

The

Friendly Companion



“Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip
not.”
(Psalm 17.5)

January 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

If you were asked to quote the first verse in the Bible, most of you could do so without any help. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* It was the beginning of the world in which we live. It was the beginning of plant life, animal life and human life. It was a good beginning with everything in perfect order. All things were in peace and harmony.

Sadly, the world did not last very long in that state of perfection. When man sinned against his Maker, from that moment everything began to descend into a state of darkness, rebellion, confusion and corruption. The transgression of Adam and Eve brought a separation from God and a curse upon all their descendants. By the time Noah was born, people had become so evil that the earth was filled with violence. The Bible tells us that *"God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."*

What was God's answer to man's violence? He sent a flood to destroy the world! Every man, woman and child were destroyed, except for Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. The descendants of Noah did not remember God's mercies and hardened their hearts against His judgments. A few generations after Noah, the world was full of violence again.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 7 verse 8, *"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."* When we consider the perfect state of man at the beginning, then how can this be true of him now? Only as we have a revelation of Jesus Christ can this mystery be solved; and it is a mystery. *"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"* (1 Timothy 3.16).

As good and upright as Adam was at his beginning, yet through the subtle power of Satan, he fell from the perfect state in which he was created. God promised Adam that through the seed of the woman (the Lord Jesus), He would bruise (destroy) the head of Satan. So, Christ came into the world to destroy the

works of the devil. Christ provides for all His people a righteousness which far excels the righteousness man had in the beginning. The Lord spoke of His people in the prophecy of Ezekiel; *“And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee”* (16.14).

Adam could lose his perfect state, and he did. Yet, those who are born of the Spirit have a union with God better than that of a creature to the Creator. It is a union of sonship. They are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. They are made heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. These things are provided for them in the Lord Jesus, who *secures* them for His people. *“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”*

In the Lord Jesus, poor sinners who believe on Him have a Mediator who intercedes for them before the throne of God. They have the blood of Christ the Lamb to cleanse them from all their sin. They have a place prepared for them around the throne of God. They have the Author and Finisher of their faith sitting at the right hand of God. *“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”*

In the beginning, the Holy Spirit breathed into man *“the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* In the covenant of grace (*new birth*), the Holy Spirit breathes into poor, needy sinners the life of God. He quickens them, He draws them to Jesus, He teaches them of Jesus, He comforts them in Jesus, He enlightens them so that they see *“no man save Jesus only”* (Matthew 17.8). *“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.”*

There comes a year in the life of all God’s people, when the end of the year is better than the beginning. They begin the year in a state of sin, under condemnation and in darkness, but the blessed moment comes when God has mercy upon them, awakens them, creates in them a new heart and blesses them with the knowledge of Himself. *“Better is the end of a thing” – year – “than the beginning thereof.”*

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

What an inviting scene is presented to us by a brook or stream, whether it is flowing rapidly beside a mountain road or quietly flowing through an open meadow! There is something very calming about walking or sitting alongside a flowing brook.

There are numerous brooks mentioned in the Bible. The brook Kidron is the one most often referred to. It was the brook that David crossed when fleeing from his son Absalom. The refuse and dung of the sacrifices offered in Jerusalem were poured out into the brook Kidron. Thus, the waters of Kidron were blackish and foul. What a picture is presented to us in Psalm 110, where it was prophesied that Christ would “*drink of the brook in the way*” – a type of the foul waters of the sin of mankind! Christ crossed over the brook Kidron when he left the temple and went up to Mount Olivet.

The picture on the front cover shows a brook that is thought to be near to the place where the brook Cherith was located. The brook Cherith has often brought sweet meditation to me. This is the brook where Elijah found refuge. In the early days of the three-and-one-half years of drought, he was hiding at Cherith. What lessons are presented to us in the story of Elijah at the brook Cherith!

Firstly, he did not choose that place himself. God commanded him to hide by the brook. We like to think there may have been a canopy of trees overshadowing the brook to give the prophet shade from the burning sun.

Secondly, the Lord told him to drink of the brook. The most basic need of life was wonderfully provided. The waters of Cherith were not like the bitter waters of Marah. They must have been very sweet and refreshing. In the lives of His people, God often provides them with a brook Cherith, where they are helped to drink in times of trouble, times of judgment, or times of great need. Then, there is a little refreshing for their soul.

