eminent in the fear of God, eminent in gracious zeal. Jerusalem was in desolations, the wall was broken down, and it grieved his loving heart. What could one man do, and so far away? The Lord laid a burden on his heart, and despite all the opposition and impossibilities, as it seemed, the Lord used him that Jerusalem's walls might be completely re-built, and we read how the building of the walls was finished (Neh. 6. 15). May there be those among our young people here that the Lord shall use, for it is His work. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," but He does use means. I read to you tonight that beautiful promise in Isaiah 58. 12: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." May the Lord in mercy fulfil it in our churches. In Isaiah 61. 4 we read: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." May the Lord fulfil these promises.

There is an interesting point in the Book of Nehemiah concerning how the walls of Jerusalem were repaired and re-built. *Every person repaired the little piece next to his own house.* Now if there is a

re-building of Zion from her desolations, then it will not be done by you and I putting the world right, or putting other people right, but it will begin with the Holy Ghost in our own heart, our own church, that in humble confession and repentance that little piece of the wall that lies nearest to us personally might be re-built.

Beloved friends, there is a prayer here (may the Holy Ghost lay it in your heart): “Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.” May we see our churches built up, and may some of you personally who feel the ravages of sin and Satan find the building up in your own hearts. O that that word might be graciously fulfilled amongst us:

“Though afflicted, tempest-tossed,
 Comfortless awhile thou art,
 Do not think thou canst be lost,
 Thou art graven on My heart;
 All thy wastes I will repair;
 Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
 And in thee it shall appear
 What the God of love can do.” (H. 273)

“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.”

WONDERS SHOWN TO THE DEAD

“Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee?” (Psa. 88. 10).

Of Heman the Ezrahite little is known, except that most godly scholars believe that he was contemporary with Solomon. Two things may be said of Heman without hesitation: that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write as he did, and that he himself was a deeply-exercised man.

The language of the psalmist may seem to some extravagant, but such have not sat where Heman sat, otherwise they would understand the deep place into which he had come.

We must not infer from Heman’s language that he believed in the annihilation of the soul, rather that he knew that matters which are not resolved between God and the sinner before death, will not be resolved hereafter. “In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccles. 11. 3; see also Rev. 22. 11). In that sense the answer to his questions is *No*.

However, looking deeper into the language of Heman's soul, an awakened sinner can give a different answer.

1. When the Lord is pleased to begin a work of grace in a sinner's heart, He does show wonders to the dead! How wondrous are those words in Ephesians 2. 1: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." How the awakened soul looks back in wonderment to the quickening grace which first alerted him to the solemn state in which he was living. And what encouragement this may be to those who have loved ones yet in spiritual death and darkness. It may be pleaded for them by those who are burdened for their eternal state, while as yet they have no heart for it themselves and are "as far from God as sheep can run." The prodigal's father said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15. 24).

2. When the soul is awakened, it begins to learn more and more of the absolute spiritual death there is in the old nature. "Could ever God dwell here?" is a perennial question. While the Lord never regenerates the old nature, He works resurrection power in the new man of grace, which acutely feels the deadness and barrenness of the old. How often a living soul, groaning under the deadness and lifeless condition of the old nature, cries out with this question. How the words of the psalmist suit them. "Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name," and, "Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee; and let Thy judgments help me."

3. When a soul is brought under the condemning sentence of the broken law, the sinner cries under a sense of God's justice in condemning them, "Is there no way of escape?" How welcome are the good tidings so aptly expressed in the hymnwriter's language.

"In guilt's dark dungeon when we lay,
 Mercy cried, 'Spare,' and Justice, 'Slay.'
 But Jesus answered, 'Set them free,
 And pardon them and punish Me.'" (H 837)

4. When the child of God is at "wits' end corner," or like Jonah in the belly of the whale, how suitable to their feelings is such a question. How impossible did the resurrection of Lazarus seem to Martha as she stood at the grave of her brother Lazarus! But what wonders did Christ show to the dead as He called Lazarus forth with divine power.

5. How in living faith the child of God waits around the tomb of the Saviour to see the wonders shown to and by the Son of God as He rose victorious over death and the grave. The disciples had inwardly, if not outwardly, given the answer *No* to the question of the psalmist.

6. What wonders may be believingly anticipated for those souls who die in the Lord. They are "with Christ; which is far better." With sweet surprise they find themselves at home at last. The wonder of it fills their soul to a never-ending eternity.

7. What a wonder God will show to the body and soul of His people, who have passed on before His return. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which 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 Thess. 4. 16, 17). But how solemn will be the awesome, terrifying wonder of those who lived and died without living faith in Christ.

Yes, God does show wonders to the dead. May we be found among those favoured souls to whom the wonder of His resurrection is a saving reality.

**“WHEREFORE HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE THEM TO THE
UTTERMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY HIM”**

By Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb. 7. 25).

What a witness is this to the power and readiness of Christ to save! And this is the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the blessed Son of God. But He does more than this. He brings home the record with power to the soul. He writes the testimony on the heart. He converts the believing soul itself into a witness that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

And what a gospel is this for a poor sinner! It speaks of pardon – of acceptance – of peace – of full redemption here, and unspeakable glory hereafter. It proclaims a Saviour to the lost; a Redeemer to the captive; a Surety to the insolvent; a Physician to the sick; a Friend to the needy; an Advocate to the criminal – all that a self-ruined, sin-accused, law-condemned, justice-threatened, broken-hearted sinner needs, this “glorious gospel of the blessed God” provides. It reveals to the self-ruined sinner One in whom is his help (Hos. 13. 9). To the sin-accused, One who can take away all sin (1 John 1. 7). To the law-condemned, One who saves from all condemnation (Rom. 8. 1). To the justice-threatened, One who is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest (Isa. 32. 2). To the broken-hearted, One who binds up and heals (Isa. 61. 1). That One is Jesus. O name ever dear, ever sweet, ever precious, ever fragrant, ever healing to the “poor in spirit”!

What a witness, then, is this which the eternal Spirit bears for Jesus! He assures the believer that all he can possibly need is treasured up in

Christ – that he has no cross but Christ can bear it – no sorrow but Christ can alleviate it – no corruption but Christ can subdue it – no guilt but Christ can remove it – no sin but Christ can pardon it – no need but Christ can supply it. Lift up your heads, you poor, you needy, you disconsolate! Lift up your heads and rejoice that Christ is all to you – all you need in this valley of tears – all you need in the deepest sorrow – all you need under the heaviest affliction – all you need in sickness – all you will need in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.

Yes, and Christ is in all too. He is in all your salvation – He is in all your mercies – He is in all your trials – He is in all your consolations, and in all your afflictions. What more can you want? What more do you desire? A Father who loves you as the apple of His eye – a full Saviour to whom to go, moment by moment – and a blessed, indwelling, sanctifying, comforting Spirit, to reveal all to you, and to give you Himself, as the “pledge of your inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” “Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.”



PAUL’S AIM

By J.K. Popham (1847-1937)

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3. 13, 14).

These are the words of an exercised, satisfied and dissatisfied child of God, an eminent saint, blessed with a most wonderful knowledge of Christ, favoured above many with communion. Perhaps no other saint was ever so indulged with intimacy with God as Paul was on one occasion. He tells us of the time when he was caught up to the third heavens, when he saw sights and heard things which it was not lawful for him to utter. And yet that eminent saint was very troubled at times; a body of sin and death hampered him, sickened him, weakened him, drove him into things which he would not do, kept him from doing things which he would do, made him a groaning sinner: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” This eminent saint, this indulged child of God reckons himself not to have attained to that which was before him.

We all must say, as we know ourselves and the little we know of God, that we indeed cannot reckon ourselves to have attained, or to be perfect; indeed sometimes we may think and feel that we have received

nothing, that we have attained to nothing; seeing such uncertainty in our experiences, such darkness in our minds, such fear, such guilt, such fearful workings of sin, such prevalence of sin, such lack of God's testimony in our souls. But the Scripture encourages such. It is written of the high priest that he is able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Christ Himself has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," and the Holy Ghost has said that Christ died, and by dying destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," that He might "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Here, in this chapter, the apostle relates something of his condition of mind. He tells us of his natural advantages, that he was a Jew, even a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the purest of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, as touching the law, a Pharisee; he was in a good condition naturally, one of those to whom the oracles of God were committed; and as to his attainments, they were very considerable. Touching the law, he was blameless; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; a strict observer of God's commandments, a strict walker, until the time came for Christ to be made known. What he was under the law was to his advantage, but this came into collision with the Lord Jesus. If we have any righteousness of our own, it will come into collision with Christ; one will go down and the other up. If we belong to the Lord, down will go our righteousness, till we esteem it to be filthy rags.

Depend on this, Christ will brook no rival, He will have no partner in the work of salvation; He will have us, if we belong to Him, partners of His throne, but not in His work. It is a solemn thing to be against Christ in anything, and nothing is more against Christ than a legal spirit; it opposes Him, it resists His righteousness, it determines to establish its own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousness of Christ. It will seek righteousness, but not by faith, by works; and if any child of His is of that spirit now, the Lord, his Teacher, will just beat it down, and bring his heart down with labour, till he finds none to help, and then he will cry to the Lord in his distress. This is what the people of God have to come to – they must be lost. It is hard to perish, but it is easy to die at the cross and lose oneself; but till we are brought there, dying is very hard, very difficult, impossible to us, but possible with God.

The apostle was brought to this decision in his mind and conscience: that whatever things were gain to him as a man, a Jew, were loss, all loss; whatever things he had were just no more than dung and dross, to be despised, to be abandoned, given up. Some may think that not very difficult, but to any who should think so, I would say, it only manifests your ignorance. Whoever thinks it easy to esteem his own righteousness to be filthy rags, and everything he could attain to by any possibility to

be nothing more than dung, does not know what he is saying. It is hard to die, hard to lose your own life; but Christ will bring us to this, that we must lose our lives if we will save them; that we must hate them, if we would love them; we must sink, as it were, into a felt hell in order to reach after a blessed, grace-given heaven. Christ does not barter with people, He does not give them something for something they give to Him; they must have nothing in their hands and nothing in their purses, no money to buy with, no merit to barter, no righteousness to offer, but just be poor, helpless, dead things; and that not once only, O no, right to the end.

And being brought to that, Paul was at another point, at a certainty about his disposition with respect to two competing things; for Christ and sin, Christ and creature righteousness, seemed to be in competition, and Paul's heart was brought to a point with regard to these two things. They could not co-exist, one must give way; they could not occupy the same heart at the same time, each having its own sway. No; so Paul says, Without doubt – “doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.”

How do we stand in regard to these things? How do we stand with regard to our own selves? Are we a piece of dross? Are our best things dung? Are our attainments nothing but sin in our own judgment? Do we feel that we can unite with the apostle, and say that we count these things that we naturally esteem, to be but dross, but dung? And do we see that there is an excellency in the knowledge of Christ that so far transcends all the things we may have and esteem, as that we are willing and more than willing, deeply anxious and earnest, that these our own things should perish and be removed from us, that we may win Christ? “What think ye of Christ?” And I would say, What think we of ourselves? If we are high, Christ is low; and if He be low, O what a state we are in!

But says Paul of himself, “I have suffered the loss of all things.” And there is a way in which every child of God has to come to this. We may not have to lose for the sake of Christ what Paul had to lose literally, for he had to lose, in a sense, his Hebrew condition and standing, and that was not little to him; he had to lose whatever he possessed under the law, he suffered the loss of his character, and of his name and of his standing with his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh. We shall lose something: we may have lost something in our families, they may have despised us; we may have lost something in business or in some connexion.

O, but when Christ is put first, when in the light of the Spirit, the teaching, the unction that teacheth of all things, Christ is invested in our eyes and judgment with a beauty, a glory, a desirableness, a preciousness,

a fulness that no tongue can express, and only a God-given faith can see, then down goes self, and down go the things of self, and up rises Christ and stands first, prominent, paramount above all creation, brighter than the sun, better than mountains of gold, better than the gold of Ophir. O what a Christ the Spirit does bring to poor sinners! What a Christ He opens to their view at times! And that makes them willing to let all else go.

The apostle knew, because he was a sensible sinner, that if he stood alone before God in his own rags, in his own name, he was lost for ever; and so he proceeds to say, "And be found in Him." As the branch is in the vine to bear fruit, so must the soul be in Christ to be righteous. To be holy, to be godly, to walk uprightly, to please God, to do His commandments, we must be in Christ. Works done without faith are but sin, and all things done out of Christ are but sin. If we pray rightly, we pray in Christ; if we hunger and thirst rightly, we hunger and thirst in and after Christ; that is to say, the very hunger comes from His life in us. And to be "found in Him" experimentally, is to be united to Him as we receive Him by faith; faith in a revealed Christ, mind that.

If men tell us that we ought to believe, and it is living below our privileges not to believe, that Christ died for us, why, they go upon universalism at once. It is no wonder that a man who believes in universal redemption should say we ought to believe, because Christ died for all. Nobody needs a testimony that he has an interest in that which is universal and common to every man. But if there be a particular redemption, if, as the Spirit says in the Acts, Christ purchased the church "with His own blood," then for one to be properly assured that Christ purchased *him*, he must have the witness of the Spirit. He must bear witness in some way "that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The Spirit's testimony in a sinner's conscience will bring him to an assurance. Before he gets it, his soul may be often enabled to rest itself, as far as it can go, on the atonement of Christ. But an assurance of an interest must be given by the Holy Spirit.

"And be found in Him," found by God in Him. Yes, God will look for His treasures, His jewels, and He will find them all in Christ. When He makes up His jewels, may He count up us! What a great thing it will be to be reckoned, and accounted, and found a jewel in Christ! All God's jewels are in Christ, and they all want to be in Him, and seek to know that they are in Him by the witness of the Spirit.

"Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God

by faith.” That is, Christ’s righteousness, imputed to every believer, to every one for whom the Lord Jesus worked, and prayed, and bled, and died. Let us seek to know this by the witness of the Spirit in our hearts. We who seek shall find: and when we find, we shall find ourselves in Christ, and find Christ in us; we shall find the witness of the Spirit in our consciences, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

O the riches of grace here, the riches of God’s grace in a sinner, the riches of a full assurance of understanding in a sinner, the riches of Christ dwelling in a sinner’s heart, of the peace of God pervading his conscience, of love warming his affections and drawing them forth, and of light giving him to see how he stands and where he stands, and of power enabling him to say, “Surely I am the Lord’s!” Here is all wealth, all God’s goodness, the riches of His grace, the riches of His glory, the riches of Christ’s blood, and the riches of the Spirit’s power. “And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness.” Having been stripped of that, now I have another given to me. My own, O what rags! Christ’s, O what beauty and glory! Christ’s righteousness is all beauty and all glory. Do we pant for this as Paul did, not in his measure, but in the same spirit of faith? True faith is the life of God, and it is a panting spirit. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”

“Blest soul that can say, Christ only I seek;
 Wait for Him always, be constant though weak.
 The Lord whom thou seekest will not tarry long,
 And to Him the weakest is dear as the strong.” (H. 804)

Then Paul says he wants to know the Lord: “That I may know Him.” But he did know Him. Yes, but not as fully as he wanted. Who ever is satisfied here? No child of God would lift up his face and say he knows as much of God as he wants to know. We have not attained to what is attainable in this particular; it is but little some of us know. I do feel that in my own case; how little I know of the Lord of life and glory! And if one were to ask me to explain how it is that I am so apt to backslide, and set up vain things, and follow them, I should, I trust, humbly confess that it is through my ignorance of Christ. For the knowledge of Christ is a fixing thing, it is a binding thing; it is so attractive, too, as that when we know Him, we are held and attracted to seek more than we know.

“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection,” lifting me from a life of sin, from a life of unbelief and selfishness, lifting me into that spirit that Paul had when he penned that letter to the Corinthians: “For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead ... that they which live” – live by that death – “should not henceforth live unto themselves, but

unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” Follow on, my friends, after “the fellowship of His sufferings,” which is being a partaker of them. Having an interest in them, we are brought to have fellowship with those sufferings in our own sufferings for sin, indwelling sin. “Being made conformable to His death,” dying unto sin. He died unto sin once, and every child of God in his measure can say, sooner or later, that he himself has died unto sin. “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.” “Dead” – there is a death by the death of Christ; and the fruit of that is a death to sin in our own souls, as Christ is made known to us.

“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” – I am not what I would be nor where I would be. Christ has laid hold of me, and I follow on, that I may lay hold of the reason that He had in laying hold of me. My brethren, there is something here to be sought after, to be looked into, as the Lord may give us grace. Why did Christ take hold of us? He left millions untouched, unsought, in their death in trespasses and sins. O why did He lay hold of us? Says Paul, “I want to know.” He was not doubtful about Christ’s having laid hold of him, but he did want to be enabled to lay hold of the reason.

That “I follow after, if that I may apprehend” – or know, or lay hold of – “that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” What is this for? *All for the glory of those riches of grace and mercy and pardon and justification*, and ultimately of heaven, that God may be glorified in His Son, and glorified in His saints, who are in His Son. “We know not what we shall be,” says John, “but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

And in the text he says, “I count not myself to have apprehended” this, it is before me; “but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind.” What are the things that the apostle was forgetting and wishing to forget? They could not be the work of God in his soul. No, because the Lord said, “Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee.” We shall never be taught by the Spirit to forget anything that God has given us. The disciples forgot Christ’s word for a time, but afterwards they “remembered His word,” it was brought back to them. And the promise of Christ is this concerning the Spirit’s work: “He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

We shall bear our treasures with us as long as we live, we shall take them with us. A promise, O what a treasure! A visit of love, what a treasure! A touch of God’s power, what a treasure! A manifestation of

Christ, an answer to prayer, a deliverance out of temptation, a guidance through difficulties, and a sweet coming forth out of some fiery trial, O what treasures these are! They are not given up, forgotten after their first sweet use. No! says the Lord by Moses, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee." May we treasure up as well as we can every good thing God has given us, every kind word He has said to us, every sweet visitation He has indulged us with. O what blessedness there is in such things! Why, they are more than the whole world; a word from God in the heart, why, mountains of gold and silver are not to be compared with that blessed thing. What did it do for us? Set God before us, and set us after Him. Is that little?

Nor shall we forget our sinnership. "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged," says the Lord. Remember you were slaves in Egypt, remember the iron furnace out of which I brought you. Says Paul to the Ephesians, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead.... Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh," did really walk according to the course of this world. A sad compass to steer by is that. Remember that was how you walked; the devil was your guide, your prompter; and never forget it, never.

And we shall not forget the troubles we have had. Said Moses to the people, "Remember how the Lord brought you through that terrible wilderness; forty years you were there. Never forget it, how you were fed, how water came to you from the flinty rock, how that your shoes did not wear out, and your garment did not wax old; remember those things, the dangers and the mercies, the difficulties and the guidance, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud, all that long, long time; remember who was with you." These things are not to be forgotten; they are in our hearts as God has given them, and sometimes they are in our memories, as we are reminded of them by the Holy Spirit.

But some things are to be forgotten: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider ... forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" – forsake them. Christ and the world are not to be put together. We have been brought from a dark world. "What communion hath light with darkness?" The devil was once our leader and commander; now, what union is there between Christ and Belial? What concord is there? We once flattered ourselves that we were righteous; now we know that we have left those filthy rags. We once thought we were wise; now God has made us willing to be fools, that we may be wise. We once had a purse, a bag, for our wealth, and God made holes in it, and we have lost all our wealth. Now we are poor sinners, and know that we are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. Paul in a sense forgot the things which he had had, because he so earnestly desired the things that

were set before him. “Forgetting those things which are behind”; not noticing them, nor valuing them, nor living by them, nor carrying them with him, he said, “Forgetting those things which are behind.” Is the world behind us? Are our own rags behind us? Is our wisdom behind us, our goodness? Are these things behind us? “Forgetting them,” says Paul, “let them be as if they had not been, as if they were not, because there is something set before faith which is infinitely superior.”

“Reaching forth,” stretching out, expressed by the psalmist in those memorable words, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” When one feels dark, what does he want? Says he to God, “O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me” – let me not be my own guide – “let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.” “Reaching forth,” after Christ, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”; after revelations of Him, after sweet manifestations of Him, of His Person and of His work, and of an interest in Him, my own interest. “Reaching forth” after the Holy Ghost, that He may come and dwell in one; and after the Trinity, that the Three Persons in the one God may dwell in our poor hearts, that we may be separated unto God, and be for His praise and glory, and have that motive that the Apostle Paul expresses: “The love of Christ constraineth us,” to leave things behind, to leave death and the world, and vanities of that sort, to leave these things by a judgment, a gracious judgment, “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”

What riches God has! What riches in the covenant of grace, what riches in the mighty movings of the Holy Spirit on a sinner’s heart! What riches of light to enlighten one’s understanding! What riches of love to melt a heart that is hard as a stone, and make it love the Lord! O the riches of grace, the unsearchable riches of grace which Paul was anointed to preach, unsearchable riches of pardon, of justification, of sanctification, of union, of mercy, of peace, of comfort, of joy! And Paul had this before him: “That I may win Christ, and be found in Him ... forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” This pressing is what in another place Paul calls labouring: “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” And again in the Hebrews: “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.” This is the soul’s panting after union and after heaven, after union with God in Christ and all that that includes; and it includes a great deal more than we can understand, and a great deal more than we have experienced. Even if we have

experienced union, we have not fully experienced all it means and includes. "I press toward the mark."