Thirdly, the Lord commanded the ravens to bring him bread and flesh (meat) morning and night. That continued all the time that Elijah dwelt at the brook. What a miracle that the unclean

ravens should find bread and meat and then bring them to God's prophet!

Fourthly, he was hidden so wonderfully that no one except God knew he was there. The Lord still hides His people safely by their brook Cherith.

Lastly, we would mention the trial of faith and patience that Elijah had at the brook. Slowly the brook dried up before Elijah's eyes. Yet, he stayed at the brook until the word of the Lord came to him with further direction.

What a lovely brook it must have been for Elijah all the time he was there.

THE UNEXPECTED VISIT

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiab 65.24).

It was in the winter of 1875, while living in the city of Boston, that the above word came to me with special comfort. Sometime previous, I had been forced to dispose of my business, losing everything, and I found employment in a shop. Here, all went well for a while, until a man offered to do the same work for much less than I could live on, even by the most frugal measures. Again, I was out of work, in a cold, unsympathetic world, with no means of a living.

One sorrow never seems to come alone, and now my wife was taken very sick, demanding almost constant attention. For a time, the doctor was at our house two or three times a day, and often more medicine was needed. This, of course, took money, which was a serious concern in our already difficult circumstances. To meet our present needs, I borrowed from friends, until I was ashamed to ask for more.

Sadly, I did not think of going at once to the Lord for deliverance, as I should have. For many years, I had claimed to be a Christian and to walk by faith and not by sight, but the present situation was a reality I had not expected.

Saturday came, with three visits from the doctor and an empty pocket. The cupboard and coal-bin were also empty and cast an even deeper gloom over the already dark and dismal prospect of a cold winter's night. Supper consisted of a piece of dry bread, over which my sick wife shed many tears. She asked if I knew our financial condition, and I answered as cheerfully as I could that God would supply our need. She anxiously replied that I always said that.

My heart was too full to speak. Knowing that I could do no more for her in my present, troubled state, I went into the outer room to pray. On bended knee, I told the Lord of our great need. Such a sweet calm came over my soul! Not a shadow of doubt was left, as I went back to my sick wife. Yet, I had no idea of how any relief could come.

Just then, the bell rang, and a man came in. Although he was a stranger in our home, he was God's messenger! For a time, we chatted in a friendly way. He told how he was led to think of me, and something seemed to say, "Go and see him." At tea, he and his wife had talked of me, although they really knew little about me. They had seen me in the church, but did not know where I lived. With some searching, he had found me. There was nothing about the room to indicate our condition, but as he was leaving, he said, "I know nothing of your circumstances, but all men can find use for money. If you have no present need, put it in the bank or use it as you think best. God has led me to leave this here." Then he was gone. What a burden was lifted from our hearts! All our present needs were now supplied, and we could but praise God from whom all blessing flow. An hour and a half before I prayed, he was led to seek me out.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1893

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**NEHEMIAH PRAYS**

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of the king of Babylon. His job was to see that the king received only what was good and safe to drink. It was a very important position.

Some Jews had come from the land of Judah, and Nehemiah asked them about the condition of Jerusalem. They told him that the walls were broken down and the gates were burned with fire. That made Nehemiah very sad. He wept and prayed to God.

The king noticed that Nehemiah appeared sad and asked him the reason. He told the king that it was because the land of his fathers was in ruins. The king asked, "*For what dost thou make request?*" Quickly, Nehemiah prayed in his heart to God. Then he asked the king to send him to Judah to build the walls again. He asked for a letter to the keeper of the king's forest for timber to build with. He also asked for letters to the governors to bring him safely to the land of Judah.

Nehemiah said, "*And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.*"

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the cupbearer of the king of Babylon?
2. What did he do when he heard about Jerusalem?
3. What did he ask the king to send him to do? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. A priest and a scribe.
2. A safe journey.
3. Soldiers to protect them.

*“So
I prayed
to the God
of heaven.”*

Nehemiah 2.4

BIBLE LESSONS**THIRTY-ONE KINGS AND THEIR CITIES DESTROYED**

After Joshua had defeated the five kings and their armies, he went to each of their cities and destroyed all the people in them, as Moses had commanded: *“And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them”* (Deuteronomy 7.2).

Soon, the southern part of Canaan was in the possession of the Israelites. Even though Joshua had destroyed the occupants of every city, a report reached Jabin, the king of Hazor. His city was in the northern part of Canaan, and he was considered the most powerful of all the kings in that part of Canaan. He soon gathered a great army to fight against Israel. The Bible tells us, *“They went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.”* His army was much greater than that of the five kings. What a fearful sight for the Israelites to see them riding swiftly on horses and chariots!

The God of Israel saw them too! He said to Joshua, *“Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt bough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.”* The armies of Israel came upon them suddenly, and the Lord delivered them into their hand. Israel smote them until there were none remaining. Joshua turned back to the city of Hazor, and he slew Jabin and burned the city with fire.

When they had taken the rest of the cities in Canaan, they smote all the people but took the spoils (goods) and the cattle for themselves. Thirty-one kings, with their cities, were destroyed by Israel. A large portion of Canaan was now in the possession of Israel.

However, the many years of fighting had taken their toll upon Joshua. The Lord said to Joshua, *“Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.”* The Lord still had a great work for Joshua to perform before his death. He must divide the land for an inheritance among the

nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh. You remember that the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the other half of Manasseh had received their inheritance on the east side of Jordan. Moses had divided to these two-and-a-half tribes their inheritance before he died. Now Joshua must divide the land of the Canaanites by lot to the other tribes.

The tribe of Levi was not given any part of the land, although cities in each tribe were to be appointed for them to live in. Thus, within each tribe, there would be priests to teach them the law of the Lord and to perform sacrifices for them. Eleazar the high priest and the elders of each tribe would help Joshua in casting lots, which would determine the place and boundary of each tribe.

When the children of Judah knew that the lots were about to be cast, they came to Joshua with one of their elders, Caleb, to remind Joshua what God had promised to Caleb forty-five years before. He and Joshua were among the twelve spies that Moses sent to bring a report of the land. Caleb had tried to quiet the people, when they were filled with fear over the report of the giants in the land.

When Caleb first saw the cities of Canaan, situated on mountains and the giants dwelling in them, he believed the Lord would deliver them unto the Israelites. Now, forty-five years later, his faith was not diminished. He believed as much now as at the first that God was able to subdue those mighty kingdoms and the giants who lived in them.

Caleb reminded Joshua what Moses had promised him, *“Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God”*

You can read about this in Joshua chapters 10 to 14.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Joshua do to the people in the cities?
2. Who was considered the most powerful of all the kings in the north?

3. What were the number of their armies compared to?
4. Who was the elder of Judah who had spied out the land many years before?
5. What promise had been given him by God through Moses?
(12 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. In a cave at Makkedah.
2. *“Stand thou still upon Gibeon.”*
3. About a whole day.
4. *“That the LORD bearkened unto the voice of a man.”*
5. Put their feet upon the necks of these kings.

THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE

Life rolls on like a torrent. The past is no more than a dream. The present, when we think we have fast hold of it, slips through our hands and mingles with the past. And let us not vainly imagine that the future will be different. It will glide away with the same rapidity.

Some of you may have seen the waves of the ocean pressing each other to the shore. You then beheld an emblem of human life.

Oh, children, may you, in your early youth, be led by the Spirit to be mourners over sin, and to look unto Jesus, who alone is able to bless and save you to the uttermost!

Sower 1885

God's mercies are as cords to draw us to Him, but our sins are as sharp swords that cut those cords.

Sower 1885

ADDRESSING GOD

One man felt grieved when he heard God being addressed in prayer by the word “you.” He compiled the following facts about the use of the words you, Thee, and Thou in the Bible.

In the King James (Authorised) version of the Bible, the word “you” is found in 2,011 verses. It is used when God addresses men and when men address one another, but it is NEVER used when man speaks to God.

In the book of Psalms, the words “you” and “yours” occur thirty times, but NEVER in addressing God. The words “Thy” and “Thou” occur 2,860 times. In Solomon’s great prayer recorded in 2 Chronicles, the word “Thy” is used 61 times, but “you” is NEVER found.