Ah, the consummation of it all is heaven, that I may reach that place which Christ has prepared for me. Says Paul to Timothy, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Is this panting ours? If we press, we have difficulties before us, many. The man who runs a race may have much against him, but he forgets things, he has been enabled to lay aside all those things which would impede his progress, and one thing is before him – the goal, the prize. Says Paul, "They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9. 24).

KEEPING THE SABBATH

By Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa. 58. 13, 14).

Great stress was always laid upon the due observance of the Sabbath day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day, in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth. See Isaiah 56. 2, where keeping the Sabbath is joined, as here, with keeping judgment and doing justice. Some, indeed, understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a "Sabbath of rest" (Lev. 23. 32). But, as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this Sabbath is doubtless the weekly Sabbath, that great sign between God and His professing people – His appointing it a sign of His favour to them and their observing it a sign of their obedience to Him. Now observe here:

I. How the Sabbath is to be sanctified (see Isa. 58. 13); and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the Sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

1. Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the Sabbath day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly

dignified it. We must *turn away our foot from the Sabbath*, from trampling upon it, as profane, atheistical people do, from travelling on that day (as some do); we must turn away our foot *from doing our pleasure on that holy day*, that is, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on Sabbath days, without the control and restraint of conscience, or from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the Sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as anything. On Sabbath days we must not walk in *our own ways* (that is, not follow our callings), not *find our own pleasure* (that is, not follow our sports and recreations); nay, we must not *speak our own words*, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please Him; and speak His words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house and walk by the way. In all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

2. Everything must be done that puts an honour on the day and is expressive of our high thoughts of it. We must call it *a delight*, not *a task and a burden*; we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us and the services it obliges us to. We must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with Him. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!" We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency [satisfaction] we take in the day and the duties of it. We must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it and earnest desire of His grace to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it. We must call it so to others, to invite them to come and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thought of wishing the Sabbath gone that we may sell corn. We must call it *the Lord's holy day, and honourable*. We must call it *holy*, separated from common use and devoted to God and to His service, must call it *the holy of the Lord*, the day which He has sanctified to Himself. Even in Old Testament times the Sabbath was called *the Lord's day*, and therefore it is fitly called so still, and for a further reason, because it is the *Lord Christ's day* (see Rev. 1. 10). It is holy because it is the Lord's day, and upon both accounts it is honourable. It is a beauty of holiness that is upon it; it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring God on that day. We put honour upon the day when we give honour to Him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

II. What the reward is of the Sabbath – sanctification (see Isa. 58.14). If we thus remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,

1. We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. *If we call the Sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord*; He will more and more manifest Himself to us as the delightful Subject of our thoughts and meditations and the delightful Object of our best affections. Note: the more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

2. We shall have the honour of it: "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth," which denotes not only a great security (as that, Isa. 33. 16, "He shall dwell on high"), but great dignity and advancement. Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee. It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that He made them to ride on the high places of the earth (see Deut. 32. 12, 13). Those that honour God and His Sabbath He will thus honour. If God by His grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey towards heaven, then He makes us to ride "on the high places of the earth."

3. We shall have the profit of it: I will "feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father," that is, with all the blessings of the covenant and all the precious products of Canaan (which was a type of heaven), for these were the heritage of Jacob. Observe: the heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now, fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered, fed with the earnest and foretastes of it; and those that are so fed have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, "The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." You may take God's word for it, for He cannot lie nor deceive; what His mouth has spoken His hand will give, His hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of His good promise shall fall to the ground. Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it

A true Christian is one that is born of God (John 1. 13); believes in the Son of God (John 9. 35); has the kingdom of God within him (Luke 17. 21); lives a life of faith in Jesus (Gal. 2. 20); has fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1. 3); suffers for Christ's sake (Phil. 1. 29); is hated by the world (John 15. 18, 19); but is separate from it (2 Cor. 6. 17); and fights and conquers every enemy (Rom. 8. 37; 16. 20; Rev. 3. 21).

J.C. Philpot

VALUED FELLOWSHIP

Extracts from letters by Frank L. Gosden (1890-1980)

Thank you for your kind letter.... My increasing unfitness, which seems worse than my insufficiency, is solemn. What need I have of sanctifying grace, which alone is sufficient for the subjugation of the body (see 1 Cor. 9. 27).

I often think of you, I trust with prayerful interest, that that great promise may be the secret of your enduring to the end: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28. 20).

Very kind regards, yours sincerely

Frank L. Gosden

Tunbridge Wells, Kent
May 29th, 1956

I truly feel for you as I think about your many anxieties and cares. I sympathise with you both in your bereavement.... Yes, as you say, Luke 12. 40 gathers more solemn meaning as the day approaches. I understand your language.

"But when I cry, 'My strength renew,'
Seem weaker than before." (H. 281)

It will be a mercy to reach the harbour without shipwreck.

I am thankful you have a staunch and faithful friend in —. May he be spared to you, and us.

With love in the gospel,

Frank L. Gosden

Hove, Sussex
December 3rd, 1959

I thank you for your kind letter. I know what you mean when you say "I am ready to halt." Paul felt his insufficiency; how much more should I; but my unfitness is the worst of all as it is the effect of dreadful carnality.

However, the Lord teaches to profit, and will bring us to nothing that He may be all in all.

I think of you as I do our mutual friend —, both have double burdens, and family anxiety. May you receive double grace.

Yours in gospel affection,

Frank L. Gosden

Hove, Sussex
[Undated]

**THE LORD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY
SHOWN TO ONE OF HIS SHEEP**

*The experience of Arthur Thomas Hawkins
(Concluded from page 293)*

February 1938

It has been on my mind for several years to continue the record of the Lord's dealings with me which I started in letters to my wife, whilst I was in America in 1924 before our marriage. I hope it is my desire that this should be for the honour and glory of God and not the self-gratification of the creature. I feel that He has done so much for me both in providence and grace, that it is due to His great name that I should continue the record of His great mercies to one of the most unworthy of all His creatures.

I believe the last of the letters referred to contained an account of how the Lord so blessed my soul with a sense of His goodness after the death of my first wife, that I felt compelled by His love to join the church at Gower Street Memorial Chapel. Soon after I joined, I came up against an obstacle which I was unable to surmount for over ten years. I refer to speaking in public prayer. In consequence of this I stayed away from the prayer meetings for that period. I felt it was wrong, yet could not overcome it; many times did I pray to be delivered from this snare, and sometimes I have gone to the chapel with the full intention of going in, but when I got to the doors my courage failed me and I have turned aside. Only those who have experienced this will know what it means. How I was delivered will be told later, if the Lord will.

I joined the church in September 1923, and soon after this I began to feel a drawing to a friend of my late wife and myself, who had lost her husband in the war. I tried to put these feelings from me, as I felt I wanted the Lord to make the way very plain. I found, however, that my feelings increased, and eventually whilst on a visit to Brighton I felt compelled to write to her and tell her what I felt. I had a letter back saying she had felt drawn to me for some time, so it was mutual. We were eventually engaged and married in December 1924.

Before our marriage, I was sent by my employer to America for two months, and although whilst there I found none to whom I could speak and no place to go on the Lord's day, I enjoyed much of His sweet presence, and restfulness of mind and body so that my health greatly improved after the trying times previously experienced. My one dread was that I should be left to myself and to my previous sad place return.

After arriving back in England, we soon arranged to be married. This took place at Luton in December 1924. Mr. Kemp officiated. It

was a day much to be remembered, for I do not think I ever felt the Lord Jesus so sensibly present as I did on that occasion. It seemed almost too much for me at times, and there was no doubt in my mind that we were experiencing His sweet approbation on the step we were taking, nor have I doubted it since.

May 1938

After our marriage the Lord shone on my path and I found favour in the eyes of my employers so that I had no worries on that score. About this time, the seventh, eighth and ninth verses of the third chapter of Revelation were brought with sweet power to my mind one morning and continued sweetly to rest on my spirit for many months; in fact, I cannot read them now without feeling somewhat of the same. I have felt many times that I could not take them to myself, yet I dare not say that they did not come from the Lord, by the power accompanying them. I have also wondered many a time what they really meant to me, although I have sometimes thought that they may partly refer to providential things, as I have been maintained in my present employment for over fifteen years at this date (1938), having commenced before my first wife's death. Many times indeed I have seen the Lord's hand working on my behalf, when there have been those in the firm who would have got rid of me if they could, but the Lord has kept me.

In 1926, our landlord wished us to buy the house we were living in at Hendon, but as it was on the small side, we did not feel inclined to do so. Many prayers went up to the Lord that He would find me a suitable lodging place. We felt that we did not want to go unless He was in it. I believe He led us to our present abode at Mill Hill, and although the price was higher than we thought of paying, yet He gave me a sweet feeling that this was the right place and that He would enable us to pay for it, and so it has proved so far. It was with mingled feelings that I left the old home, for there I had passed through deep waters; one room in that house had heard many sighs, groans and seen many tears. There, many times I had thought I should sink to rise no more; there, also, when I was stripped of everything and my wife lying dead upstairs, I rejoiced in God my Saviour, being so overcome with His great love to me, that I hourly expected to be called home, there to see Him face to face without a veil between, and to praise Him for ever for His great mercy to one so unworthy; even now I never pass that road without thinking of those things. That was a sacred, hallowed spot.

However, we left it and settled in our new home in June 1927. Goodness and mercy have followed us up to now, and I believe will continue to do so.

June 1938

Several instances of the Lord appearing, I feel I must record. At one period, I had got into a very backsliding state spiritually and felt at times I must be deceived and would prove a hypocrite at last, and when the time came round for the ordinance of the Lord's supper to be administered, feeling as I did that I was out of the secret entirely, and knowing that Scripture, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup ... unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," I decided to stay away from the services on one particular Lord's day. However, on that morning I was asked by a friend if I would take an old lady to the service in the evening (she would not be able to get there otherwise). I could not refuse, yet how to get out of sitting down at the Lord's table I did not know. Eventually I ventured, intending only to pretend to take the bread and wine. The first hymn given out was number 1122, but I felt nothing but misery until the last verse:

"If sin and guilt afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see His face." (H. 1122)

This dropped with almighty power into my heart, so that my spirit was broken all to pieces. I no longer wanted to pretend, but could only "weep to the praise of the mercy I had found." Truly I did feel unworthy, but not in the same respect I had before. I felt that I did love the dear Lord in truth and that He loved me, unworthy though I was of it.

October 26th, 1938

One Sunday, as I had to leave my wife and children at home and go to chapel alone, I felt a strong inclination as I was early to go up into the prayer meeting. After an inward struggle I went in and was called upon to speak in prayer. I felt I dared not refuse and I stood tremblingly on my feet. I felt greatly burdened, but I am sure the Lord enabled me to open my heart to Him, or I could not have said a word, although as it was, it was but broken sentences. Thus He enabled me to break through the snare that had held me for about ten years, and since that time, through His grace have not stayed away from a prayer meeting when able to get there, but it is always a relief to me when I am not called on to speak. Yet I would say to His honour and glory, I have had some sweet seasons in opening my heart to Him.

A while after this the Lord laid a painful affliction upon me. I was at Leicester on business when I fell down an iron staircase and badly injured my back, although I did not realise it at the time. It was found some time later, when it began to get very painful, that a bone in the back was out of joint and pressing on a nerve, injuring it. I went to an

osteopath who replaced the bone, but I suffered intense pain for many months through the injured nerve. I could get nothing to ease it and worst of all the Lord hid His face from me so that I was in great darkness of mind, yet I was kept from despair by encouraging passages of Scripture or lines of hymns stealing over the mind when the pain was at its worst, but not accompanied with any particular power.

One Sunday evening, however, while alone, I felt the Lord sensibly come where I was, and although no word was spoken, I felt I was not altogether out of the secret. I was enabled to bless and praise Him for all the way He had led me, feeling my utter unworthiness of His great mercy. A little while after this the pain suddenly left one night, and I felt I could say with the poet,

“He doomed me in the dust to lie,
In sorrow sharp and long;
Then turned my sadness into joy,
My mourning to a song.”

December 1938

At the beginning of 1937 it became obvious that fresh deacons would have to be chosen by the church. I was greatly exercised during this period, being afraid the lot might fall on me (at the previous election it did not do so, greatly to my relief), knowing and feeling my utter incapability and worthlessness for the position. So I prayed earnestly that I should be passed by as before; it caused many cries and many sleepless nights, which became intensified when I found that I had received the most nominations.

When election day came, I shall not soon forget the sense of worthlessness that I felt, and I do not think I ceased asking the Lord so to work that I should not be elected, yet this passage came repeatedly to my mind: “I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them.” On the other hand the thought would continually rise in the mind, that if I had not attempted to speak in prayer at the prayer meeting, there would have been no possibility of my nomination, thus was I tossed about that day. However, when the voting was over, it was revealed that I had been elected, together with one other friend, a friend to whom my soul was knitted as David’s was to Jonathan. When I was called to the front, my legs seemed like lead, so disappointed did I feel, and yet underneath all was the feeling that this was the Lord’s doing; so weak was my faith that how to fulfil the position I did not know.

The following Lord’s day it fell to my lot to give out the hymns in the chapel. Here I proved the power of God to overcome all natural obstacles, for I never felt the least nervousness, neither did I have to make any effort to make myself heard, a thing I had much feared. The first hymn I gave out at a prayer meeting was 686, and the first one in the

chapel 171. Now after eighteen months in the office, I often feel as fearful as at first, although friends have said that the portion given me, i.e. "I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them," has been and is being fulfilled; yet there have been times that I have felt I cannot carry on any longer.

"Yet have been upheld till now;
Who could hold me up but Thou?" (H. 376)

November, 1939

It is nearly a year ago since I wrote down anything, but it has been a year of mercies, notwithstanding many soul exercises, especially concerning the coming of Mr. Morris to the pastorate at Gower Street. Also there has been much pain of body, but goodness and mercy have followed me. In November 1938, I was given a month's notice to leave my situation because I refused to join the sports club belonging to the firm. A new director had joined the company and he had made a rule that every employee was to join the sports club, and all who did not were to leave. I resisted, and although the managing director tried to get me to give way, first by using smooth words, and afterwards by threats, the Lord enabled me to stand firm, as He had also on a previous occasion in regard to Sunday work. In the end he gave way and told me to forget all about it, so once more I proved the power of God to help in time of need.

I have been recently looking back over the years and over the path I hope the Lord has led me, nearly fifty-four years of my natural life and forty since I first felt a desire towards His name. On the other hand, His longsuffering, goodness and mercy are beyond measure. He has never left me as I have left Him, and now it seems I must soon come to the end. As I look back, how much fleshly religion there seems to have been, but how little, if any, that is real. My friends see the outside, but what of the inside; He looks at the heart, He sees the deceitfulness of it, the pride of it; is it possible for there to be anything real and vital in such a heart? I think sometimes that if I do get to that blissful place to see Him as He is, I shall see how much flesh and how little reality there has been in my profession, and yet however little, as it comes from Him it will take me to Him, but my concern is, "*Is it real?*"

November 13th, 1940

I have now come to the end and must close this book. The Lord has laid His afflicting hand on me, and the hour of my departure is at hand. My gracious God surrounds me with His mercy and goodness, and I feel I can say I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and henceforth there is laid up for me crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give me in that day. I shall see Him and be with Him whom my soul loves. I have been a wretch indeed, but He, by His grace, has saved me in spite of myself, and I desire all the glory, honour, power and

greatness to be given to Him, whilst I must lay my own mouth in the dust before Him. I pray that He may bless His own work, if any, in these writings; it is but a poor attempt to show forth His praise.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Desires of a Living Soul: Life and Poetry of Clive J. Jefferys; paperback; 126 pages; price £5 plus postage; published by and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12b Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ.

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of His people as the “salt of the earth.” Clive Jefferys, as one of these, never lost his savour. His humble, godly life was an example to many of us who knew and loved him for the truth’s sake. Although a deeply-exercised man, his simplicity of faith in Christ and its attendant fruits are beautifully apparent in this little volume.

After a short biography, and extracts from his diary, the poetry for which he was well-known and loved follows.

Although some may feel that a few of the poems are not as lyrical as Isaac Watts or John Kent, for example, this is well counterbalanced by the truth, experience and evident unashamed love for Christ that Clive had.

It is worth recording an incident related to one concerning his farming life. He was once laid aside with influenza for three weeks, during which he could not attend to the farm and cattle. Just before his illness, he had intended to mend a hole in the fence of a field in which his beef cattle were grazing. However, when he was laid low, he had not managed to attend to it. This meant that the cattle could stray into the neighbour’s field, with potential serious financial consequences if any damage was caused to his crops. So, what did Clive do? Characteristically he turned to prayer and asked the Lord that his cattle would be given contentment with the pasture of his field. As he watched from his bed, he could see the gap, but not once, during the whole of his illness, did they venture through the hole.

How true are the words of another poet:

“Such simple folk the world despise;
But simple folk have sharpest eyes,
And learn to walk the best.” (H. 745)

The Church of Acts 2: The Scriptural Pattern for the Church Today, by Matthew J. Hyde; paperback; 176 pages; price £5.50 plus postage; published by and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12b Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ.

This excellent treatise expounds the verses of Acts 2 with particular regard to the doctrine and practice of the New Testament church in its infancy.

It has often been ignored, to our detriment, that we have the New Testament pattern for the gospel ministry set down clearly in the Acts of the Apostles. The doctrine and certainty of Christ’s resurrection form the dominant theme of the sermons preached by Peter and later by Paul. This, of course, does not preclude

Christ's blameless life, sin-atonement death and burial, all of which preceded the glorious moment when He came forth triumphant from the grave, but it is amazing to see how the repeated, simple testimony of the empty tomb, and its eternal implications, was used so emphatically by the Holy Spirit in building up the New Testament church. The ministry was unashamedly Christ-centred, as the ministry in our pulpits should also be. This is ably set before the reader by Matthew Hyde.

After a brief introduction, we are taken through a well-reasoned, and sometimes challenging, Scriptural unfolding of the Lord's purpose and pattern for the New Testament church from the Day of Pentecost and its fruits in the following chapters: The church established by Jesus; The church's foundation: This same Jesus; Pentecost: the empowerment of the church; How does God add to the church?; What is the work of the church; the conclusion being an exhortation, much needed, to stir up our souls to seek the same blessings so wonderfully wrought on the Day of Pentecost. There is a minor mistake in the conclusion (which has been corrected for any future printings), where the reference to one church in Revelation which the Lord did not have some rebuke for should have been to two churches.

This book is highly commended and one that those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whether preacher or hearer, would find both profitable and helpful to read and ponder.

Life and Letters of William Boorman, edited by Matthew J. Hyde; paperback; 230 pages; price £9 plus postage; published by and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12b Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ.

To those friends familiar with Lamberhurst and the surrounding chapels, this volume will be of significant interest. Besides giving a profitable biography of William Boorman, there is an impressive number of spiritual letters written to the godly in the area (a grace which is sadly very deficient in our day as the dependence on instant technology has taken hold). It is also helpful to read the background of these correspondents, a point often missed in such publications as these. Matthew Hyde has added material on acquaintances of William Boorman, among whom was Matthew Mercer (Pastor at St. David's Bridge, Cranbrook). Two gracious women are given extensive coverage, Martha Hoadley and Esther Sharp, both of whom greatly valued William's ministry and were held in high esteem by him. Interesting photographs add interest, especially to those familiar with the Kent and Sussex area.

It has been said that on one occasion (probably at a graveside) William Boorman's voice could be heard up to a mile away.

Although it was proposed to close the chapel, C1960, as the numbers were so few, through the exercise of the late Edward Relf, confirmed under the ministry of the late Jabez Buss, the doors were kept open, Jabez Field eventually becoming the honoured Pastor for many years. It is good to know that the same gospel is being preached by the present Pastor, our friend Jabez Rutt, and may the cause of God at Lamberhurst flourish as it did in the days of William Boorman and his successors.

We are glad to commend this addition to the history of our churches in the Kent and Sussex area.

ZIKLAG
(1 Sam. 30. 19).

“Recovered all” – Can this be so?
Shall David this great kindness know,
A traitor to the Lord?
He, who has fled through unbelief
To Israel’s foes and sought relief
Among a heathen horde?

Although anointed he has been,
He flees to Achish, and is seen
In Ziklag settled down;
He seeks to fight God’s foes among,
But He will not allow this wrong –
The leaders on him frown.

They sent him back, he had to go;
He came to Ziklag soon, and lo!
’Twas wasted and bereft;
Their wives and children all were gone,
His people threatened him to stone,
And he is much distressed.

Yet still he is not left to sink,
Nor linger on despair’s dark brink,
For Israel’s God he knows;
And so, encouraged in his Lord,
He prays, and seeks directing word,
And to enquire he goes.

“Shall I pursue, and overtake,
And wilt Thou me a victor make,
And what shall me befall?”
“Pursue,” said God, “thou shalt succeed,
Shalt overtake, and spoil – indeed
Thou shalt recover all.”

I, too, have had my Ziklag, Lord,
For basely I transgressed Thy Word,
And sinned against Thy light;
I knew that I was doing wrong,
But sin and Satan proved too strong,
I turned me from the right.

And so beneath Thy chastening rod,
In deep distress, upon my God
I earnestly did call;
“Remember Ziklag, Lord, I plead!”
And, by Thy mercy – great indeed,
I have recovered all!

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

**COUNSEL TO A CHURCH AND
NEWLY-APPOINTED PASTOR**

Addresses given by Mr. Jabez R. Rutt and Mr. Gerald D. Buss at the Recognition Service for Mr. James Burgess, Pastor at The Halve Chapel, Trowbridge, held at Zion Chapel, Trowbridge, on Friday, December 30th, 2022

Charge to the Pastor

Reading: 2 Timothy 4. 1-5

Mr. Jabez Rutt: My dear brother James, through the merciful providence, love and grace of our God, who has brought you thus far, and now about, if the Lord will, to take up your labours here in the town of Trowbridge. It is a very solemn charge that we have before us here: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." It is a very solemn charge. We stand before God, before our Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of the church. It is very instructive in the Word of God when the Lord Jesus sends John to the seven churches of Asia, it was the "angel of the church" that was addressed. It is a divine position that the Lord has given to His servants in the church: "the angel of the church." The term "angel" means a messenger and by the grace of God, you are the messenger of God and it is as before Him that we minister the Word; it is to be faithful unto Him – that is the vital thing – faithful unto Christ. The apostle says, "Be thou faithful unto death." You know, we are not sent to be popular, nor are we sent to sew pillows under all armholes; we are sent to preach the Word, the Bible that the Lord has given to us in our own language, the holy, infallible Word of the eternal God, and this is what you are to preach.

The clear exhortation here: "Preach the Word." You know, friends, we can soon get led astray instead of preaching the Word, to preach this or to preach that. I know that over the years personally, especially in my early ministry and often in my study meditating, with a word on my spirit, I could have preached this experience, that experience or another experience. I could have filled up the whole of the Lord's day with all these little different experiences, but this word used to come to me clearly, powerfully and effectually: "We preach Christ crucified." My beloved friends, that is vital; James, that is vital, to preach the Person and

the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says, "For I determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." May the Lord give you that same determination to know nothing among men. Christ is the foundation, Christ is the centre, Christ is the sum and the substance of our ministry – or should be. All our ministry should be centred in the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I purposely mention that word, "Person." You know, it is one thing to appreciate what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, what He has fulfilled, what He has accomplished and what we receive through the life, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and the ascension into glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful, precious gospel that we have to preach but, you know, the great thing is to love Him for who He is, for who Christ is, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, not just to love Him for what He has done for us, and we do, and that is what draws us to Him in love. It is that wonderful, precious, redeeming work that He has done, and may this fill your ministry, and fill your little chapel, and each one of us; may it be the centre and sum of all our desires.

A Christless sermon is a dead sermon; there is no life in it. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." That is where life is; that is where the substance of the gospel is, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, in what He has done, in what He has accomplished. You see, this exhortation, "Preach the Word." What do we find from Genesis to Revelation? The glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Right through the Old Testament, right through the New Testament, the centre of it all is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Him hath God exalted ... to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." May that be your chief concern, and may it be the chief concern of your hearers, that that is what they want to hear. You know, some people are very satisfied when the minister tells them little stories about this and little stories about that, and about something else, but, does that really profit your souls? It may tickle your fancy, you may be pleased with it, but does it really feed your soul? Christ is the Bread of life, Christ is the Water of life, and it is only as you are enabled to preach Christ, and set forth His glorious Person, that your flock will be fed with the Bread of life and with living water, and that is what we need to centre on.

You know, the very fact that the apostle says, "For I determined," it means you have to set your face to it. As I have already said, you may in your studies think this and think that and think something else, you could go down this pathway or that pathway, but will it profit your hearers? Is it centred in the Person of Christ? Or is it centred in the creature, or is it centred in frames and in feelings? We all have frames,

we all have feelings, and frames and feelings change, but there is one thing that never changes: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

May the Lord enable you to preach Him and may He enable you to focus entirely on His glorious Person. “Preach the Word.” Of course, we have the Word of God. In the Word of God is the Person and work of Christ, the holy law, the holy gospel, all contained in the Word of God. But there is the incarnate Word. I think it is Joseph Hart in his hymn:

“The written and the incarnate Word
In all things are the same.” (H. 878)

Christ is the incarnate Word. I think of that lovely word, I believe I probably quote it more than any other scripture: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

How we see in that the two natures that are in Jesus Christ. The term, “the Word,” refers to the divine Person of the Son of God. But then it says, He “was made flesh.” So it speaks of His human nature, and that wonderful, profound glory of God manifest in the flesh, that the Son of God assumed in the womb of the virgin, a holy human nature. That human nature never had any existence separate from the Person of Christ. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the womb of the virgin and that union was made between the divine and the human, an indissoluble union that will never be dissolved, an eternal union, and that eternal union is between Christ and His people. He calls His people, “My brethren.”

“Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season.” There are going to be times when you are going to get really tried, really troubled, really perplexed – the temptations of the enemy. Just as it was with Joshua the high priest that the enemy Satan was at his right hand to resist him and, that is a very real thing with the Lord’s servants, Satan standing at their right hand to resist them. The apostle says, “We are not ignorant of his devices.” He makes suggestions to you. I have often put it this way. Satan has a magnifying glass, and you get perhaps a little problem arising in your family or in the church, between two brethren, and then Satan begins to explode it and to magnify it and makes it bigger and bigger. You know, what our dear brother read in 1 Peter chapter 5 has been much on my spirit: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” We have an example, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. That is our example to follow. May you be given that grace to set a good example before your flock. To be “ensamples to the flock.”

It rested much with me in thinking of this afternoon, verse 8 in 1 Peter 5: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” You see, there is that lovely promise, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.” May you be enabled in the midst of all these pathways that are before you constantly to look to Jesus Christ. “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD” – that word “standard” is Christ – “shall lift up a standard.” The standard of the glorious Person of Jesus Christ, the standard of His holy life, of His pure and spotless righteousness, the standard of the cross of Calvary where He has suffered and bled and died for His people. He lifted up the standard of His precious blood. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” – from all sin. He rose again for our justification. He died for our sins but He rose again for our justification. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” As the Spirit of God opens the truth up unto your soul, you will see everything, all the doctrines of grace, centred in the Person of Christ. He is the foundation, He is the sum and substance of it. And if you are tempted perhaps to divert away and to speak of this or to speak of that, just remember that “we preach Christ crucified.”

Paul writing here to Timothy, he speaks of sound doctrine, how we need to be sound in the faith. It was said of John Bunyan, “Prick him anywhere and he bleeds Scripture.” You know, that is so true. May it be true of us. Everything that we set forth in the ministry must be according to the Word of God; that is our guide. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” O that the Lord would make you faithful in doctrine and sound in the faith. He warns us here, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

But the exhortation to Timothy, and our exhortation to you this afternoon, “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist.” This is another part of the gospel ministry. It makes it very clear, his charge here was to his son Timothy in the faith. Part of a pastor’s work is evangelisation. “Do the work of an evangelist.” That should be the burden of every minister’s heart. I cannot understand a minister that does not have a burden for souls, that does not have a passion for souls, that does not long for the salvation of souls, that does not continually pray for the salvation of souls.

May the Lord grant this to you as a church, "For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." How vital then in all this is the divine work of the Holy Spirit to lead, to guide and to direct you in the ministry of the Word. O that the Lord would always keep you absolutely dependent upon Him, make you feel the need of the divine anointing of the Spirit, the divine power of the Spirit, and as the Spirit grants you that anointing, then Christ will be made precious to you. Christ will be made altogether lovely unto you, and it is that experience you have of the love, mercy and grace of Christ that you will then bring into the pulpit. Then you will be able to speak of the things that you have tasted, handled and felt of the good Word of life. "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

May the Lord enable you as you go forth as His servant and with your little flock, to watch unto prayer.

I think that since I have been the Pastor at Lamberhurst, there are certain wonderful things that have rested upon my spirit and still do, found in the Word of God, and things that I plead before the Lord. "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." You see that Bread of Life, Christ, the Water of Life, Christ, the Wine of the Kingdom, Christ – it is all in Christ; it is He that is to be exalted and set forth.

Another aspect: we have spoken of those two natures in Christ. In the Word of God, He is called the Son of God. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, from everlasting to everlasting, co-equal with the Father and with the Spirit and these Three are One, One blessed almighty and eternal God. But there is another title given to Christ, the Son of Man. That term (I think there are seventy-two occasions in the Word of God when that name is given to Christ, most of them in the New Testament by Christ Himself) the Son of Man, is highlighting His human nature. Not only is He the eternal Son of God; He took a real, holy, human nature, He lived here upon earth, and the apostle says in Galatians 4, "Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." That is the glorious Person that you are to preach, that we are all to preach as the Lord enables us. Well, may the Lord add His blessing to the few remarks that we have made.

Charge to the church

Mr. Gerald Buss: Beloved friends at The Halve and all the dear friends gathered and the Lord's dear servant, the Pastor of The Halve, it is my privilege under God's hand to stand here this afternoon and just speak a few words to the church at The Halve. And when we say *the church*, we do not mean the little building that they gather in, nor do we mean the bricks and the mortar that make it; we mean the congregation,

but especially the members of Christ's mystical body that gather there. Because we believe, and we may say it with a humble confidence, because the great Head of the church has a care for the members of His mystical body at The Halve, He has seen fit in His divine sovereignty to provide for them an under-shepherd; this is the Lord's provision. Psalm 23 verse 1 has many aspects to it, but I believe the dear church at The Halve with their dear Pastor can now say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and then what follows, "I shall not want," that is, be in want of anything that may be needed in the path that now lies before them.

Now, as I was asked to speak at this service, immediately a word dropped into my heart that you will find in Colossians chapter 1 verse 7: "Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." And the two words that stand out in this short passage are these: "For you." We may say to the little church at The Halve, this is what the Lord is saying this afternoon. He has provided "for you," an Epaphras, a dear fellowservant of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We do not know much about Epaphras; his name only appears four times briefly on the page of Scripture. He has four different appellations, shall we say, ascribed to him. He is called "a dear fellowservant," he is called "a faithful minister of Christ," he is called "a fellow prisoner," and he is called "a servant of Christ." All those things were things that appertained to the man God had provided to the church at Colosse to be their pastor. "A dear fellowservant." Paul could say that, and I can say that with our dear friend here, that I believe him to be a "fellowservant" coming into this area, much needed, to preach among the churches, and may the Lord richly bless him in so doing. We believe he is a "faithful minister of Christ." God has made him that; may He keep him that, for he knows as well as I do, that we all need keeping grace in those things the Lord brings into our path to make us a faithful minister, those things that sharpen our sword.

On one occasion he was also "a fellow prisoner" with Paul. We do not expect our dear friend to end up in a prison cell, but none of us know what persecutions may yet come upon the land. But in another sense many of God's servants do come into times when they are in prison circumstances, hemmed in, hedged in, and then there will be much need for prayer. When Peter was in prison, remember the church made "prayer ... without ceasing" for him, and they were surprised when he was delivered as well; they were surprised at the answer God gave. There may be times when your dear Pastor will be hedged in with one thing and another, and that will be the time under God's goodness for you to be wrestling in prayer, to see the great wonders He can do in opening doors and making crooked things straight and rough places plain.

But then above all, I think that this is the most important thing: he is not your servant; he is Christ's servant for you. Christ has placed him here for His honour and glory. I remember years ago listening to the late Fraser McDonald, Pastor at Portree, of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and in his prayer meeting address he suddenly stopped. He said, "If my Master was any other than who He is, He would have dispensed with my services long ago," but he said, "He was a faithful Master to me." No doubt our friend will feel the same, but I believe the dear Saviour will be a faithful Master to our friend here. As we have been reminded by our friend Mr. Rutt, there are times of "in season, out of season." We will not always feel as comfortable as we would like to, though often at times this is when the Lord blesses, but friends, one thing is certain, our faithful Master has called our friend here like Epaphras; has called him for a purpose. And I say this kindly to the dear church at The Halve: you may have to share him; there are other causes around here that need support and some of the ministers are getting older. So just as it was with Colosse, there was Laodicea and Hierapolis just down the road that Epaphras also ministered unto. So, I believe the Lord has brought him into this area for a purpose and to be an encouragement to the church of Christ in this area.

As I pondered this, I found in my heart four things to say to the church at The Halve, and they are four great things:

1. You have a *great privilege*.
2. You have a *great responsibility*.
3. You have a *great burden*.
4. You have a *great resource*.

What is your *great privilege*? God has given you – let me repeat that – God has given you, a Pastor. He said through His servant Jeremiah, "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart," according to my heart, what I see you need. The Lord has given you such a man, the man you need at this time, for such a time as this. This is a great privilege. The great Head of the church has been mindful of you; small though you are, yet He has been mindful of you; He has given you and granted to you a great privilege. Prize it, prize it, dear friends. I say it again, prize it, because it is God's gift to you. Do not despise it; do not take it for granted; certainly do not neglect it. It is a great privilege; it is one of the ascension gifts of our dear Saviour when He ascended on high. "He gave some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," and it is said a pastor is all those three things in his ministry. So, first of all then, you have a great privilege. Prize it, thank God daily for it, do not make an idol of your Pastor – he would not wish that – but do give him the honour that is due unto the office to which he has been called .

Secondly, you have a *great responsibility*, and that is in more than one way. First of all as we read in Hebrews 13, you have a responsibility to obey. Now, God's servants are not lords over God's heritage, but on the other hand there is a position God has given them, of authority, and that authority exercised in faithfulness and love is to be acknowledged. We live in a day when authority is cast aside as a thing old-fashioned. In the church of God it certainly is not. God has ordained this office in the church and His servants are to magnify that office, not to magnify themselves – God forbid we should do that. But we are to magnify the office to which God has called us and use it prayerfully, humbly, that we may be of benefit to the church, and the church has a responsibility to heed. Your Pastor is watching for your soul.

I say this kindly, friends, and of course I speak from experience now of many years, there is nothing more grieving to a pastor when he gives counsel and advice and warning, when it is cast aside; that will cost him sleepless nights. Do not give him sleepless nights like that. He is watching for your soul; he is watching for the good of the church; he is watching for the example you are setting; he is watching that there be no reproach on the name of Christ in the church. When it is otherwise, friends, I tell you that is a grieving experience for any pastor. I believe those pastors here this afternoon will have to join with me in saying it: "Do not give him that grief." Remember he has an authority to admonish in love when he sees something which he feels is not scriptural. He has authority; he is commanded, to say it, and to tell it, kindly, always keeping to the Word of God, not with prejudice, not tradition, no. What does the Word of God say about it? If the Word of God clearly points out the way, and it does, then there is no other response or action that should fill the mind of the church. They have a responsibility under God to obey, to listen, to heed. He watches for your soul.

Also, you have a responsibility to care for him. You say, "He has come to care for us." Yes, he is now your under-shepherd. But he needs your care as well. He needs you to pray for him, he needs you to watch over his needs, and if you see something that you can do, to be of practical as well as prayerful assistance, then do not be negligent in it. For love's sake he has given up a lot for you; for love's sake he has moved many miles to reside here. He has done it, we believe, in the fear of the Lord. Now may God help you to heed this responsibility, to care for him in the way that his Master has given him to care for you.

Thirdly, it is now a *great burden* that is for you to share. I believe we do not think enough, and our friend Mr. Rutt has hinted at it, about the care of souls; this is the whole essence of the matter. If God has sent our dear friend James to The Halve and joined him to that church, which I believe He has, the reason is that souls should be born again of the

Spirit, and that there should be an edification of the saints of God; that is the reason. But friends, this is a great burden, and it is when Zion travails she brings forth children and usually, and I have found in my own little church over many years now, very often out of times of trial and difficulty, in affliction perhaps, in disappointment or discouragement, that God often manifests His fruit more clearly than at other times. Never pray for trouble – God forbid you should do that – but do not forget what was said to Daniel: “The walls shall be built in troublous times,” and we do not know what times may yet come. You are to help in bearing this burden with your dear Pastor. Be an Aaron, be a Hur. Do not pull his hands down; hold them up. He is not perfect; he knows that; we ministers are poor sinners before sinners. But dear friends, pray, pray, pray for him, and then I believe under God’s grace you will see some answers. O there is so much tittle-tattle in our day, talking about this, that and the other.

“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me.’” (H. 394)

Oh, you dear friends at The Halve, bear this burden in prayer, in secret. Do not neglect the prayer meetings. They are a blessed time to God’s people; they are times of fellowship. May there be times when you get hold, as it were, like Jacob did: “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”

Fourthly, you have before you a *great resource*. Were it not so, my dear friends, you would not value the privilege nor bear the responsibility, nor bear the burden, but for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I was pondering in family reading just recently. We have been reading through Nehemiah and Ezra, of the very wonderful expression that Nehemiah used when he went to rebuild the walls; he said, “God put it in his heart.” “God put it in his heart.” Now what we have heard this afternoon is this: God put it in the heart of our dear friend here to be burdened about the cause at The Halve; God put it in the heart of the cause of The Halve to be burdened about this dear servant. The Lord worked at both ends of the matter; the Lord put it in the heart. And friends, what the Lord puts in the heart will come to something. You know, the devil is busy. Our old, wretched nature, O we wish it were not there. But, “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever, nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.”

Dear Nehemiah had something else to say, didn’t he? You read through the book when you get home. See how many answers of prayer

that man had, and every time he got an answer, he said this: "According to the good hand of my God upon me." Friends, if that hand is not upon us, nothing will be done; preaching, praying, praising, it will be empty, void, destitute. But if the hand of God is upon the preacher, the hearers, the praises, the prayers, the meditation, then something will be done. The servants of God here this afternoon will testify, there have been those times when they have truly felt the good hand of their God has been upon them and we have heard it from our dear friend James this afternoon.

"The good hand of my God upon me." He moved kings on behalf of Nehemiah; He silenced his enemies; He gave strength to build. I believe the walls of Jerusalem were built in fifty-one days. How incredible! How long it would it take in our generation to build a wall like Jerusalem's! You think of all the planning applications and hindrances that would be in the way, but when God works He says, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Who shall hinder it?

So, God has given to you dear friends an Epaphras. Praise the Lord for it; thank Him for it. May He keep the Pastor and the people humble in this wonderful path to which He has called them, and above all may they look for no other honour, no other glory, no other aim but this: "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." And then dear friends, it will soon be noised that Jesus is in the place at The Halve. I thought as we sung that little hymn just now, that thousands might come and fill the place. The little Halve would not hold a thousand, would it? Even this commodious chapel would not hold a thousand. Never limit the Lord what He can do though. And we do pray from the bottom of our hearts, as even Nehemiah said himself, "Prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day," and prosper the little church at The Halve.

"For you," for you, a dear fellowservant of Christ has been provided. May He abundantly bless you. Amen.

DISTINGUISHING NATURE OF SAVING GRACE

*Extracts from a sermon preached by John Arnold Wallinger,
at Bethesda Chapel, Bath, in 1845*

Text: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Psa. 80. 1).

"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." This exhibits the riches of divine grace. But why is it said, "Thou that leadest Joseph"? Joseph stands here for the whole Israel of God; one tribe put for all. Sometimes all the tribes are spoken of as Jeshurun, sometimes by the name of Ephraim, sometimes by Israel, and here by Joseph.

But wherein does grace appear? In that all the other nations of the earth were passed by, and Israel chosen; God manifesting the riches of His grace in passing by some and choosing others; in passing by the many to save the few. So that this grace is rich not so much in regard to numbers, but as to the mercy revealed; and this grace is bestowed upon God's chosen ones, His family, His elect, His redeemed. "By grace are ye saved." Friends, salvation is all of grace; therefore, you cannot be more saved than you are, if you are a believer; you may have more enjoyment, but you cannot be more safe. And is this to lull you into carnal security? It will never have that effect if the Holy Ghost apply it. But were none ever left to fall into carnal security? Yes, but if they were the Lord's they were recovered out of it. And I know that you might have as clear a creed as the Apostle Paul himself and be damned at last.