The prayer of our Lord in John 17 lacks a single “you,” but it contains “Thou” and “Thine” 41 times.

In view of these facts, it seems only proper that we address God according to the pattern set forth in His Word. God is sovereign, eternal, and infinite. As such, He deserves utmost respect from His creatures, especially from believers who have been taught God’s ways.

While “Thee,” “Thine,” and “Thou” may not be familiar terms to the world in general, it is for that reason that they lend themselves aptly to addressing God in a distinctive and reverent manner.

Selected – The Friendly Companion 1999

CALVIN’S PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, as in these days the affairs of the world are in a state of disturbance, and as wherever we turn our eyes, we see nothing but horrible confusion: grant, I pray, that we may be attentive to Thy teaching. May we never wander after our own imaginations, never be drawn aside by any cares, and never turn aside from our stated course. May we remain fixed in Thy Word, always seeking Thee and always relying on Thy providence. May we never hesitate concerning our safety, as

Thou hast undertaken to be the Guardian of our salvation, but ever call upon Thee in the name of Thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

The Banner of Truth 1978

REMARKS AT A SPECIAL SERVICE

It is twenty-eight years since the chapel was opened. What has held us together? Prayer. I believe many of you have come up praying for God's blessing – "Lord, bless him that we expect to hear." So, you have been delivered from all personal feelings of bias, finding fault with the weakness that has been displayed. As you have come up, so I believe I have come up – "Lord, bless the people; smile upon them; do them good."

So, this tie between us has been a better one than man could have invented. We have no handsome place to draw you to. You are not likely to increase your business by coming here. It has not been the excellent singing or the splendid tones of an instrument that has attracted you. Nor has it been the silver eloquence of the preacher. If anything has reached your hearts, it is because, out of his weakness God has perfected strength.

The Life of Francis Covell

"SAFETY IS OF THE LORD"

In my work, I frequently stayed away from home. One of these occasions was during early August 2002 when I was staying in a hotel a few hundred miles from my family. I believe that I was late to bed that night, and usually I went to sleep very quickly after getting into bed. This night was different: I could not go to sleep as usual, and after some time, I felt a real, urgent desire to get out of bed and pray for the safety of my wife and children. It was an urgent need, and I had to do it. I got out and knelt by my bed, pleading for the Lord to keep my family in safety – my prayer was limited to this one matter, and I prayed

for it over and over again. After getting back into bed, still in my heart committing them into His care, I went to sleep.

The next morning, I telephoned my wife as usual. In casual conversation, she mentioned how during the night she had awakened, thinking she had heard one of the children on the landing, and had called out to them, but not getting any reply, there was a soft door click and she had gone back to sleep. Yet, strangely, in the morning they each denied having been up. The conversation moved on, and nothing more was thought of the subject. About a week later, when I was home and we were due to go on holiday, I asked the four children (we only had four at that time) to go and get their money boxes and bring them to me, so that we could see how much they had saved for spending on holiday. We would typically tip them out and count the coins, and I would often add a little to it, etc. One by one, they came back to say that their money boxes were empty!

After initially considering what school friends had been round, my mind went back to that hotel room and the need to pray for their safety. I asked my wife if, on that morning when she told me that she had heard one of the children on the landing during the night, she had found any windows open in the morning? She thought and remembered that it was the morning that she had found the girls' bedroom window swinging wide open, which at the time she had thought strange.

The window was over our three-year-old daughter's bed and opened over the pitched garage roof. With some suspicion of what I would find, I went outside. The green wheelie-bin had been moved out of position and placed beneath the back end of the garage roof to enable somebody to climb onto the roof. There were scuff marks on the roof and the lead flashing immediately beneath the side window to the girls' bedroom had been disturbed by the feet of somebody climbing in the window.

Clearly, a thief had climbed up to the side window (that was open a little because of the summer heat), had opened this and climbed in over the sleeping body of our three-year-old

daughter, laying immediately under that window. Our ten-year-old daughter was asleep in the same room, and he had stolen from both of their money boxes before crossing the landing to the boys' bedroom, where they were sleeping in bunk beds. He had climbed the bunk to take the savings from the money box kept on a shelf over the head of our twelve-year-old son, then he had similarly taken the savings from the nearby money box belonging to the seven-year-old. After this, it would seem that he had gone out onto the landing possibly with the intention of going into our bedroom, where my wife was sleeping, but she had mercifully been awakened and called out, "C... is that you?" The thief heard and made his escape, going back into the girls' bedroom. Climbing over the sleeping body of the three-year-old, he went back out of the window. My wife and four children remained safe and untouched! And the Lord had caused me to kneel by my bed, hundreds of miles away, to plead for their safety – possibly during the event itself.