God's Spirit does as He lists among the churches of the living God. So that this is true, that neither faith is given, grace imparted, hope enjoyed, communion realised, Christ revealed, the heart gladdened (and that not as the world gladdens), pardon felt – none of these can take place or be exercised without the mighty operation of God the Spirit.

It is the work of the Spirit that is denied, or not honoured, in the so-called churches of the present day. Many who live in a profession of religion seem to think, and talk, and act, as if faith and hope and love were self-acting principles. But, friends, this is only speculative religion, or intellectuality – a cheat.

If you have true faith, you can, nevertheless, no more put out and exercise it at will than you could move this chapel or turn the moon from its course. It needs a fresh impulse, a fresh touch from the Spirit of God, before we can exercise the graces He has given. If this be true then we can have no more faith than God is pleased to give us, as saith the word in Ephesians: "According to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4. 7). And again, as saith the word in Romans: "According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12. 3). The genuineness of the faith is the point after all.

If your religion is a mere profession, it will be laid down as it was taken up. Whereas that which God gives shall be kept, for He says: "I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. 27. 3). The greater part of the religion of the day is man's work, not God's; it is not the religion of the Holy Ghost and therefore it cannot stand.

John Arnold Wallinger (1793-1878) was born in Hare Hall (in Romford, Essex), a mansion that was built for his grandfather John Arnold Wallinger (1720-1792) and is now a school. He lived in various parts of the country including Essex, Yorkshire, Kent, Somerset and

Sussex. He seceded (c.1830) from the Church of England and was the settled minister at Pavilion Chapel in Brighton, Sussex, throughout the 1860s, having, until the late 1850s, held a similar ministerial position at Bethesda Chapel in Bath, Somerset. J.A. Wallinger left Pavilion Chapel in 1869 but continued to live in the Brighton and Patcham area of Sussex until his death in 1878. After his death his widow moved to Tunbridge Wells, Kent, where she died in 1880.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Address by Dr. John Duncan at a Communion Service, 1865.

Three years had now elapsed from the time when Jesus, who had grown up before Jehovah as a tender plant and a root out of a dry ground (Isa. 53. 2), had been manifested to Israel, and solemnly recognised at His baptism by a voice from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17). During these three years, years the most eventful that ever occurred in the history of the world, many glorious and gracious words had fallen from the lips of Jesus, many glorious and gracious works had been performed by Him. Before the gospel was preached even, a few beheld His glory, those whom He had chosen to be witnesses of all that He spake and did, and also of His death and resurrection (Acts 10. 39-41).

And now the time came when they commemorated Israel's deliverance from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; that deliverance which was followed by the legislation and the covenant which God made with Israel in Horeb. But God had said, "Behold, the days come ... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not.... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days ... I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now the first covenant was not ratified without blood; but the new covenant had to be ratified with better sacrifices than these. Jesus Himself is the Mediator of the New Testament.

And now at the expiry of the public ministry of our Lord, Jesus was calling His disciples to commence a new ordinance, the solemn commemoration of the sacrifice by which the new covenant is sealed. Taking bread, He said, "Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you"; and taking the cup: "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Oh, what words! Oh, what a scene! Who is He that presides? Who are they that sit at meat? What are the viands [items of food]? At what cost is the feast prepared? What will be the consequences of it to Him? What the consequences to them?

It is Jehovah, Israel's own God, come as the messenger of the covenant, who here presides. It is Jehovah, the Son of the living God, the Word that "in the beginning was with God, and was God." It is the Word made flesh. It is the only-begotten of the Father, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person, who is in the Father and the Father in Him; who, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, also Himself likewise took part of the same – very God and very Man – the Son of God and the Son of Man; who is not ashamed to call us brethren. At this table He presides.

And who are they who sit there? "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." They are indeed the holy apostles of the Lord but sinners. ("Shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it.") He, knowing them to be such, eats with sinners the bread of heaven; not with holy angels, but sinners He calls to eat; yes, *sinners!* Ah! how does He appear at that table, when we think He receives sinners, and eats with them! But they were sinners of whom He spake to the Father: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." Perhaps their faith at this time was going no further than the knowledge of His Person, and the knowledge that He had the words of eternal life which He had brought from the Father's bosom. And now He gives them more deeply than ever before the words of eternal life. "This is My body broken for you; this is My blood shed." This Man gives them His flesh to eat – "My body"; the body and blood of the eternal Son of God, body and soul. Jesus had given them both His body and mind and soul before; they had listened to His words; they had received them as the words of eternal life; they had received Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. Now it is not merely Christ, but a broken and bruised Christ. He gives them His body broken and His blood shed.

Ah! we may learn a lesson of what God is as a just and holy God, and of what we are as guilty sinners, deserving to be eternally bruised, covered with shame, under God's curse. And what a lesson of the Father's infinite love, of the Son's free love! "God so loved the world,

that He gave His only begotten Son.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” “I lay down My life.” In this death His soul was put to grief; in this death there was the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood. Ah, there is something deeply mysterious about it! He gives them this bread to eat, this cup to drink, this cup of salvation.

And what are the consequences of it to Him? From the sacramental table follow Him to Gethsemane. He had given them the cup to drink. Then, in our stead, in order that He might give the cup of salvation, He was to drink the cup of curse and condemnation. Jesus had already, as it were, pledged Himself. Now, not only was it sure in the purpose of Jesus, not only was it sure in the covenant of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit’s consent: not only was it sure by His incarnation and coming into the world for this very purpose; but, as it were, the former bond was renewed, for already He had given a cup of salvation into the hands of the disciples, and already said, “This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Now, it is altogether impossible that this cup should pass from Him. They have, first, the precious security: He had pledged Himself to these eleven men, pledged Himself by that cup of salvation. And now let us see how strict divine justice is. He leaves the three chosen disciples behind to watch and pray. He advances a few steps before them, and there falls prostrate on His face, His sweat like great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and He cries, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!” Three times over He prays the same words, yet saying, “Not My will, but Thine, be done.” Yes, He knew what was in that cup, and His holy humanity shrank from it with a holy dread. But He had engaged – He had put into their hands the cup of salvation – and it was not possible that this cup should pass from Him, and His promise to them not be fulfilled.

He is now alone in Gethsemane; there are no mockers here; no high priests, no scribes and pharisees, no cross – He is alone with the Father, and there He takes the cup. In one sense, in covenant engagements from eternity, and actually at His incarnation, it was taken; but now more especially, the imputation of guilt is brought home, all that divine justice required Him to take out of the hands into which He has put the cup of salvation. And from Gethsemane to Calvary, where He is crucified in weakness. It is said an angel appeared, strengthening Him, strengthening the Mighty One; so He is crucified in weakness. The Almighty! but it is in weakness that He is crucified, in weakness that He cries, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Such is the bitter cup in which (O blessed be God!) He did not leave one penal drop for us, but drank it to the dregs; and, instead, He puts into our hands the cup of salvation.

But O, with this cup of salvation there is ever the acknowledgement that Christ got that cup of wrath which was ours, that we might have this cup; and there is the bitterness mixed with its sweetness when we look upon Him whom we have pierced, and are in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

“The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come” (1 Cor. 11. 23-26).

Address after the Distribution of the Elements

“Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

After supper is ended comes the garden, Gethsemane's garden. From it comes a lesson, which is best learned just in Gethsemane itself, where its strongest motives are: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” Jesus, when about to enter this garden, took three of the disciples with Him, Peter and James and John. He told them before He took a few steps forward from them: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and wanted them to watch till He came. And all three fell asleep. We are not to be harder on them than Jesus Himself was concerning this. He said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief.” The very atmosphere perhaps, with the excessive sorrow after great joy and long watching, overcame them. They had not forsaken Him, as afterwards they did; but still they were not awake. He sought comforters; He sought them to watch and pray, but they did not. O what reliance shall we put on the intercession of saints, when Peter, James and John fall asleep while our Lord goes alone to bear our burden and drink our cup? Not the zeal of Peter, not the integrity of James, and not the bright burning love of John, can keep them awake!

“Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” Temptation will come after the supper – it came to Judas, and it came to Peter – and we are called to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. To watch – “Watch with Me.” Let us watch in Gethsemane, let us watch with Christ. And to pray, let us learn to pray from Him – to pray, and then to pray as in an agony, a prayer that terminates in this: “Thy will be done.” He has taught us to say, “Thy will be done,” and the saying of it will not cost us so much as it cost Him.

“Ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come.” “I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations”; and this day, hearing His Word and sitting at His table, we are witnessing the fidelity of God to Christ in this promise. “Till I come.” Then the cup shall be drunk new in the Father’s kingdom at the marriage feast of the Lamb, when there shall be the realising of these words: “The Lamb ... shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”

We are reminded very solemnly this day how short our time is, how far the day is spent. The night is not far off in the course of nature to some of us – and none of us know how near it is. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” And how shall we die in the Lord? Paul says, “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Present in the body, absent from the Lord. “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” Meanwhile He hath said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Go from the table of the Lord, and may He be with you according to His faithful word.

GOD’S WORKMANSHIP

By G. Wisse (1873-1957)

God is the Craftsman in the passive aspect of the conversion. The psalmist sings, “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psa. 100. 3). John testifies, “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1. 13). Paul cries out, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2. 13). “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2. 10). Note that this last verse connects this inward, passive aspect of conversion to a manifestation in actions, in fruits and godliness. The Lord uses His holy and precious Word as the means for both aspects of conversion. God calls us unto conversion by it.

That this call is heeded does not, in the final instance, depend upon whether life has already been worked in us; rather, it depends on whether it is made powerful and irresistible by the Holy Spirit. Some have tried to detract from this relationship between call and inward restoration, by saying, “Yes, but how can the dead hear?” Do you then suppose that outside and before the call of the Word, life has been infused in the soul? Here again we could go into depth. We suffice by saying that it is precisely the nature of the call that by the application of the Spirit of God it “calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom. 4. 17). For instance, by His call, “Turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye

die?" (Ezek. 33. 11), God works in the elect the awakening unto conversion and conversion itself. Therefore, there is the reasonable admonition, "For why will ye die?"

Nevertheless, this call is an inward, irresistible and powerful call in the elect. By this, however, we do not wish to intimate that it does not occur mediately; rather, it works an abiding result despite our old will and way.

The fact that God is the Author of our conversion brings us to the following implications for the experiential and practical life:

1. The creature is humbled. Note here your true state of misery, how terribly matters stand with you.

2. None need despair of the possibility of conversion. It is an act of God; therefore, could it somehow be impossible?

3. Where there is a beginning to conversion there is also a completion, for it stands upon the purpose of God.

4. Here is a true reason for rejoicing and exultation for all who possess the benefit of conversion. O what great love of God is manifest here! Against my own will I am brought to a point where I shall eternally thank and praise God.

5. Thus, the person who has been endowed with this benefit is greater and more glorious than any ruler or beneficiary of rulers. What he possesses is a divine and heavenly gift to abide within us – what riches beyond compare!

6. This should cause us to become small before the Lord and follow closely behind Him. O son of man, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4. 7).

7. What a costly calling is laid upon us, that we might walk according to it.

We could add yet other things, but that would take us too far. Here are two remarks in conclusion. First, relinquish all your vain efforts to convert yourself in your own strength by self-improvement and self-polishing, which stem from pride and enmity. It is all white-washed sin. Secondly, do you yet have unconverted children or parents, family members or friends? My dear reader, I can imagine what efforts you have expended to convert them, all in vain. Come, cease trying to convert them yourself. Certainly, you must use the means earnestly. Never desist from that, but lay the means at the feet of God and see whether God will perform it. If all your attempts seem to have suffered shipwreck, say to the Lord, "Lord, I have reached an end; O wilt Thou intervene!" It is true, the means must be employed. Yet God is jealous of His honour. He requires that we acknowledge that in all means, and in a certain sense, despite all means, God must yet apply it. Not we, but God must convert them.

SAVING FAITH

*Sermon preached by Donald MacLean,
on Wednesday, October 26th, 1983*

Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11. 1-3).

In this epistle, Paul, through the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was seeking to strengthen the Hebrew Christians in the face of the many adversities that they met with, to encourage them not to draw back but to continue in the strength of God the Lord. He had been unfolding to them the great and precious privileges that they enjoyed, and that we too with them enjoy under the New Testament dispensation. And understanding these privileges, and using them in order to strengthen the soul, was intimately bound up with the grace of faith. The grace of faith is a very important grace. As long as the Lord’s people are in this world they live a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. Therefore it is very necessary for us to understand not only what the grace of faith is, but also to understand the place that the grace of faith has and the exercises that the grace of faith involves.

In this chapter, the apostle goes on to speak about faith and to speak about how faith was demonstrated in the case of believers under the Old Testament dispensation. The faith that he speaks of here is the grace of saving faith, of course – that is, it is the faith that stems not from the wisdom of men, but from the power of God. As the Word of God teaches us, and as the catechism also teaches us, that faith is wrought in the soul of a sinner by effectual calling. As we are by nature, we have no such thing as saving faith. We may have such a thing as historical faith – we can believe historical events although we have not seen them. And we can believe historical events in connection with the Scripture – that there was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, that He died on the cross of Calvary, and so on. We may believe all these things in a historical way, but that is not saving faith. And as we read often in the gospels, there was also an exercise of faith that we call the faith of miracles – that is to say, there were those who believed that the Saviour was able to perform miracles. But the faith of miracles is not saving faith. Many people had the faith of miracles who did not have the faith that is spoken of here.

How the Holy Spirit works saving faith in a soul

Therefore it is necessary for us to understand clearly that the faith that is spoken of here is the faith that is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Ghost in effectual calling or, if you like to use the

expression, in regeneration. Regeneration and effectual calling are really the same thing – they are just expressions that point to two different aspects of the soul being brought alive. “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,” is regeneration, and effectual calling is really the experience of a soul being regenerated. We cannot have this faith unless we are born again. And this faith is the first exercise of the soul that is born again. The grace of faith is the first exercise of the soul that is quickened.

Now there is a common error in connection with faith and regeneration that is taught in our day – it was taught before our day also, but very much in our day – that a person is regenerated by faith. The error is that a person believes and then he is regenerated; a person believes and then he is born again. That, of course, is demonstrably false, because you cannot have a soul exercising a living grace when the soul is still dead. Nevertheless that idea is very popular nowadays, and it is also very deceitful. The true doctrine is that the grace of faith is wrought in the heart in effectual calling or in regeneration. And therefore we read that faith is the gift of God. It is not to be found in the heart of man as he is by nature. He needs a change of nature so that he can exercise the grace of faith.

Therefore faith brings before us the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit blessing the Word of God to a sinner, blessing the doctrines of God’s Word, then giving the soul to feel the authority of the Word of God in his or her soul’s experience in such a way that, first of all, that soul comes to recognise and to feel that he or she has sinned against God. As the prodigal said, “I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” As David said,

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,
In Thy sight done this ill.” (Psa. 51. 4, metrical).

Some light is let into the soul with respect to this particular point, that the soul is sinful in the sight of God.

And secondly there is imparted to the soul a desire to be reconciled to the God against whom that soul has sinned. We see that in connection with the prodigal too. “When he came to himself,” as the Scripture says, and when he had this confession, “I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,” he also had this desire, “I will arise and go to my father.” That was a desire that he had when he came to himself. When he realised that he was going to perish with hunger, this desire arose in his heart and mind: “I will arise, and go to my father.” And so there is imparted to the soul a desire to be reconciled to the God against whom that soul is conscious that he or she has sinned.

Now, in the implanting of faith in the soul, the Holy Spirit teaches the soul that there is but one way of return to God. The soul in the

exercise of this desire may choose other ways. Very often the soul chooses the way of its own righteousness. In other words, the soul resolves to go to God after it has prepared some ground that it is ready to think will be pleasing to God. That is, the sinner expects or thinks that he can have some righteousness of his own, something that God will be pleased with, and that is the way to return to God – he thinks the way to obtain God’s favour is to have something that will be pleasing to God. Now the Holy Spirit brings the soul to recognise and to see and to understand that there is no way to return to God by that door. That door is for ever closed because (as the church learns and the soul learns) all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and their best endeavours and their best longings and their best prayers and their best reading of God’s Word – their best attending the means of grace, their best seeking to be more and more earnest and so on – by all that taken separately and all that taken together they will never open the door to God’s favour. That is a door that is closed, and a door that the sinner cannot pass through by any endeavours of his or her own. And therefore the Holy Spirit brings the soul to understand that there is only One who says, “I am the door” – the great I AM THAT I AM, the Person of the Son. He is the One who has opened and consecrated the new and the living way whereby the sinner should be reconciled to God.

You see, when light from the gospel comes into the soul with regard to that particular point, the desire for reconciliation is now directed towards the Person of Christ – Christ the Son of God, the One who glorified the Father on the earth and finished the work that He gave Him to do, the One who was crucified, the One who died for the ungodly, the One who set aside all the claims of law and justice. The soul comes to see that this is the Saviour – and the alone Saviour – and that there is “none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” but by the name Jesus. So the desire for reconciliation is pointed in this direction – it becomes a desire for Christ. A desire for Christ! The language of the soul in these circumstances is, “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” It is the same desire as the Greeks had coming up to the feast when they asked Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” And this soul, who has been taught the sinfulness of sin, and the sinfulness of his own sin, and who has been taught the sinfulness of his own righteousness and his inability ever to reconcile himself to God, is now coming to the Word of God and to the throne of grace, and to the means of grace, and this desire is in his soul: “I would see Jesus!” And that is our prayer, that that soul would see Jesus, that they would find the Messiah.

Now where that desire and that longing is, then they are also taught that they are to find the Messiah in the gospel. But they have to learn –

and they do learn – their own inability to see Jesus, their own inability to believe. The soul with this desire and this longing is coming to the means of grace and hearing about Christ, and hearing about the Person of Christ, and hearing about the love of Christ, hearing about the efficacy of the blood of Christ – and yet he finds himself unable to trust, unable to believe in Christ! That is because this faith must be secretly wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the soul through the Word of God, through the gospel. Through the soul reading the Word of God and meditating on the Word of God and hearing the gospel preached, the Spirit enlightens the understanding in the knowledge of Christ – the knowledge of Christ as the one way of salvation. And then the Spirit draws the soul into union with the Person of Christ. So the sinner who could not believe before comes now to believe – he comes now to trust in Christ, he comes now to rest in Christ, and he comes to rest in Christ alone for salvation as He is revealed in the promise of the gospel. And so resting in Him, so being united to Him, that soul comes to be numbered among those of whom it is true that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Their sins, which are many, are forgiven them.

Faith is tied to the promise

That leads us to notice that faith, in its initial exercise, and faith in all its exercises, is tied to the promise. We read here about these promises, that the Old Testament believers saw them afar off and they embraced them. That is what faith is – it is an embracing of the promise, and embracing the substance that is in the promise in the gospel. The substance that is in the promise is Christ the Saviour. Christ is the One who finished the work the Father gave Him to do. Christ is the One through whom the mercy of God comes to the soul. But it is important for us to recognise the fact that faith needs the promise and faith is exercised towards the promise. Therefore the apostle says here that faith is the substance (or the foundation) of the things hoped for. And faith is that which brings these things to be a foundation and a prop or an upholding of the hope of the soul. That is the nature of faith – it is the substance of the things hoped for, it is the evidence of the things which are not seen. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are spiritual and are eternal. These things which are not seen are in the promise, and faith, as we see here, is the evidence of the things which are not seen.

Now one way of looking at this passage and looking at faith in the light of the passage is to consider the example of a telescope. Those of you who have been at sea will appreciate the example of a telescope. Here you are at sea, and somebody reports that there is a ship over a bit. But from this distance you cannot see the ship very clearly. You cannot

make out what kind of ship it is, whether it is an oil tanker or a cargo ship or a passenger ship, you cannot see what flag it is flying, until you use the telescope. The telescope has the effect that what cannot be seen with the naked eye is now brought near so that you can tell whether it is an oil tanker, or some other kind of ship, and what nation its flag belongs to. These things you see are now evidenced through the use of the telescope. The ship that could not be seen before is now seen clearly by the use of the telescope. Well, so it is here with respect to the grace of faith. It is the evidence – the showing forth – of things not seen.

Faith sees Christ even at a distance

Now of course there are many examples of faith – indeed, this chapter is full of them. Let us take one example, Abraham. Christ said that Abraham saw “My day ... and was glad.” Abraham lived hundreds of years before the coming of Christ and yet he saw His day. The day of Christ to him was a reality. It was there; he believed it. He saw it. Where did he see it? He saw it in the promise. How did he see it? He saw in the telescope of faith. That day was far off from the days of Abraham, yet Abraham saw that day and he was glad, and he rejoiced in it, he was assured of it, he was certain about it. It was a reality to him. There was substance in it, there was evidence in it. In the exercise of faith, he saw “My day ... and was glad.”

Now take another example – the promise that is given to the people of God: “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.” There is a promise – thou shalt see the King in His beauty – and faith sees what is promised. Jesus is there. He is risen again. He lived two thousand years ago, but faith in that promise sees Christ, sees the King in His beauty, the King that is in heaven, the King that is the glorified Redeemer, the King that is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. The soul sees that. How? With the telescope of faith.