I speak reverently, but the Lord did not need me to pray, as it were, for my family's safety, as He was quite able to watch over them without me knowing anything about it. However, He was pleased to demonstrate His power and loving, tender care, all to His honour and glory, and also to teach us by these things: "*But safety is of the LORD*" (Proverbs 21.31).

How watchful is the loving Lord,
How sweet His providential word,
To children that believe!
Your very hairs are numbered all;
Not one by force or chance can fall
Without your Father's leave.

Why should I fear when guarded so,
Or shrink to meet a deadly foe?
His mouth is held with bit;
I need not dread his utmost spite,
Nor can he bark, nor can he bite,
Unless the Lord permit.

No cross or bliss, no loss or gain,
No health or sickness, ease or pain,
 Can give themselves a birth;
The Lord so rules by His command,
Nor good nor ill can stir a hand,
 Unless He send them forth.

Since Thou so kind and watchful art,
To guard my head and guard my heart,
 And guard my very hair,
Teach me with child-like mind to sit,
And sing at the dear Saviour's feet,
 Without distrust or fear.

So, like a pilgrim let me wait,
Contented well in every state,
 Till all my warfare ends;
Live in a calm and cheerful mood,
And find that all things work for good,
 Which Jesus kindly sends.

Gadsby's Hymn 1113

R. Saunders

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (1)

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14.12).

The Book of Ruth is set during the time when the judges ruled in the land of Israel. The Lord had brought His people, the children of Israel, into the land of their inheritance and caused them to drive out many of their heathen enemies. Sadly, after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel began to turn away from following the Lord. They did not obey the Lord in driving out the heathen, but began to mix with them and to follow their idolatrous ways and gods. This caused the Lord to afflict His people and chasten them sore. Then they cried unto the Lord. In mercy, He raised up certain judges who were used

to deliver His people from their enemies. Gideon and Samson are two of the well-known judges who were so used of God. It is not known who the judge was (if there was one) when the events took place in the Book of Ruth.

What we are told is that *“there was a famine in the land”* (Ruth 1.1). There never should have been a famine in the land flowing with milk and honey, where the Lord had said there would be an abundance of bread. Why, then, was there a famine? Because the children of Israel had rebelled against the Lord their God. One of the ways the Lord dealt with His people when they turned from Him was to cause a famine. *“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee: cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep”* (Deuteronomy 28.15-18).

There was a certain little family living in Bethlehem during this time. They were greatly affected by the famine. The parents had two sons, called Mahlon and Chilion. No doubt, both boys had healthy appetites, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain enough food for them all. Rather than asking the Lord their God for help at this difficult time, to provide them with sufficient food, they came up with an idea. There was no famine in the land of Moab, so they could travel down around the Dead Sea and stay in that land until the famine in Israel had ceased. The parents, Elimelech and Naomi, decided that this would be the best course to take. Sadly, they did not ask counsel of God. They leaned upon their own understanding and assumed that all would be well in the end.

Moab was a people of idolaters, who were enemies of the children of Israel. They worshipped the god Chemosh, who was the so-called god of war. Did not Balak, king of Moab, hire

Balaam in a vain attempt to have the children of Israel cursed? *“He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land”* (Numbers 22.5,6). Also, in Judges chapter 3, we read that Eglon, the king of Moab, gathered armies against the children of Israel and fought against them, *“and smote Israel.”* For eighteen years, the children of Israel were forced to serve him, until the Lord raised up Ehud, who slew king Eglon and led the fight against the Moabites and subdued them. There would have been some times when there was peace between Israel and Moab. It was likely at such a time that this family went to sojourn in Moab. But what an awful mistake!

They made a decision that would have very sad consequences. As Naomi herself admitted later, they *“went out full”* (Ruth 1.20). They did not go as being led by God. They did not go with His smile and gracious approbation.