And this is what we have in the exercise of faith. The soul sees Christ in heaven. Christ in heaven is brought near to the soul and to the experience of the soul – by faith they see that Jesus is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, that He is glorified, that He is the High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on high. “If any man sin,” says John, “we have an Advocate with the Father,” an Advocate in the court of heaven. How do we know we have an Advocate in the court of heaven? Well, it is revealed in the Word of God. But how do we enjoy it? How do we benefit by it? Through the telescope of faith. By faith we see that Jesus is the Advocate, that He is the High Priest. We see Him there and it has an effect on our souls.

Now the person is brought to be united to Christ, and brought into an estate of grace, and they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now

the Lord is promising to give glory to that soul. How does the soul enjoy that promise? How does the soul taste of the fulness of that promise? By faith which is the evidence of things not seen. Although they do not see the glory now with the eye of sense, yet they see it with the eye of faith – they see the “city which hath foundations, whose Builder and whose Maker is God.” It is in the nature of the exercise of faith, that those things which are not seen and cannot be seen with the natural eye, or the natural understanding, or the exercises of the natural heart, are seen in virtue of the exercise of faith by the spiritual mind, by the one who is a new creature in Christ Jesus. And, you see, it is most important that those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus should be exercised in this way, in order that thereby they should hold fast their profession, and also that they should continue in their profession, so that they should be able to say,

“So henceforth we will not go back,
Nor turn from Thee at all:
O do Thou quicken us, and we
Upon Thy name will call.” (Psa. 80. 18, metrical)

Faith looks to Christ in the midst of difficulties

But, you see, it comes to this particular matter – you have a trial, you have a difficulty, you have something that needs to be cleared up, something that you need strength for. When you think of that, then you look to the Saviour who is in heaven. You can see something of this in Mary Magdalene. When she thought of how “they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him,” she felt that, and she felt it deeply. And when the Saviour manifested Himself to her – and she was the first one to whom He made Himself known after the resurrection – you remember that she made to lay hold of Him. But He said, “Touch Me not,” because the communion that she was to have with Christ after the resurrection and after the ascension was to be different. When Christ was with her in the world, she could see Him with the eye of the body, or with the eye of sense. Now that He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do, there was no need for her to see Him with the eye of sense. For the time being she could hear His voice. When He said, “Mary,” she recognised Him. She said, “Rabboni,” because she had heard that voice before. But now that had all come to an end – the Saviour was to ascend and to go up into heaven and the everlasting doors were to be opened, the doors that do last for aye, that the King of glory might come into His place. Mary, in the state she was in, would have preferred if Jesus would have stayed with her. But that was not the way. Now she was to have Christ with her in the exercise of faith. When the Saviour says, “Lo, I am with you alway,” then they are looking to Him, and faith is looking to Him and faith is bringing Him near to the soul. Or

faith is so viewing Him that He is near to the soul. “Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not.” It is most necessary that faith should be bringing the substance of the promise near to the soul. It is through this that is communicated by the Holy Spirit that the soul exercises faith, and it is faith that leads to the enjoyment of the substance of the promise.

And if I might just go on to this particular point – the same thing is true with regard to what I was mentioning on Sabbath evening in connection with commemoration of Christ’s death. In the Lord’s supper we have things that can be seen, bread and wine, but it is faith that brings us near. The bread and wine are representing the body and the blood of Christ – they are representing, in other words, Christ and Him crucified, Christ as the One who died, who paid the ransom price, for “the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Now, although the eye of the body sees the bread and the wine, the eye of the soul sees there Christ held forth – the Christ who was on the cross of Calvary, the Christ who was dead, and who is now alive, and alive for evermore. The soul views Him by faith, and feeds on what He did and the love that He revealed and the salvation that is to be found in Him. So in the exercise of faith, while the person is eating and drinking with the bodily mouth the broken bread and the poured-out wine, which represent and set forth Christ and His death, faith is feeding on Christ – on the Person of Christ, on the salvation that is in Christ, on the love that Christ reveals, on the grace that is in Christ, and on all that is involved in the revelation that we have of Christ in the Word of God. Those who have this faith need to have it in exercise every day and to be living a life of faith on the Son of God. Christ is the Object of their faith, and although He is in heaven and although He is far off (in that sense) as to His Person as the God-Man, yet nevertheless to faith, He can be near to the soul. The eye of faith is looking to Him, and the mouth of faith is feeding on Him, as One who is a present Saviour – the One who says, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,” the One who says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and the One who says, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

(To be concluded)

What shall they do who have not assurance? Let such labour to find grace. When the sun denies light to the earth, it may give forth its influence; so when God denies the light of His countenance, He may give the influence of His grace.

Thomas Watson

THE LORD'S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE

Dear Friends,

“The Lord thinketh upon me” (Psa. 40. 17).

The fortieth is a supreme Messianic psalm and one cannot help wondering what was going through David’s mind as he penned these words, “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart” (verses 7, 8). The inspired writer to the Hebrews leaves us in no doubt that these are the words of Christ (Heb. 10. 5-9). Later in the psalm it is as though we are made privy even to the thoughts and prayers of the Man of sorrows as He hangs on the accursed tree. Does this tell us something, I wonder, of the closeness of David’s walk with his Lord, that his heart and mind were at one with the heart and mind of his Saviour?

Such is the union of Christ with His people that they really are to be thought of as one. Is Christ in Psalm 40? Yes, without question! Are you and I in Psalm 40? Most assuredly, along with David himself.

Let us put the words of our text into their immediate context: “Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me” (verses 16, 17). For those who seek the Lord and love His salvation there is every cause to “rejoice and be glad” in Him. The Lord should indeed be magnified. From beginning to end salvation is *His* work! The saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in this psalm, finds its origin in the mind and counsels of Deity before the world began (verses 7, 8). This is cause enough for a perpetual song of joy and gladness in our hearts.

“The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy.” We should not let the contrast here escape us. It is the contrast between the faithful, covenant God of Israel and one of His covenant people, even possibly at this time Israel’s king. The One is to be uplifted because He is great and greatly to be praised; the other is to be pitied because he is in need of help. The One is the Saviour; the other is the sinner. David knew his condition and he knew his rightful place before the Lord as one truly humbled and in the dust. Is that where we put ourselves? Do we recognise before God our inherent poverty of soul and deep, spiritual need? Humility is not regarded by the world as a positive characteristic, but for the believer it should be part of our daily experience and Christian testimony.

And yet, says David, “The Lord thinketh upon me.” The world may have little or no time for me and dismiss me out of hand as irrelevant, but the Lord has time for me. I am continually in His thoughts, upon His

mind and on His heart. As one who is poor and needy, I have nothing to give Him and I deserve nothing from Him except to be banished for ever from His sight and from His mind. And yet, He thinks about *me*. How can this be true?

It is true because of Christ. It is true because Christ executed the will of His Father in going to the cross (verses 7, 8). Then He knew His own soul to be so encompassed about with innumerable evils and so overwhelmed by the iniquities that He bore (*our* iniquities) that His very eyes, as it were, were weighed down so that He could no longer look up (verse 12). It is because of Christ, and of Christ alone, that the Lord “thinketh upon me,” with thoughts of mercy and of grace. It is because of Christ and my union with Him that He smiles upon me, supplying all that my poverty lacks and meeting every need of my soul. It is interesting that the word *yet* in the Authorized Version (verse 17) is printed in italics, indicating that there is no equivalent in the original. But I wonder if there is not a sense in which the word *therefore* would be appropriate in its place. A knowledge of our poverty and need is the very condition we need to be in for the Lord to set His thoughts upon us and to fill us with that which we need. “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away” (Luke 1. 53).

Finally, David was able to acknowledge that the Lord was his help and his deliverer (verse 17). He knew this already from experience because he had been in the “horrible pit” and “the miry clay,” but the Lord had brought him up from that, set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings (verse 2). And what the Lord had done before gave David great encouragement that He would do again: “Make no tarrying, O my God.”

Dear Christian friend, you may go unnoticed by the world, you may be neglected or forgotten by your family, your friends may have deserted you, you may feel all alone, “poor and needy,” but you can take to yourself these precious words of David: “The Lord thinketh upon me.” Far better that than to have the world at your feet.

J. Hooper

It seems as if we needed day by day to be taught over and over again our own sinfulness, weakness and helplessness, and that none but the blessed Lord can do us any real good. Religion is not like any art or science which, when once learnt, is learnt for ever; but is a thing which we are ever forgetting, and ever learning over and over again.

J.C. Philpot

SALUTARY LESSONS LEARNED IN THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

From the Diary of Kenneth Alexander MacRae (1883-1964)

October 27th, 1934: I was never nearer death than during my late illness, and I have reason to praise the Lord that He lifted me up again and has given me the prospect of being able once more to labour in the gospel vineyard. That it was not without its own blessings is evident, and yet in my pain and trouble I had very little of the Lord's presence. It is true that several times the words came vividly before me: "It is I; be not afraid," but I was afraid to build much upon them lest they should be the product of my own imagination, and not a message from the Lord. Nevertheless I had not much fear of death. I knew it was not very far away, and yet I had no serious fear of my rejection. In fact, there were times when, were it not for my wife and daughter, I would almost have preferred to go. No doubt excruciating pain brought me to this, but I never got nearer having a desire to be with Christ which is far better than at that time.

The lessons learned upon that bed of suffering I might well commit to permanent record lest I let them slip:

1. I saw the folly of wrestling against sickness when it comes. This, humanly speaking, was at the root of my sufferings, for had I been careful I would have escaped with the first light attack of my illness which came upon me ere I left home. I failed to see that sickness was God's will and an indication to me to submit. I thought my engagements in connection with the cause were God's will and that they must be discharged at all costs, and therefore I refused to submit. But this, I see, was self-will and rebellion – I was unwilling to give up that which pleased me, for a phase of God's will which was distinctly distasteful to me. I see the folly of it now.

2. I saw how utterly foolish I had been in my ministry, working at high pressure all the time, and forgetting that all my efforts would be vanity were they not blessed of the Holy Spirit. This was what troubled me more than anything else in my illness. How I longed to be assured that I would yet return to labour in Zion, that I might be wise and that I might work aright, learning to take the Lord with me in every sermon and in every effort to advance His kingdom. And now let me not forget this most important lesson. One sermon preached in the power of the Spirit is better than one hundred without. Time taken in pleading with the Lord for His blessing upon my endeavours is not time lost, but what makes my endeavours profitable. If I learn to work less and plead more, I will be able to accomplish much more. And that leads me to:

3. I saw how foolish I had been in being so neglectful of prayer. I saw it as a real duty to be performed – not slavishly, but as the exercise of sincere faith upon the Word of God. The promises were there, not to be admired, but to be pleaded, and, if they were pleaded in sincere earnestness, they would be fulfilled. I must use prayer as a means definitely provided by the Lord for the advancement of His cause and for the growth of grace in His people.

4. I have learned the value of intercession. Not only in Kilmuir and Stornoway were people pleading for my restoration, but throughout Lewis, in Glasgow, in Ferintosh, in Fearn and probably in many places – and that in public. This is what amazed and humbled me, that I should be publicly prayed for in so many congregations. At the same time it was a source of great comfort and strength to me.

5. I have learned the value of sympathy in a new way. I have been the recipient of extraordinary kindness and I felt my heart go out with gratitude to those of my friends who so remembered me, and especially to those who came to visit me. I can understand now, as I never could before, the value of a visit to a sick bed and of a word of sympathy to those who are in trouble.

Death has been vested now with a new dread for me – not the dread of dying which is natural to all, but dread of the pains of the dissolution of the body. If the pains of death are worse than those I passed through, they may well be dreaded. But with some the body dies easily.

THE NECESSITY OF PERSONAL RELIGION

The Experience of John Hobbs

The first thing God did for my soul was to give such a discovery of what Christ is, as the self-existent Jehovah, as broke down all my carnal reasoning on the subject; and this from His own sacred Word, and the words were these: “For if ye believe not that I am He” – I AM, the same that spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai – “for if ye believe not that I AM ... ye shall die in your sins” (John 8. 24). And from that day to this I have been fully convinced that the Saviour of poor sinners is the almighty Jehovah, the eternal God, a Person in the glorious and indivisible Trinity, the eternal Son of God, the Word that was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, God-Man, Mediator, God manifest in the flesh.

This is not the revelation of Christ to the heart; if I had never been led further than this, I might have gone to perdition, for Satan possesses all this knowledge, and confessed, “I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1. 24). See how far he can go! Therefore, a saving knowledge is not merely a conviction of divine truth, even as regards the

eternal Godhead and personality of Christ, if we go no farther; but the teaching I received was God's work in me, and, bless His name, I know it was, and unquestionably where He begins a good work, He will carry it on, and perform it, unto the day of Jesus Christ.

"Well," say you, "and what then? What did He do more for your soul? I suppose having learnt who Christ was, you were led into another line of things, to study the Scriptures, to receive the preached Word, and derive therefrom further light on the subject, and learnt what Christ is as a Saviour, Prophet, Priest and King." No; in this way I did not learn it. "How then?" say you. Why, the next step the Saviour took in manifesting Himself to me, who He is, and what He is, was to convince me of my need of Him. "How was that?" say you. By His own word brought home to the conscience, in which He plainly spoke to me. "Spoke to you! are you enthusiast enough to believe God ever spoke to you?" Not with an articulate voice, but, blessed be His name, He has often spoken to me in His own peculiar and especial manner; and I know His voice, and can distinguish it from any other. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10. 27). I do not say these things because they are written in the word. "My sheep hear My voice," but how should I know I was one of His sheep if I did not hear His voice? but, bless His name, I know His voice, and can distinguish it from any other voice. Because if I were to hear a sermon or a book read, I should not be led to decide about it simply from the doctrinal truth it contained; that would not settle the point with me. It might be all truth, and yet not one sound of the Saviour's voice be in it. The Saviour's voice is known by its quickening power. "Where the word of a king is, there is power" (Eccles. 8. 4).

But to return. I was brought to know my need of a Saviour, and that by these words: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6. 23). I was convinced that I was a sinner; I was brought low by divine power. I had never heard anything about these things before; it was not the effect of education, or conversation with others, but it was the secret teaching of God's Holy Spirit. All who knew me could bear testimony to this, for I had not the privilege of religious training. He convinced me that I stood in need of Him, that I was a lost, ruined, undone sinner; and not only convinced me that I had broken the law in every point, but about two years after this, the law was brought home to my conscience in its spirituality, not only showing me that I was a condemned, outward sinner (for I tried to convince myself that many of the commandments I had not broken, and this was true, I being quite young), but I found that the law reached to the thoughts and intents of the heart. My dear brethren, there is not a sin of which I had not the germ in my heart, and its corrupt influence working within me.

Well, in this state and condition I needed a Saviour, and what God did for my soul was to reveal this precious, almighty Saviour, in His fulness, freeness and all-sufficiency; the glory, beauty, excellency and matchless worth of His glorious and adorable Person; His precious blood to cleanse, His righteousness to justify, His grace to save. The attraction, the beauty, the glory of His Person drew my heart to Him, and filled it with desires after Him. Thus He revealed His dear Son in me.

BOOK REVIEW

Alexander Moody Stuart: A Memoir, by Kenneth Moody Stuart; hardback; 448 pages; price £17; published by and obtainable from The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6EL.

Alexander Moody Stuart (1809-1898) was one of the eminent ministers of Christ who stood firm for the principles of the gospel at the time of the Disruption, which culminated in the establishment of the Free Church of Scotland. Ready to sacrifice all for the sake of Christ, the Lord honoured him with many "souls for his hire," many of whom retained a deep and lasting affection for their Pastor.

The excellent work, a reprint of the original 1899 edition, with additions, is partly autobiographical and partly biographical, ably presented by his son Kenneth. It traces the life history of Alexander, from his birth in Paisley, his conversion, and call to the ministry, and his usefulness as a leader in the newly-formed Free Church. In addition, there are sermons and addresses which reveal the warmth of the gospel experienced by this gracious man. The communion address on page 227 is particularly commendable and profitable.

It is well written and informative of the times in which Alexander was called to serve the Lord. It is a pleasure to commend this memoir to our readers.

A PASTOR'S LONELINESS

A poem written by Jesse Delves (1891-1980), on receiving a copy of the Friendly Companion magazine

My dear Friend,

Just to let you understand
 "The Friendly" safely came to hand;
 The verse enclosed was fitting too,
 For which to you my thanks are due.

I've friends around on every hand,
 A true, devoted, loyal band,
 But, solve the mystery if you can,
 I still remain a lonely man.

Yes, though it may be hard to see,
 It's ordered that it thus should be;
 And though kind friends in part atone,
 'Tis needful I should walk alone.

A pastor's is a lonely life,
 But much exposed to inward strife;
 More private in my life and walk,
 More public in my work and thought.

My bread comes in a different way
 From those who labour every day;
 Yet though I sow the gospel seed,
 My God supplies each temporal need.

I have the greater need to cry,
 For I have sins of deeper dye;
 These sins are known to One alone.
 Oh, that the Fountain may atone.

How oft, alas, does pulpit stain
 Upon my heart with pain remain;
 And oft I pray, with one of old,
 To say the thing that's right of God;

To take the precious from the vile,
 Without hypocrisy and guile;
 To use the "shovel" and the sieve
 Needs grace which God alone can give.

Strong men need meat both rich and good,
 Weak babes need nursing with their food;
 Our sons should be as plants well grown,
 And daughters shine as "corner stones";

That poor and halt and lame and blind
 May in His time true mercy find,
 And earnest seekers after God
 Rejoice in sin-atonement blood.

These points as we may look them through
 Engage my thoughts and prayers too;
 They cause one many a secret sigh
 When Sabbath days are drawing nigh

Perhaps 'tis not so hard to find
 Or solve the mystery in the mind;
 And, read the "Friendly" though I can,
 I still remain a lonely man.

Affectionately yours,

Jesse Delves

Reply to the Pastor's verses

My Pastor's lines gave me much thought;
 I thank him, for they came unsought;
 Therein he kindly draws aside
 The veil which otherwise would hide
 Much secret exercise and care –
 A burden he is *called* to bear.

A lonely man? Yes, he needs be
 Oft with his God on bended knee.
 Ah! blessed posture! May the Lord
 Oft speak home then the living Word;
 Cause him to know that mighty grace
 And power suffice in every case.
 And when he feels the tempter's thrust,
 O then, Lord, be his shield and trust

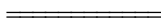
And does he pace the study floor
 In search of food from heavenly store?
 Lord, give him large supplies of bread,
 That his loved flock may still be fed.

But let him not discouraged be
 By loneliness; grant him to see
 His Master tread the lonely way
 From Bethlehem to Calvary.
 Oft turn his mind to Olivet;
 Let him *those* labours ne'er forget;
 Think of the nights the Saviour spent
 Beneath the stars; the prayers He sent
 With fervour to His Father, God,
 As He the path of obedience trod.

Thus, though I at a distance stand,
 And scarce advance to shake his hand –
 Thus I would pray with free access
 That God will still my Pastor bless.

His constant prayers and exercise!
 They call from me grief and surprise
 That I, one of this flock, should be
 So fruitless and oft slovenly.
 O God, once more with power descend!
 To rouse Thy sheep the heavens rend!

Reginald West (1906-1995)



THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

DECEMBER 2023

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

WHAT CHRIST CAME TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM

“This day is salvation come to this house” (Luke 19. 9) were the words the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, addressed to His new-born child, Zacchaeus. What was it Zacchaeus was saved from? What did this word “salvation” accomplish in this man’s life, heart, home and soul? Five things. See if you can follow as we look at five things from which Zacchaeus was saved. And we need to be saved from exactly the same five things as Zacchaeus was.

The first thing Zacchaeus was saved from was himself. That sounds a strange thing to say, doesn’t it? But don’t you realise that your self, as you were born in Adam, is unbelieving, impenitent, worldly, corrupt, proud and self-righteous? There are many other descriptions we could give it. That is what you are by nature. But, when a sinner is born again by the Spirit, he realises that that old self is his greatest hindrance. Paul called it a “wretched man.” Apparently, one of the cruellest punishments the Romans had was to tie the body of a dead man on the back of a living man and make him walk around while that body decayed on his back. Apparently, Paul was referring to that. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He was talking about himself. “For the good that I would” – this wretched self – “I do not: but the evil which I would not, that” – this wretched self – “I do.” That is what Paul felt about himself. And that is what Zacchaeus now felt about himself. He suddenly realised what a terrible thing it was to be governed by self. A selfish life is a Christless life. It is a Godless life. How have you lived this past week, dear friend? Unto God? Unto Christ? Or unto self? With every decision you have taken, what motive was there? “How will it please my flesh? How will it make my life easier? How will it smooth out its rugged way and make it just a little bit easier for my flesh?” Or did you say, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Did you pray as the hymnwriter says,

“O crucify this self, that I
No more, but Christ in me, may live?” (H. 1075)

Did you? The Lord bless you if you did, dear friend, because you are now allied with godly Zacchaeus; called by grace. Oh, crucify this flesh! Crucify this self! Crucify those affections that are Satanic, that are evil

and that are worldly! Crucify this proud, self-righteous, self-seeking self. That is the first thing Zacchaeus was saved from. God's dear Son did not save him from it by adapting that old nature. No. He had to carry it like Paul did, until his dying moment. But He gave him a new nature. The eyes that coveted in the old nature are now believing in the new. The ears that were deaf in the old nature are now hearing the Word of God with power in the new. The tongue that lied, cursed, swore and deceived now testifies of a precious Christ.

Now, what about you, sinner? What about you? Has God changed your tongue? How has it been used this last week? Has it been kind? Has it been honest? Was it sincere? Was it holy? You examine yourself. How we need the precious blood of Christ! Zacchaeus knew it and felt it when the Lord opened up the word "salvation" to him. And I want to ask you this question: is God saving you from yourself? Those very faculties that were once in self-service, are they now in Christ's service? That is the point. That is what salvation does.

Secondly, Zacchaeus was saved from the world. When I say, "the world," I mean the spirit of it. The spirit of each generation as it is in the world is a very powerful one. Younger ones will know what "peer pressure" is. When you are in a group of people of your own age, you do not want to be different. You do not want to stand out. And that is not easy. I found that difficult when I was at school. And I still do find it difficult, by nature, to be the only one who does not go along with what you know to be wrong! You know that your godly parents would disapprove. And more than that, God would disapprove. It needs grace to be different.

Zacchaeus was a man of the world before this. He went along with the current of it; he was a leader in the world. He was a man who had no problem with the spirit of the world. Although the world did not like him much, in one sense, I think secretly some of them only disliked him because he had a lot of money and a lot of riches. But now, Zacchaeus is different. Instead of going along with the world, he had to swim like a fish against the tide. That is not easy. Zacchaeus is now going against the tide. The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not like what they saw. They had no time for this Man, Jesus of Nazareth. They hated His doctrine. They hated His Person and they hated His very presence. And here now was this man, newly converted, willing to stand by a precious Christ and say, "I am not ashamed to be His. I am not ashamed to be known as a disciple of His. I am not ashamed to be a follower of this Man, 'despised and rejected of men'; a Man whom I despised, whom I rejected, but now my eyes have been opened to see the preciousness of Him." Zacchaeus was saved from the world. It is a wonderful thing to be saved from the world.

“Save me from this bewitching world,
That has to death ten thousand hurled.” (H. 954)

This world is dragging sinners around us into eternal misery. I am not throwing stones. It is not for me to judge; God forbid a pastor should do that. But I must warn you. If your life is governed in all its principles by what the world dictates to you, you are on the high road to eternal misery. You are! Make no mistake about it! It does not need me to tell you in one sense, although I must tell you. The Word of God tells you. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And, if you love the world, you can never be happy in heaven. Remember that. A worldly mind could never enjoy or even endure the happiness of heaven. What did the Lord Jesus Christ say? “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” There may be a dear young friend here this morning finding it so difficult to overcome. You feel more often to be overcome than an overcomer. Go to this precious Saviour who has overcome the world. He has conquered it! He has grace and strength for you to be a conqueror, too. That is the only way you will conquer. Zacchaeus was now saved from this dying world; plucked out of it as a brand from the burning.

Thirdly, Zacchaeus was saved from his master, Satan. He did not realise that Satan had been his master. He was rather like those pigs that Rowland Hill once saw. Those pigs told a very sad story. Rowland Hill was out walking one day, and he saw a herd of pigs following a man. Pigs do not usually follow. Sheep follow, but pigs do not. They are usually driven. But these pigs were meekly following this man. Rowland Hill could not understand it. Then he saw that the man they were following had a bucket in his hand. In the bucket were beans. He was strewing the beans along the road, and the pigs were greedily following after. The more beans he threw out, the more they followed him. Where was he going? Well, just down the road was the slaughterhouse. The pigs meekly went through the gates, little realising they were going to their death.

Oh, dear friend! This Sabbath morning, I ask you, what baits of Satan have you been gobbling up this past week? How much nearer are you to that bottomless abyss that belongs to those who serve Satan? Satan is very crafty. He does not reveal his agenda all at once. It is a little thing here, and then a little thing there, then something more there. You do not realise, unless God opens your eyes, just where you are heading. And, when God’s dear Son met Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus suddenly realised he was as greedy as those pigs. With him it was covetousness. With him it was more money, more money, more money! On he went, and Satan gave him more and more bait. And as we cannot

take a penny of our earthly possessions beyond the grave, where would his soul have been if grace had not intervened? In eternal misery.

But, what about your soul? “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Satan is after lost souls, in the wrong sense. He wants souls to be lost. That is his agenda. But our Lord Jesus Christ’s agenda is to save lost souls; to save sinners from the wiles and the snares of Satan. Is there a poor, devil-harassed one here this morning? You know it is Satan’s work. You can see his fingerprints and his footprints. You feel so helpless. This word “salvation” is what you need. The Lord Jesus Christ is that One who can conquer Satan. He has already conquered him on your behalf. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

Fourthly, what was Zacchaeus saved from? The debt he owed under the law. You say, “But didn’t he repay the money? Didn’t he restore it fourfold? Wasn’t that enough?” No, my dear friends. It was good that he did that. It was a fruit of conversion. It showed a changed life, and as far as that went, it was right and proper. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” But all the money he restored, and all the good he did from that day onwards, did not pay the law-debt. Only One can pay the law-debt – our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He paid the law-debt for Zacchaeus. I am sure when he began to speak to Zacchaeus inside that house around that table where he gathered with his friends, He would have opened up that word “salvation” more. How Zacchaeus needed One to stand in his own room and place under God’s holy law! You were singing of it in that hymn just now (49). One to bear the curse instead of Zacchaeus. One to pay the debt instead of Zacchaeus. I am sure Zacchaeus realised that all his tears and prayers, good though they were, did not clear the debt.

“Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.” (H. 143)

Friends, has your law-debt been cleared? Where are you looking for its clearance? In chapel-going? Through your family ancestry? Through knowledge in the head of the things of God? Through your supposed works? Through your name with a little “c”; christian? All these things will not do. The only thing that will save you from the law-debt is to see the Lord Jesus Christ in your room, your place, your stead, bearing your curse and bearing away your guilt. No wonder John the Baptist said: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And He still does. He has done it once, of course. It is sealed with His own blood. But, in the power of it He still does it.

Poor, guilty soul, those of you who feel the plague of yourself and the opposition of this dying world and the machinations of Satan, perhaps feeling in your heart the curse of a broken law and you cannot answer it, the dear Saviour says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." He can wash the vilest clean, the foulest clean. This is the salvation in our text. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," we read in Acts 4. Friend, if you are looking anywhere else for salvation, you will fail miserably. Here is the answer. It is all in a precious Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is the importance of it. It is the most important matter before you this Sabbath morning.

You might say, "But I have an important matter before me this week. I have an important exam to take. I have a certain matter to resolve." I know you have. Friends, I pray for you, and you pray for yourself in it. But, when all is said and done, this is the most important matter: your soul's eternity. Where will it spend eternity? You do not know; you may not even live to see next Lord's day! None of us can be sure. We hope our lives will be spared a little longer, but we do not know. I only read yesterday of one of the doctors who was attending the sick in China. He died himself of the very plague he was trying to heal others from. He did not know that in a few days he would be in eternity. Where his soul is, is not for me to say. But: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Oh, to be among the many! You may ask: "How can I know if I am among the many?" "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." There is the clue to it all: faith. He was a son of Abraham, and Abraham was the father of the faithful, so the Word of God tells us. The Lord is saying here: "Hear this man. He has the same faith as godly Abraham had." Have you? Have I? What is that faith? It is looking unto Jesus; His Person as the Son of God, His Person as the Son of Man, His perfect obedience, His precious blood and saying, as one good man said:

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

That is salvation. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." That is salvation. The fourth thing then, is this glorious word, salvation.

The fifth thing was death. You say, "But Zacchaeus died, didn't he? Wasn't he buried?" Yes. He certainly passed through natural death, that I am sure of. And that is appointed to you and me. It is one of the fruits of a sinful life. "It is appointed unto men once to die," because we are

born in sin and “shapen in iniquity.” All that needs to be written on any death certificate for the cause of death is the word “sin.” That is the root reason of death. But, when I say that Zacchaeus was saved from death, I mean eternal death. What is eternal death? What did our Lord mean when He said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish”? What does that word “perish” mean? Does it mean annihilation? No. You say, “How can you prove that?” Go to the infallible, inerrant Word of God; it will tell you. One solemn character: Judas. What did the Lord Jesus Christ say about that man who betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, then went and hanged himself? He said, “Good were it for that man if he had never been born.” You think about it. If there was nothing beyond death, if euthanasia and suicide ended our existence and there was nothing beyond, our Lord would never have said that. So why did He say that? He knew that Judas was plunged into the bottomless abyss, conscious of it. Yes, his natural life did die, but his soul continued. How solemn! How awesome!

But, this is the death that Zacchaeus was saved from. How was he saved from it? It was because the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross at Calvary, endured the death (in the plural) of all His church. As good John Owen called it: “The Death of Deaths in the Death of Christ.” He drained that cup of wrath. He drained that cup of eternal misery. He was God as well as Man. He had the strength given Him so to do. No condemnation, because the curse was gone – gone for ever; bless God’s holy name. And I am sure our Lord would have told Zacchaeus that those sins of covetousness: unkindness, uncleanness and all the other things that go with the name “Zacchaeus,” would be borne away at Calvary. There they would be drowned in the depths of the love, the blood and the mercy of that “fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.” That is what salvation means. That is why, dear friends, Zacchaeus’ redeemed soul is even now before the throne of God, praising and blessing the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost for that sovereign grace that intervened in his covetous, selfish, worldly, Satanic life and plucked him as a brand from the burning.

“This day is salvation come to this house.” What did the Lord say? “Your wretched heart will not hinder Me in it. This dying world will not hinder Me in it. That arch-enemy of your soul will not hinder Me in it. Even the law itself will be pleased with what I am going to do for you, Zacchaeus. And even that monster, death. The sting is taken away for you, Zacchaeus. The curse has gone because of what I am going to do.” And He has now done all that for poor sinners like Zacchaeus also.

Now, poor, guilty sinner, this is the answer to it all. This is why the Son of Man is come: to seek out the “Zacchaeuses,” to save them, because they were lost in their guilt. They were lost in Satan’s power.

They were lost in this world. They were lost in selfishness. But now – oh, blessed be God, there is that great change! No doubt others saw it. I expect Zacchaeus continued as a tax gatherer. It was not a wrong occupation. But now he did not defraud anyone. No, you can be sure Zacchaeus only asked for what was needful and what was necessary. And I am sure he continued to distribute the wealth he had, because the love of Christ in his heart bid him do so. No longer would he live that selfish, self-centred life that he was living on the way to eternal misery. Oh, the wonders that grace has done!

Let me make two further points. The first point is this. Do you, do I, know this divine intervention of grace? Can you say that grace has changed your heart, changed your will, changed your very outlook of life and changed your very view of God: His Word, His people and Christ? Can you trace out that great change? It may not have been so sudden as it was with Zacchaeus, but nonetheless, there has been a change. You are not what you once were. Grace has done it.

And there are some who have loved ones; you can see they are just like Zacchaeus before he was called by grace. They are as bound up in their sin just as Zacchaeus was bound up in his sin. Take courage. Take heart. He who plucked Zacchaeus as a brand from the burning can do just the same today. The Lord Jesus is still “able also to save them to the uttermost.” His dear hand, when once put forth, still cannot be resisted. Pray on, plead on and weep on. Do not give up. “Who can tell if God will turn and repent?”

And what about those of you who are content to be as Zacchaeus was before he was called by grace? You have no heart for the change and no desire that you should be any different. Friend, what can I say to you? I have warned you. I have told you the end of such a life. I pity you. You say, “Well, I don’t need to be pitied. I am quite happy.” Friend, I pity you. You are like a man who has a terminal illness, walking around the streets and not knowing he is ill. He has not been diagnosed, yet he is a dying man. That is just how it is with you in your soul. You have this terminal disease. You are not concerned about it. You do not really want to have it examined and opened up because you are quite happy with it. You think it is life. But it is terminal! Listen: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” I commend it to you.

The evil of sin is not so much seen in that one thousand are damned for it, as that Christ died for it.

Thomas Watson

SAVING FAITH

*Sermon preached by Donald MacLean,
on Wednesday, October 26th, 1983
(Concluded from page 352)*

Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11. 1-3).

Faith draws help from the promises of Christ

Now faith itself, of course, must feed on the Word of God and the promises of God’s Word, and it is in the nature of faith to bring the substance of what is in these promises near to the soul, so that it has an effect on the soul. For instance, if I take another promise: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Here is the child of God confronted with a duty and deeply conscious of the need to have grace in order to fulfil this duty. And Christ promises, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Now, faith believes that, and faith draws out of Christ according to the promise, and faith believes that grace will be imparted to the soul. “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” There is the soul feeling his weakness, and when confronted with the particular duty the soul has to face (or it may be a trial or a difficulty), Christ is saying in the promise, “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Faith goes out to the promise, bringing the promise near and getting the benefit of the strength that is in the promise in the experience of the soul, so that the soul is strengthened.

And I find that when there is this duty, when the Saviour says, “This do in remembrance of Me,” it becomes a duty to the people of God in due time. Some people came to a saving knowledge of Christ, yet there was some time before they found this command becoming a burden to them. For others, it became a burden closer to when they came to the knowledge of the Saviour for the first time. But whatever was the case, this is true, that this command is to do it “in remembrance of Me.” You see, it becomes something the soul cannot get away from. No saying, “Oh, I am unworthy and I don’t feel I can face up to that duty.” That comes to an end because of this burden, “This do in remembrance of Me.”

Now there have been some believers whom I knew, although they are now off the earth and away, who had what, for myself, I look on as a temptation. Although this command became a burden to them and they felt it was their duty to commemorate the death of Christ, yet the time passed and they did not do it. A temptation of some kind or another prevented them doing it, and they took the idea into their head that the

time was past, and that therefore it was not the Lord's will that they should sit at the Lord's table. That is of course a grossly mistaken view. I discussed it with them and pointed out to them that Christ says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." As often as ye do so. They would say, "Well, you see, this happened, and I felt it was my duty to do so, but I let the time pass and therefore it's gone." But there is not just one time or another time, but this is a duty laid on the people of God who have a hope that Christ has been made precious to them. And this command, "This do in remembrance of Me," does become a burden from which they can no longer escape. And when faced with coming to the Lord's table, this command, "This do in remembrance of Me" is their duty.

But Christ does not send people to duties without supplying the grace they need. That is not the kind of master He is. When He says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart," He also says, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls." When the duty is there, then the grace to perform the duty is there as well. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Very often they feel they would like to do this in remembrance of Christ, and they feel perhaps it is their duty, but they feel so weak. They are not able to perform this duty because they are so weak. Well, Christ deals with that as well. He said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." That is the nature of faith – to go out to the promise and to make the strength of Christ something that is coming near to the soul, and something the soul is participating in, and something which gives enabling grace and enabling strength.

Faith is strengthened by looking to Christ

This is where faith is so important. It is tremendously important in its exercise as it goes out to the promise. It brings what is in the promise near to the soul in its spiritual experience so that it is made a partaker of the grace, made a partaker of the strength, and receives it. As we read in Psalm 28, where it is put in such a remarkable way, as one would expect, by the psalmist, who knew and understood these spiritual exercises,

"The Lord's my strength and shield; my heart
Upon Him did rely."

Now that is faith! "My heart upon Him did rely." And what happened? "And I am helped." I am helped, I was strengthened. And therefore he goes on to say, "With my song I will Him praise." Why? Because "their strength is God alone." Now, you see that? That's what faith is – it is a heart reliance on the promise, and on Christ in the promise, and the substance that is in the promise. And where there is that heart reliance, you see what happened to the psalmist. He was helped. And he was able

then to sing of this: “And with my song I will Him praise.” “I am helped,” he said,

“Hence my heart
Doth joy exceedingly,
And with my song I will Him praise.
Their strength is God alone.”

And this is true with regard to all the varied exercises of faith. We use the expression “justifying faith.” This is one of the theological expressions which have come into religious language. What does it mean? Well, what is meant by the expression “justifying faith” is that faith is the instrument through which the soul is united to Christ and is thereby justified. Christ in the gospel is set before sinners as an all-sufficient and an altogether suitable and willing Saviour, and when faith relies on that, the Saviour is brought near, to be embraced in the exercise of faith, to be enjoyed by the soul. You see, where the soul is embracing Christ, this is living the life of faith, this is living on the promise and looking for the fulfilment of the promise. Although the promise is far off in the sense that it has its own season for being fulfilled, yet faith brings it near. As I mentioned already,

“God the Lord’s a sun and shield:
He’ll grace and glory give.”

The Lord’s people are looking forward to that, but they will not enjoy it until the time comes for them to leave this world and to enter into Immanuel’s land. But as long as they are in this world they are looking above and beyond the world, and they are looking to Christ, and desiring to be with Christ, and eventually to be in glory with Him. And however thin their hope may get in this world, it is relying on the promise. When faith is in living exercise, faith brings Christ near to the soul. It brings Christ, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the glory that is there, near to the soul. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

By faith the elders obtained a good report

I would just like for a moment to notice what is said here, “By it the elders obtained a good report.” The “elders” are the Old Testament saints who are mentioned in this chapter. They are the elders, or ancients, those who were under the Old Testament dispensation. Paul says here that “by faith the elders obtained a good report.” In the prophecy of Isaiah we read of him complaining to the Lord and saying, “Who hath believed our report?” That “report” is the report of the gospel. That is not the report that is meant here. The “good report” here means that they obtained a good testimony, or that there is a good report with respect to themselves (not with respect to the gospel but with

respect to them). By faith and by the possession of faith they obtained the approval of God and had a good testimony with regard to themselves.

You see this in connection with Cain and Abel. Cain brought an offering of the fruits of the ground, but Abel brought an offering of animals, and “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.” That is what the “report” means: he “obtained witness.” There is a good report about Abel and there is a good report about the others of whom we read here. That tells us that the Old Testament saints, like the New Testament saints, came into the approval of God. They came to be approved of by God in virtue of the exercise of faith that united them to Christ – in their case the Christ who was to come; in our case the Christ who has come. There is no other way by which we can obtain the approval of God but by faith in Jesus Christ, by our heart relying on Him and on His salvation for time and for eternity, for without faith, as we read here, it is impossible to please Him. Where their faith was in living exercise, and in virtue of their union to Christ, the elders obtained a good report.

By faith we understand creation by God

Then Paul goes on to demonstrate how faith acts with respect to creation. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” In other words, faith believes in the revelation that God has given in His Word of the creation of the world, both with regard to what we call “immediate creation” (that is, the forming of all things out of nothing) and “mediate creation” (by which in the six days all the things were formed), and all by the word of God.

Now faith believes that. We were singing in Psalm 19,

“The heavens God’s glory do declare,
The skies His hand-works preach.”

They demonstrate and they make known the wisdom, the power and the Godhead of Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who neither faints nor is weary. And faith believes that. Faith understands it. There is a spiritual understanding of it that goes above and beyond all that we hear about nowadays with regard to the evolutionary hypothesis, which is just a mere exercise of human wisdom. The people of God believe that God is the Creator. They believe that this world is His creation. They view the things that are seen – the sun, the moon and stars – and they know and they understand that beyond that is the glory of God who is from everlasting to everlasting God, whose power and whose Godhead is revealed and made known in them. In the measure in which they are enlightened they see that, and they understand that, and they believe that,

because it is revealed in the Word of God. It is revealed in the Word of God as given to Moses, as we have it in the Book of Genesis.

For all that is said, for all that people say and claim, the fact of the matter is that the person who does not believe in creation has no faith. He may think he has plenty of faith. He may think he has more faith than other people have. But where faith is, this is what Paul says: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Faith sees beyond the sun, the moon and the stars, the world and all that is found out about it by scientific investigation and the laws in connection with it. Faith does not stop at these outward, visible things, but faith can penetrate into this, to see the Creator of the ends of the earth, who neither faints nor is weary. Faith sees the God of eternity, and the God of infinite knowledge and infinite power, and the God who, in Jesus Christ, is the God of redemption and who saves His people with an everlasting salvation.

Conclusion

How important then, beyond description, is the grace of faith! And no wonder, when it is the gift of God, when it is wrought by the third Person of the Godhead in the soul of a sinner, so that a soul is relying on Christ. “My heart upon Him did rely.” That is the very essence of faith: “My heart upon Him did rely.” Faith is a relying, it is a trusting, it is a confiding, it is an abiding in Christ in the promise of the gospel. My heart, this heart of mine, is heavy – heavy with sin, heavy with a sense of sin – and sees no way of salvation anywhere else. Well, “My heart upon Him did rely.” That is faith. That is faith resting in Christ, and faith bringing Christ in the gospel near to the soul, relying on Him, trusting in Him. If you say about a certain person, “He’s very reliable, you can rely on him. He’s very reliable and you can trust him,” you might say in other words, “I’ve got faith in him, because he is reliable and because he is trustworthy.” Well, in a spiritual sense and in a much more glorious sense, so is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the lost and undone, the tender-hearted Saviour who will not cast out those who come to Him. The soul comes to this exercise: “My heart relies upon Him.” It is a heart reliance. And where that is, there is faith. And where that is, there is union to Christ. And where that is, there is eternal salvation, there is a living soul – a soul that is among the living in Jerusalem, whose feet are standing within the gates and shall be praising Him to all eternity. May you and I be numbered among them! May He bless His Word.

THE PERIL OF DESPISING THE GOSPEL

By Robert Traill (1642-1716)

“Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you” (Acts 13. 41).

Unavoidably a time of need will come, in which only the grace of God can help. None but a great atheist can make any doubt of this. Dost thou believe there is a God? that thou art a mortal man whom a few more days will turn out of this world? Dost thou believe that thou hast an immortal soul that must be for ever? (And how much a beast is that man, and worse than a beast, that doubts of any of these!) If thou believe these plain principles, canst thou doubt but a time of need will come wherein nothing can stand thee in any stead but only this God’s mercy and grace?

This present time you have is the only time given you for preparing for the time of need that must come. How little is that precious golden talent, time, laid out for that the Lord gives it for? Can men think that God gives them time to spend it in the ways they spend it? That must be ill-spent time, that is spent so, as men know they must either repent of, or perish by. We are bid to redeem the time. But most men throw it away, as if they had no use for it. *The best use of time is to spend it in preparing for eternity.* “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” These are well-spent days. But how few of the hours of your days are thus spent?

There can be no greater folly than to neglect this present only season of preparing for an unavoidable time of extremity. Our Lord, in the parable, calls the five negligent virgins, “foolish” (Matt. 25). If a man throw away his estate in folly and vanity, the world will brand him with the name of fool, and justly. If a man throws away his health and life, there is folly in that too. But for a man to throw away his soul, and all his hopes of well-being for eternity, is the rankest of all folly. Yet is the world so full of such fools, that very few give it its true name. He must be greatly plagued with blindness and stupidity that is not convinced that that is the greatest folly that shuts a man eternally out of heaven and locks him up in hell.

There can be no reflection and remorse more sad and bitter than that which ariseth on the review and sense of this folly, when it is remediless. We read of the worm that dieth not. This is commonly understood of conscience. Conscience stings two ways, and one way more dreadfully than the other. Conscience stings for sin, as it is an offence against God, a breach of His holy law, and as it exposeth the sinner to God’s dreadful

anger. But conscience stings more dreadfully, for neglecting the remedy for sin provided in Christ, and revealed to men in the gospel. Therefore our Lord lays the condemnation of the world that perisheth under the gospel, on this, that their love to their evil deeds made them hate the light that discovered them, and the grace that only can pardon and heal them. Men under the gospel perish, not only because they are sinners against God's law (though the least sin deserves hell; and they that have not the light of the gospel, are justly judged by the law), but also because they believe not in Jesus Christ (John 3. 18). Believers in Christ are not saved because they are holy (though all that believe are holy), but because they are in Christ by faith, that the glory of salvation may be Christ's entirely, and the blame of men's perdition under the gospel may be their own entirely.

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” That will be a time of great need, and none can stand with peace before that throne but they that have been acquainted with this throne of grace. Christ on the throne of grace, and Christ on the judgment seat is the same Christ. Christ in the gospel, and Christ in the clouds, is the same Christ. Yet we must distinguish. Christ on the throne of grace is no judge; and Christ on the judgment seat hath no grace to dispense. Now is the time of dispensing grace; then will be the day of His punishing the despisers of grace, and of giving the crown of glory to the receivers of His grace.

WISE MEN LESSONS

By Jeffrey P. Tomkins

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem” (Matt. 2. 1).

We do not know who these wise men were who came to worship Christ, except that they saw “His star in the east” (Matt. 2. 2). Some have speculated that they may have been Chaldeans who had some Scripture knowledge from Israel's Babylonian captivity. Nevertheless, we can learn a few things from this verse.

First, it is not always those who come from a religious background who give Christ great honour. Like the angelic notice to the shepherds at Christ's birth, these men were from outside Israel. They were not of the scribes or Pharisees, but came from a far country. Many of the strongest Christians are redeemed from the most unlikely and utterly-lost backgrounds. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5. 20).

Second, the incredible journey these men undertook points to their determination and diligence. They had no access to modern, high-speed transportation, but took upon themselves a long, slow, costly, dangerous journey to get to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

And finally, these men provide a striking example of faith. They believed in a Christ whom they had never seen, and when they arrived, they worshipped a King who was still a Child and had not yet performed a single miracle to convince them or given a single teaching to persuade them. Nevertheless, they “fell down, and worshipped Him” (Matt. 2. 11).

The Apostle Peter, who actually witnessed Christ’s miracles and teachings, exhorts us to a similar faith. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1. 8).

CHRIST MADE LIKE UNTO HIS BRETHREN

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

Why was Jesus Christ made flesh?

1. The first cause and impulsive cause was free grace; it was love in God the Father to send Christ, and love in Christ that He came to be incarnate. Love was the intrinsical motive. Christ is God-Man, because He is a lover of man. Christ came out of pity and indulgence to us. Not our deserts, but our misery, made Christ take flesh. Christ’s taking flesh was a plot of free grace, and a pure design of love. God Himself, though almighty, was overcome with love. Christ incarnate is nothing but love covered with flesh. Christ’s assuming our human nature, as it was a master-piece of wisdom, so a monument of free grace.

2. Christ took our flesh upon Him, that He might take our sins upon Him. He took our flesh that He might take our sins, and so appease God’s wrath.

3. Christ took our flesh, that He might make the human nature appear lovely to God, and the divine nature appear lovely to man.

i. That He might make the human nature lovely to God. Upon our fall from God, our nature became odious to Him; no vermin is so odious to us as the human nature was to God. When once our virgin nature was become sinful, it was like flesh imposthumated, or running into sores, loathsome to behold; such was our nature when corrupt, odious to God, He could not endure to look upon us. Now, Christ taking our flesh, makes this human nature appear lovely to God. As when the sun shines on the glass, it casts a bright lustre, so Christ being clad with our flesh, makes the human nature shine, and appear amiable in God’s eyes.

ii. As Christ being clothed with our flesh makes the human nature appear lovely to God, so He makes the divine nature appear lovely to man. The pure Godhead is terrible to behold; we could not see it and live; but Christ clothing Himself with our flesh, makes the divine nature more amiable and delightful to us. Now we need not be afraid to look upon God, seeing Him through Christ's human nature. It was a custom of old among the shepherds, they were wont to clothe themselves with sheepskins, to be more pleasing to the sheep; so Christ clothed Himself with our flesh, that the divine nature may be more pleasing to us. The human nature is a glass, through which we may see the love and wisdom, and glory of God clearly represented to us. Through the lantern of Christ's humanity, we may behold the light of the Deity shining. Christ being incarnate, He makes the sight of the Deity not formidable, but delightful to us.

4. Jesus Christ united Himself to man, that man might be drawn nearer to God. God before was an enemy to us, by reason of sin; but Christ taking our flesh, doth mediate for us, and bring us into favour with God. As when a king is angry with a subject, the king's son marries the daughter of this subject, and so mediates for this subject, and brings him into favour with the king again, so, when God the Father was angry with us, Christ married Himself to our nature, and now mediates for us with His Father, and brings us to be friends again, and now God looks upon us with a favourable aspect. As Joab pleaded for Absalom, and brought him to king David, and David kissed him, so doth Jesus Christ ingratiate us into the love and favour of God. Therefore He may well be called a Peace-maker, having taken our flesh upon Him, and so made peace between us and His angry Father.

See here, as in a glass, the infinite love of God the Father; that when we had lost ourselves by sin, then God, in the riches of His grace, did send forth His Son, made of a woman, to redeem us. And behold the infinite love of Christ, that He was willing thus to condescend to take our flesh. Surely the angels would have disdained to have taken our flesh; it would have been a disparagement to them! What king would be willing to wear sackcloth over his cloth of gold? But Christ did not disdain to take our flesh. O the love of Christ! Had not Christ been made flesh, we had been made a curse; had not He been incarnate, we had been incarcerated, and had been for ever in prison. Well might an angel be the herald to proclaim this joyful news of Christ's incarnation: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy ... for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2. 10, 11). The love of Christ in being incarnate will the more appear if we consider:

1. *Whence Christ came.* He came from heaven, and from the richest place in heaven, His Father's bosom, that hive of sweetness.

2. *To whom Christ came.* Was it to His friends? No; He came to sinful man; man that had defaced His image, abused His love; man who was turned rebel; yet He came to man, resolving to conquer obstinacy with kindness. If He would come to any, why not to the angels that fell? "He took not on Him the nature of angels" (Heb. 2. 16). The angels are of a more noble extract, more intelligible creatures, more able for service. But behold the love of Christ, He came not to the fallen angels, but to mankind. Among the several wonders of the lodestone, this is not the least, that it will not draw gold or pearl, but despising these, it draws the iron to it, one of the most inferior metals. Thus Christ leaves the angels, those noble spirits, the gold and the pearl, and He comes to poor, sinful man and draws him into His embraces.

3. *In what manner He came.* He came not in the majesty of a king, attended with his life-guard, but He came poor; not like the heir of heaven, but like one of an inferior descent. The place He was born in was poor: not the royal city, Jerusalem, but Bethlehem, a poor, obscure place. He was born in an inn, and a manger was His cradle, the cobwebs His curtains, the beasts His companions. He descended of poor parents. One would have thought, if Christ would have come into the world, He would have made choice of some queen or personage of honour to have descended from; but He comes of mean, obscure parents. That they were poor appears by their offering: "A pair of turtledoves" (Luke 2. 24), which was the usual offering of the poor (Lev. 12. 8). Christ was so poor, that when He wanted money, He was fain to work a miracle for it (Matt. 17. 27). He, when He died, made no will. He came into the world poor.

4. *Why He came.* That He might take our flesh, and redeem us; that He might instate us into a kingdom. He was poor that He might make us rich (2 Cor. 8. 9). He was born of a virgin that we might be born of God. He took our flesh that He might give us His Spirit. He lay in the manger that we might lie in paradise. He came down from heaven that He might bring us to heaven. And what was all this but love? If our hearts be not rocks, this love of Christ should affect us. Behold love that passeth knowledge! (Eph. 3. 19).

Time with us all here must be short, and we should do what we can to serve our day and generation; to live as far as we can to the glory of God and the good of His people, and not lead useless, selfish, unprofitable lives, as if money were our god. All Christians have their place in the mystical body, and their place to fill in the church of God.

J.C. Philpot

THE PRESSING NEED FOR NATIONAL AND DENOMINATIONAL REPENTANCE

Extract from a letter from John Grace to J.C. Philpot

It occurs to me that many in the present day are like the prophets in the days of Jeremiah, who declared there should be neither sword nor famine, yet the Lord said, "By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed." I cannot help thinking a dark cloud is hanging over us. We read concerning Israel of old, that after they had rest, they did evil again before the Lord; therefore He left them in the hands of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them. Idolatry was the sin they fell into, and thereby departed from God.

Now have not we – a Protestant nation – departed from God? And will He not visit us nationally for this? But when I look at the dear church of God, I am much more deeply concerned. Oh, the little union and communion that is known – the lukewarmness, carnality and formality – the mixing with mere professors of the day – the great suspension of the operations of the blessed Spirit – the little power, comparatively, attending the ministry – iniquity, indeed, abounds and the love of many waxeth cold.

Now under such circumstances, what has God's usual way been to bring His church out of her lethargy? You and I like to be smiled into fruitfulness, but the first rod of correction generally comes in this way. God hides His face, then follows it up by bringing us into some affliction, so that Isaiah's words may be fulfilled: "LORD, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them." As with individuals, so with the church or nation collectively. Some say that the day of trial and persecution is passed, and that people are now too enlightened to do those outrageous things which were done in former days. But I cannot see how the Scriptures can be explained, if there is not yet to be a day of persecution; and they have to prove that the enmity of the human heart is not the same as it was, for surely we have daily proofs that "man, born bad, grows worse and worse."

The state of the church of God is often upon my mind; and I would, were it the will of God, that there might be a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. I sometimes look back to the time when the Lord brought my soul into blessed liberty, thirty-one years ago this month. But after that I went into captivity for five years and scarcely had one sweet smile or ray of divine light all that time. Ah, my sins, my backslidings procured all that. I verily thought I should go with broken bones to my grave, but of His great mercy the Lord returned, not in anger, but in

mercy; He broke my heart and brought me, like Job, to repent in dust and ashes. The last chapter of Hosea portrays the Lord's gracious dealings with me, and was often much blessed to my soul.

John Grace

Brighton,
March 7th, 1853

WILLIAM GADSBY (1773-1844)

It is two hundred and fifty years since the birth of William Gadsby. As a tribute to the memory of this eminent servant of God we republish the short biography our esteemed former Editor, the late Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, gave at his bi-centenary in 1973

When God has a work to do, that work must be accomplished; yet how mysteriously and by what unlikely means does He work! Who would have thought that a small, ragged, barefooted boy, receiving hardly the bare essentials of education, and growing up "as far from God as sheep can run," would one day be one of the most honoured ministers in the churches of truth – indeed, the founder, instrumentally, of forty churches – and that his name and work would still be honoured two centuries later? Yet so it was with William Gadsby.*

I

It was just two hundred years ago, on January 3rd, 1773 (or thereabouts – the exact date is uncertain), that a ninth child was born into the family of a poor Warwickshire roadman, John Gadsby. The child was named William. The cottage in Attleborough, near Nuneaton, where he was born, has long since been demolished.

We know little of William's early days – just sufficient to catch a glimpse of a lively little boy, full of mischief and frolic, running almost wild about the village, or nursing a younger child almost as soon as he is able to hold it in his arms; a little boy being punished for throwing away a piece of bread, or, feeling he is badly treated, fleeing from home disguised as a hunchback. Yet already a fallen nature was manifesting itself, especially in dreadful swearing.

At the age of thirteen, he was apprenticed to a ribbon weaver, and ran to great lengths in sin. Already he was a leader among his compan-

* It is remarkable how the memory of his name has survived in some parts of the country. Some years ago, a worldly man, on hearing of our religious connections, exclaimed, "Why, you're a Gadsbyite!"

ions, entertaining them for hours together to their great amusement and delight. As he put it, "I was the life of their society, and they seemed as if they could not live without me."

But "the appointed time rolled on," and about the age of seventeen, the Lord began to work in his heart. He strikingly describes this:

"When the set time came, He arrested me, broke my heart and brought me to stand before His throne as a guilty criminal, brought me to sign my own death warrant. I gave God leave to damn me if He would. I had nothing to offer, and I could do nothing to save myself."

Some of his workmates tried to force him to go with them as formerly, but he so spoke to them of hell and damnation that they were glad to be rid of him.

The Independent Chapel at nearby Bedworth ("black Bed'orth" as it was known on account of its wickedness) was where he now began to attend. His mother soon had to warn him that he would have to go without shoes as he was wearing out his only pair by the constant journeying there and back! There was a godly zeal in William Gadsby's religion from the beginning. It would appear that his soul was brought into gospel liberty after a few months of deep and sore spiritual distress. Speaking of this in after years, he said:

"But O! God's peculiar love that was shed abroad in my heart by His blessed Spirit, and which brought me to feel the love and blood of Christ, led me to trace something of the wondrous work of His wonder-working grace! Then how my hard heart was melted! I was brought to His footstool with all humility, simplicity and godly sincerity; filled with gratitude and thanks for God's unspeakable mercies in opening these great mysteries to my poor soul. I was then solemnly and blessedly led to believe in God's free mercy and pardon, and could look up and say, 'He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.' I recollect the time when God was graciously pleased to reveal pardon in my poor soul at first. O! what sweetness and solemnity and blessedness there were in my poor heart! I sang night and day the wonders of His love."

Soon a period of trial followed in which he was allowed to backslide, and was well taught his ignorance and helplessness, Satan roaring, "Where is your peace with God *now*? Where are your meekness and humility and your tenderness of heart *now*? Where is your power in prayer *now*? Where is your trust in the God of Israel *now*? And where are YOU?" No peace could be felt till he found that Ezekiel 16 exactly described his case – the blessing, the backsliding, the desperate wickedness – till, as he read on, at length he cried, "This is my case. Whatever is this people's lot must be my lot. Damned or saved, I must go with them!" But when he reached the last verse, the word most powerfully entered his heart: "That thou mayest remember, and be

confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.” “They’re safe! They’re safe!” he cried out, and his deliverance was complete.

II

Eight miles away at Coventry there was an old Baptist cause where in former days the renowned John Brine had been pastor. At this time, a new chapel had just been built in Cow Lane. Through meeting the assistant minister, who often preached at Attleborough, William Gadsby was constrained to meet with the Coventry Baptists. He often spoke in later years of how he was never late for the seven o’clock Sabbath morning prayer meeting, though having to walk every step of the way. Here he was baptized on December 29th, 1793, shortly before his twenty-first birthday. The aged pastor, John Butterworth, a member of a remarkable family from Goodshaw in the Forest of Rossendale, was too old and feeble to baptize; so Gadsby was baptized, along with twenty-one others, by the assistant pastor, James Aston. Mr. Aston (almost prophetically) remarked that he could “see something in the young man, although so illiterate and uncouth, that seemed blessedly to prove that he would some time or other be made useful to God’s dear family.”

Shortly afterwards, Gadsby became closely attached to a young woman about two years his senior. She was Elizabeth Marvin, the daughter of a stocking weaver at Hinckley, about five miles away from his home. Elizabeth was one of eighteen people who had just been baptized and formed into a Particular Baptist church at Hinckley by Mr. Aston. Partly through this friendship, but mainly because his health was suffering through the arduous nature of his work, Gadsby left Attleborough and began to learn stocking weaving in Hinckley.*

The Hinckley years form a most attractive part of William Gadsby’s life. It was here he was married to Elizabeth, where they first set up their home, and where their three eldest children were born. Here he joined with the newly-formed church, now meeting in Hogg Lane. And it was whilst living at Hinckley that he first preached.

III

Preach? Gadsby was determined he never would. He prayed to die rather than preach. He continually cried, “Do not let me preach, Lord. Send by whom Thou wilt send, but not by me.” He even sat in his night shirt on the cellar steps trying to catch a cold and die rather than preach. Then the Lord settled the matter. With divine authority and power the

* When in 1940 Hinckley celebrated the 300th anniversary of the introduction of the stocking frame, the *History of the Hosiery Trade* published that year included an excellent chapter: “William Gadsby: Stockinger–Hosier–Preacher.”

word was spoken: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence." This was enough. "Well, Lord," was the prompt reply, "if this is the way Thou workest, Thou never hadst a better opportunity, for Thou never hadst a bigger fool to deal with."

It was on Whit Sunday, 1798, at the age of twenty-five, that William Gadsby preached his first sermon, in an upper room in Bedworth, from the words: "Unto you therefore that believe He is precious." How appropriate this text at the very beginning of that long, Christ-exalting ministry, during which he would so often exclaim, "Honours crown His head for ever"! Though many were astonished that this rough-looking and clownish young man should attempt to preach, the godly marked the power of the Word, and also the exemplary life of the preacher.

At this time, he used to travel about during the week, taking the stockings he had made to Leicester, Coventry, Nuneaton and other places. It was on one of these journeys, having only half a crown (12½ pence) with which to provide for his family, that he gave it all away to a poor man in distress – only to receive a gift shortly afterwards of half a guinea (52½ pence) from a man he had not seen for years. But his mind was on his preaching continually – so much so that, after he had ruined a pair of stockings, his wife said, "Look here, William, it's time you gave up either preaching or weaving."

The barn at Hogg Lane now became the scene of many of his labours. What trying days these were! Years later he said of his Hinckley days:

"I preached to a number of poor people in an old barn and truly we had many precious visits from the Lord, which made the old barn a consecrated place to our souls, notwithstanding the thatch was off in so many places of the roof that we could see the sky through the numerous holes, so that when it rained the people had to remove from one part to another during preaching to prevent getting wet through; and what was worse, we were too poor to get it repaired. An additional torment was that our enemies (who consisted chiefly of professors of religion) often broke our locks off, and did us much mischief."

One hole in the roof was just over the pulpit, through which at times stones were thrown at the minister while he preached. On one occasion, the barn was broken into, the pulpit taken, and an attempt made to sink it in a pond – but the pulpit (which is still in existence) still floated. At last they said the devil was in it for they "could neither sink the parson nor his pulpit." Yet amidst all this, the Word had free course and was

glorified, sinners were blessed, so that it was resolved to attempt the building of a chapel.

Eventually a chapel was built (and by this time Gadsby was prospering in business). Also, a chapel was built for him at Desford in 1800, Gadsby's practice at this time being to preach twice at Hinckley, once at Desford; then the following Sabbath, twice at Desford and once at Hinckley. The chapel at Desford has long been demolished; only the burial ground still remains.

But it was not at Hinckley nor Desford but Manchester where the Lord had ordained that most of his life should be spent and his preaching signally blessed.

IV

"There was as much prospect of the mountain of Gibraltar coming to Manchester as I!" exclaimed William Gadsby not long before his death. Yet how remarkable the unfoldings of providence in bringing him there! Really, he invited himself. Hearing that the people at Back Lane Chapel (as it was then known) were without a minister, and being anxious to raise funds for the building of the new chapel, he wrote saying that he had business in Manchester, and would willingly preach three or four Sabbaths. His business was to beg for money.

How much could be written concerning his first remarkable visit to Manchester! The people were divided between those who agreed with Andrew Fuller's duty-faith writings and those who opposed them. Gadsby made a great stir among the Fullerites, and the longer he stayed, the more people came to hear him. The Word entered many hearts. One godly member was so impressed by the power attending Gadsby's announcing the opening hymn ("Awake, my soul, in joyful lays") that he was persuaded this was to be their pastor. At his first appearance many were astonished; he was at that time very thin, and dressed in a coarse, brown coat, drab trousers, and wearing a coloured neckerchief – in fact, "Not a bit of black except inside me," as he said. But the doctrines he preached had a gracious effect, and the hearts of many of the people were united to him. It was on this occasion that the well-known John Warburton, then a poor weaver, came with his heart full of prejudice but, feeling so blessed in his soul, went home with his "very soul knit to him as closely as Jonathan's was to David." Soon the good old veterans were saying, "This is the man for us; let us arise and anoint him," and they began to cry mightily to God to make a way.

It was during this first visit to Lancashire that one who heard him, said, "Before he had spoken ten minutes, I saw more beauty and glory in Christ than I had ever seen before. My cup of joy overflowed. I saw that this glorious Christ and His finished salvation were mine."

The outcome of all these events was that, after much opposition had been overthrown, William Gadsby, at the age of thirty-two, left Hinckley to become the pastor at Back Lane Chapel, Manchester (later Rochdale Road). His farewell sermon was preached at Hinckley on September 29th, 1805, from the text: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

V

The time would fail to tell of all the happenings during the thirty-eight years that William Gadsby laboured in Manchester. It was during this period that so many of his precious hymns were written, and his Selection published, designed as a hymnbook "free from Arminianism and sound in the faith, that the church might be edified, and God glorified." And how abundantly his prayer has been answered – that "the dear Redeemer will be gracious to make this selection of hymns a blessing to His people"!

Though some of Gadsby's own poetry may not be of as high a standard as other well-known hymnwriters, yet in some of his hymns he excelled. How precious, for instance, are hymns 514, 527, 531, 536, 579, 596, 631, 633, 667, 699, 703 and 720.

An interesting event took place about the year 1831. A quantity of spoiled sheets of Gadsby's hymns were being used as wrapping paper in a cheesemonger's shop in London. A stranger, who bought some cheese (or bacon), on unwrapping it read:

"Pause, my soul! and ask the question,
Art thou ready to meet God?" (H. 698)

and the Holy Spirit so fastened the words upon his conscience that he was convinced of his state as a sinner, and ultimately brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. But what effect Gadsby's hymns have had at other times over the years, only eternity will reveal.

Various books and pamphlets were written during the Manchester years; these varied in subject matter, but especially he wrote on the gospel as the believer's rule of life – this being one of the chief differences between himself and other Calvinistic ministers. It was also during these years that the *Gospel Standard* was first "launched into the wide ocean" by Gadsby and his energetic son, John, a successful Manchester printer, William Gadsby at first writing the annual address, and also contributing articles under the nom-de-plumes, "A Lover of Zion," and, "A Soldier."

But it was upon his *preaching* that the Lord's blessing most evidently rested, and as a *preacher* that he made such a marked impression during his lifetime.

VI

What was it in William Gadsby's preaching that made such an impression on his contemporaries (for that he made a tremendous impression there can be no doubt)? Most certainly it was the divine power, unction and gracious authority that attended the Word he preached. J.C. Philpot felt that he was the greatest minister of his day.

Wherever he preached, there were crowded congregations, whether in his own chapel at Manchester, or during his annual visits to London – where sometimes as the people were coming out at the end of one service, they found others queueing to make sure of a place at the next. There seemed to be a special suitability in his ministry for the cases of burdened, broken-hearted sinners, many of whom could find no relief in much of the dry, formal preaching that prevailed among so many of the Baptists. The Holy Ghost clothed the word with divine power, and warmth, life, love and liberty attended it. How difficult it is for us to gain any real impression of the atmosphere that must have prevailed among these crowded congregations in those days of spiritual prosperity!

He would open the service by giving out a hymn, usually verse by verse; and often his slow, drawling manner would prejudice a new hearer against him. Then after reading from the Word, he would pray. His pulpit prayers were unusually short (seldom above five minutes), but they were singularly his own, and from his heart. After the second hymn his sermon commenced – often, after taking off his glasses and slowly surveying the congregation, with some striking, weighty statement. “His voice was wonderful,” wrote Dr. Halley, Principal of New College, London. “I heard him once in the old Free Trade Hall of Manchester. When other speakers had made strange efforts to be heard, sometimes in vain, he seemed to me, sitting near him, to be speaking in a pleasant, conversational tone; but the voice of the old man rolled like an equable wave of sound across the great hall and filled the ear of every auditor.”

He would solemnly open up the depths of the Fall and the boundings of sin, often touching on things another dare not even mention. Often under the leading of the Holy Spirit, his remarks were so pointed that they brought the hearer under deep conviction. On one occasion when speaking of infidelity, two men who had just attended an infidel meeting almost fainted away, and on more than one occasion, people who had acted dishonestly had to confess it when the service ended and seek to put things right.

Then he would set forth what he delighted to call “the riches of matchless grace,” dwelling on the glories of Christ, His fulness, His eternal union with His church, His finished work, His suitability in His offices, and then sweetly emphasising the blessed invitations of the

gospel. It was said, "His heart went, as it were, direct into the hearts of the Lord's people." There were, undoubtedly at times, coarse expressions and many eccentricities, but the solemnity with which he spoke, especially of the sufferings of the dear Redeemer, soon outweighed this. How beautiful is the following example of the sacred, solemn manner in which he spoke on the sufferings of Christ!

"Bless His holy name, honours crown His brow for ever and ever! O my soul, adore Him! He stood in His people's law place, called their sins His own, took their debt as His own, cancelled it by His blood, groaned, and sweat, and bled, and died. 'He died the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' Can you think lightly of sin? Can you call it a trifle, while it tore the heart of our dear Christ, and horrified Him? His soul was in an agony so that He lay on the earth, and cried out, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' He drank into His holy soul the hell that His children must have endured. Yea, He put out the flames of hell with His heart's blood that my soul might obtain eternal blessedness. Then adore Him, my soul, and bless His precious name!"

One hearer said of him, "There was a power attended his ministry that I hardly ever felt under the ministry of any other man"; and another stated that those who had never heard him could have "little idea of the living energy, life and power in the preacher during his delivery." Indeed, one aged saint wrote: "Ah! if you had but heard that voice of his, rolling like peals of thunder, and seen those eyes of his, like balls of fire piercing through the congregation, you would never have forgotten it while you lived." This last was the testimony of one who, as a young man, went to mock, but was cut down in deep conviction as Mr. Gadsby solemnly announced his opening hymn, "Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?"

And there was a *lasting* effect of his preaching; it was not just momentary impression. During his early years at Manchester, between five and ten on an average were added to the church each month, year after year, many of whom were eminent in godliness. One was a very poor woman who lived in a cellar. When Mr. Gadsby visited her before her death, she was lying on a straw bed in a most filthy state. (Her daughter was lazy and dirty, and failed to look after her dying mother.) The cellar was littered with old bones, old rags, and all sorts of rubbish and dirt. When the dear, dying saint, lying amidst all this squalor, was asked how she felt, "O!" she exclaimed, "I don't think the Lord deals as mercifully with anybody as He does with me? He is most precious to me, and His visits are most sweet."

Perhaps the most touching account of the power of the Word under William Gadsby's ministry is that of the little dying cripple boy he was

asked to visit. Never having seen the lad before, he concluded there was some mistake, till the little boy informed him of how, week by week, he had crept into the gallery steps after the service had begun. He gave a most blessed account of the Lord's work in his heart. Coming from a place where he had heard nothing but the law, and bitterly feeling its condemnation, he happened to enter Mr. Gadsby's chapel when the text was, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and under the sweet influence of the Spirit, was brought into complete gospel liberty. This was at a time when Gadsby was longing that the Lord would work in the hearts of two well-to-do young men in his congregation. "But," he says, "the Lord at the same time was at work upon the heart of a poor cripple upon the gallery stairs that none of the people seem ever to have noticed or known."

Of the forty or so causes of truth he was instrumental in forming, many were still open well into the twentieth century. In his labours he was untiring, preaching at home four times each week, and usually three times elsewhere, going many miles by foot, often over wild moors; and then, besides his annual London visit, preaching in various distant parts of the country.

May it never be forgotten that as a background to his ministry, he patiently endured one of the sorest of trials – the dreadful mental affliction of his beloved wife. For well over twenty years, until his death, she was a continual trial, often plagued with a jealous spirit, and constantly misunderstanding him. He had to prove in deep waters the precious truths that he preached.

VII

If William Gadsby made an impression, blessedly so, on the church of God, he equally made an impression, though of a different sort, on the world, and the religious world. Stigmatised as an Antinomian (because of his belief that the law is not the believer's rule of conduct), despised, opposed, treated with contempt by church and dissenting ministers alike, he lived to see his enemies, in great measure, at peace with him. And the secret was the God-glorifying life that through grace he lived. He came to be respected and honoured as a man by those who hated the truths he preached. After his death, in "A Tribute of High Esteem and Love," J.C. Philpot (not given to flattery!) issued the challenge: "Who ever found a visible blemish in him?" whilst the brief memoir published the same year stated: "For years his enemies watched for his falling, but, by the grace of God, he maintained an unblemished character to the last. No minister of the Lord of life was ever upheld by the hand of God in a more consistent and blameless life for so long a period. His walk and conversation were an ornament to the pure and sound doctrine he

preached; and yet, O the distress and trembling fears he had lest he should be left to fall into some sin, and disgrace the blessed truth of God, such was the working of corrupt nature within, and the feeling sense of his own weakness! But the Lord most graciously held him up, and brought him honourably through all.”

His tender spirit, his love for children, his kindness and sympathy, and his humility were ever apparent. Especially was he renowned for his kindness and liberality to the poor – of whatever creed. It was a poor Irish woman who said, on hearing of his death, “He once kept me from starving when my own priest would not give me a farthing.” It is estimated that towards half of his regular income he gave away.

When in his old age he broke his leg, the Manchester papers said: “Any cessation of the activity of such a man is a public calamity.” A religious leader in London, who opposed Gadsby’s doctrinal beliefs, wrote of him: “No minister in Manchester lived a more moral life, or presented to his hearers a more beautiful example of Christian discipline and self-control.” And on the day of his funeral, thousands lined the streets of Manchester to show their respect.

But what was he in his own eyes? “Less than the least of saints, and the chief of sinners”; or, as he would say, “Less than nothing, and vanity.” It is very typical of Gadsby’s religion, and that of his friends, that when John Kershaw preached his funeral sermon before a crowded congregation, the text was: “Less than the least” (Eph. 3. 8)!

VIII

In one aspect of his life, Gadsby differed from almost all other well-known ministers – the active part he took in public affairs. For this he has been severely criticised by some. But, right or wrong, it is certain he exerted a wonderful influence in the city of Manchester. His sympathy for all who were oppressed was so deep that many a good cause gained his interest and active support.

When a severe famine prevailed in Ireland (many having to live on seaweed), Gadsby advertised a special service at which £40 (a large sum in those days! – approximately £6,000 today, 2023) was collected. When he heard of a poor soldier unjustly sentenced to a severe flogging, he again had a collection, and bought the man off. Whilst in London he made what efforts he could to arouse sympathy for the Lancashire poor – the papers suggesting that other ministers should do likewise. Frequently he would appear on a public platform on such issues as the repeal of the cruel Corn Laws, which kept bread so expensive; temperance (believing that strong drink had ruined thousands); the grievances of Dissenters; the distress of the handloom weavers; whilst his pointed criticism of the ill behaviour of King George IV toward Queen Caroline caused the Government to send the deputy constable of

Manchester to hear him and observe his views. (What minister of truth would so arouse the Government's interest today?) Invariably when there was to be a collection for any good cause, Mr. Gadsby was appointed to make the appeal – his special ability in this direction causing people not only to put in all they had with them, but sometimes a note also, promising more! And be it remembered that there were sometimes as many as 8,000 to hear him at such public meetings.

IX

If William Gadsby honoured the Lord in his life, the Lord honoured him in his triumphant death. He was able to preach on his last Sabbath on earth, thus fulfilling a desire not to be laid aside for long. One present made a note in his Bible opposite the text (Isa. 43. 2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee"): "Mr. Gadsby preached this sermon with very great fervour, but with very great difficulty of breathing, especially in the evening, when it took him four minutes to ascend the pulpit, having to stop upon every step. But the Lord was very gracious to him in supporting his mind, although suffering in body. He was got home with much difficulty." The trouble was inflammation of the lungs.

On the Tuesday he had to remain in bed. He was at times harassed by Satan, his poor wife was especially trying, and he suffered much. But now he proved the blessed support of the things he had long preached.

Just before the end, when it was felt his voice was gone, he most solemnly and affectionately prayed for the church and his family. Shortly afterwards he said, "There is nothing too hard for Christ; He is the mighty God – from everlasting to everlasting. He *was* precious; He *is* precious." Then raising his left hand, for his right was cold and motionless, he exclaimed, "Victory! victory! victory!" Then after a short sleep, he testified that he was on the Rock.

"Is he precious to you?" asked his friend and fellow member, John Ashworth, who was constantly with him.

"Yes," he firmly replied. "King, Immanuel, Redeemer, all glorious!"

"You will soon have done here."

"I shall soon be with Him, shouting Victory! victory! victory!" raising his hand, "for ever."

Shortly afterwards he said, "Free grace! free grace! free grace!" and fell asleep in Jesus. It was Saturday, January 27th, 1844.

X

So lived and died William Gadsby. The Lord had a great work for him to do and enabled him honourably to do it. In his desk, when he died, was found a slip of paper on which he had written his own epitaph.

“Let this be put on my stone,” it read. And surely nothing could be more fitting:

“Here rests the body of a sinner base,
Who had no hope but in electing grace;
The love, blood, life and righteousness of God
Was his sweet theme, and this he spread abroad.”

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT FOR WHICH TO GIVE THANKS

Dear –,

You have put me under the obligation of again thanking you for the fruit. It seems quite to bewilder me, having so many kind gifts. But while considering these today, I felt a sudden fear of being carried away by them; when I really felt I could say,

“Thanks to Thy name for meaner things,
But these are not my God.” (H. 186)

In this season when there is so much carnality, may we be permitted to realise that the Lord Jesus – Emmanuel, God with us – is the portion of our inheritance and of our cup (Psa. 16. 5). Then we are rich. Paul said, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.” O to be fully possessed of Christ (Phil. 3)!

Yours affectionately,

J.H. Gosden

78 Buckland Road, Maidstone,
December 21st, 1950

Slightly adapted

MINISTERIAL DESIRES

Extract from a letter by Joseph Tanner (1808-1867)

I feel my own ailment increasing, and what is worse, I do not feel my soul in health. I would desire to feel more thankful for the “good hope” which the Lord has given me who am the chief of sinners and the least of saints. And I believe that when the few remaining days of the handbreadth of life are ended, I shall both be with and like the holy Lord Jesus. I feel a few feeble desires that, if it is the will of my heavenly Father to spare my poor life a little longer, I may be favoured to live more in His fear and to His glory.

I came to the Dicker last Friday; spoke on Lord’s day morning, administered the ordinance in the afternoon, and came here [Eastbourne] and preached in the evening. Never yet did I put my finger on the latch

of any door to open it, yet doors have been opened for me, and to my surprise I have been invited again. At times it lays me low in the dust that the Most High God should, in some little measure, own and bless my poor, feeble ministry. I can only solve it as in His sovereignty, and these words seem as a key: “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight”; also, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”; and, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

I hope and trust that you will feel constrained to come to our place once more. May the Lord abundantly bless you in your own soul, and still make you a blessing to His people.

J. Tanner

Eastbourne, Sussex
April 5th, 1864

BOOK REVIEWS

Daily Walking With God, by Samuel Rutherford, edited by James Dickie and Matthew Vogan; paperback; 41 pages; price £6.15; published by Reformation Press, and available from bookshops or direct from www.lulu.com.

This is a reprint of the *Directory of Life* which Samuel Rutherford wrote to a John Fleming in 1637. It was originally published by a minister, John Sturrock, in 1925, who obtained this little treatise in its original manuscript form in Rutherford’s handwriting. Sturrock’s introduction is given plus a helpful preface by Matthew Vogan.

John Fleming had written to Samuel Rutherford complaining about his own lack of growth in grace and asking for a directory to help remedy this felt lack. This work gives the answer from Rutherford to this enquiry.

It may surprise some in reading this, that such a godly man as Samuel Rutherford felt to come so far short in the path of sanctification. However, those who know the plague of their own heart and the constant battle between grace and sin will understand this exercise.

The directory is divided into four sections: Convictions of Conscience; A Guide for Christian Living; Practical Help for Daily Progress in Grace; Directions for Christian Conduct.

Rutherford’s advice is very challenging and could be viewed as rather legal. However, remembering that Christ “is made unto His people sanctification,” and the more that grace is imparted the closer our walk with God will be, then “in the keeping of His commandments there is great delight.” In reading such a treatise we would say of Rutherford: “O that a double portion of thy spirit might rest upon me!”

The King’s Pavilion: Gospel Comfort for Troubled Times, by B.A. Ramsbottom; hardback; 138 pages; price £10 plus postage and packing; published by Bethel Chapel, Luton and obtainable from The Christian Bookshop, 21 Queen Street, Ossett. WF5 8AS., www.christianbookshopossett.co.uk

Those of our readers who, like ourselves, have highly valued the monthly sermons and addresses in *Bethel Pulpit* and who remotely heard many of these addresses published in *The King's Pavilion*, will warmly receive this publication, not just because of the savoury, balanced content of doctrine, experience and practice contained therein, but also because it revives sweet memories of the ministry of our late Editor.

The ministry of B.A. Ramsbottom was simple, yet profound; quietly delivered, but often accompanied with that vital word *unction*. No compromise of doctrine, a deep love for the Saviour, and a longing desire that others might know Him as the preacher so evidently did, were its chief characteristics.

We warmly commend this venture, and may it be said through this means that "he being dead yet speaketh," as the Lord is pleased to bless the reading of these pages.

OUR MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

(*Hebrews 4. 15,16*)

What matchless condescension,
We see in Christ our Lord,
What deep humiliation
In God's incarnate Word!

He took on Him the likeness,
Of sinful flesh for sin
In all its fallen weakness,
Though He was pure within.

He hungered and was weary,
Felt pain and grief and woe,
Knew earth a desert dreary,
Did God's desertion know.

O great High Priest who feelest
Our woeful, wretched case,
And God's great love revealest
To all the blood-bought race.

Thy grace our spirit raises,
O give us faith in Thee,
And may we hymn Thy praises,
To all eternity.

Elizabeth Jempson

NOTICE OF DEATH

John Samuel Redhouse, a much-loved and esteemed deacon at Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, passed peacefully to his eternal rest on October 12th, 2023, aged 82. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa. 37. 37).

THE
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Through the mercy and forbearance of our covenant God, we are spared to see the end of another year in the history of the *Gospel Standard* and its related magazines; the *Friendly Companion* and *Perception*. Although the days are very different from those in which John and William Gadsby originated the *Gospel Standard*, yet the needs of sinners remain the same. It is our desire that the same truths which prompted our forefathers to write and publish should still be set forth in the desire that the Lord will bless what we acutely feel, in comparison with theirs, to be feeble efforts for His own honour and glory. For the loyal service of those whose work behind the scenes in compiling and proofreading enables the magazines to go forth month by month, we express our heartfelt thanks. "Brethren, pray for us." G.D. Buss