In our lives, we come to those times when decisions need to be made. What do we do? Something may **appear** to be the right thing to do; our sense and reason may argue that such a thing is the right course. If we are blessed to possess the fear of God in our hearts, then may we seek to know **the Lord’s will**, and pray that He may show us the right way.

When Ezra, and the company he was with, returned to Judah following the Babylonian captivity, we read *“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Abava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance”* (Ezra 8.21). Ezra would commit his way unto the Lord and seek guidance and counsel from Him. This Elimelech and Naomi **did not do**. May this be

a warning to us, not to seek our own way just because we think it is right.

So Elimelech, Naomi and their sons left Bethlehem-judah, without the blessing of God, and took themselves off to Moab, away from the famine in Israel, but into a land of idolaters. Then something suddenly happened. We do not know how it happened, but Naomi became a widow. *“And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons”* (Ruth 1.3). What a shock that must have been!

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 11

I concluded last year’s lessons by referring to the *“fear nots”* in Isaiah chapter 41, finishing with the quotation of verse 10. Taken as a whole, this chapter exposes the sin of idolatry and shows how idolaters will be dealt with. The last verse sums them up: *“Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.”*

Again, we see that precious truths applicable to the Lord’s chosen people are highlighted by the contrasting judgments due to come on those who persist in their sinful idolatries.

Another feature of these chapters is the declarations made by God Himself to any who would vaunt themselves against Him, such as in verse 1: *“Keep silence before Me, O islands; let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.”* Also, God exerts His omnipotence and omniscience, as in verse 23: *“Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together”* (see also verse 24).

Throughout runs a thread of precious encouragement to Jacob and Israel, reflecting the Lord’s faithful care of His people, both as individuals and collectively.

Chapter 42 begins with a direct prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. Whilst I admire the courage of street preachers in our day, the Lord Jesus did not go about His earthly ministry like that, as prophesied in verse 2: *“He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.”* It is true that Jesus spoke to the multitudes who had gathered around Him in various places, and also He often entered into their synagogues on the Sabbath day, but He did not stand on the street corners. The opening verses of Isaiah chapter 42 are cited in Matthew chapter 12, including these words in verse 20: *“A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.”* What a gracious encouragement is given to us in these words!

Verse 16 is a promise that has been blessed to many: *“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.”* This is followed in verse 17 by another word exposing the solemn outcome of idolatry.

Chapter 42 ends with searching prophecy, setting out the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, particularly referring to the time when the Romans would set fire to much of Jerusalem: *“It hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart”* (verse 25).

There could hardly be a greater contrast between the close of chapter 42 and the beginning of chapter 43, which commences with the words that have long been such a blessing to many a worm Jacob: *“But now, thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine”* (verse 1). What the Lord has done and the blessings that are in store for Jacob and Israel are continued, with hardly a break (but notice another warning to ignorant mankind in verse 9) right through to verse 21. Verse 21 is a

declaration which encompasses everything about the Lord's chosen ones: *"This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise."* We come far short in showing forth His praise here below, but if we are indeed His, then His word will be fulfilled in us throughout a never-ending eternity: *"They shall shew forth My praise."* Dear young friends, are you and I included in and prepared for this prospect?

As we begin a new year, it would be well for us to consider God's counsel and promise in verses 18-19: *"Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?"* This "new thing" is, of course, another prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus. Nonetheless, we know not what "new thing" the Lord may have in store for us in this new year.

From verse 22, the Lord again chides His people for their unfaithfulness, yet reminds them of the great things He has done for them: *"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins"* (verse 25). The chapter concludes with the judgment that follows as a consequence of their backslidings, in verse 28: *"Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches."*

We then have another instance where the divisions of God's Word into chapters do not always give the best sense. I feel that the first and following seven verses of chapter 44 clearly demonstrate the lovingkindness of the Lord and His declared purpose as mentioned in chapter 43 verse 21 (see above). The joining word is "yet." *"Yet now bear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not..."* (verses 1,2). The prophecy continues in a similar vein until the end of verse 8: *"Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any."*

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THE HAND OF GOD. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did Moses say that God had brought His people out of Egypt with? (Exodus 32.11)
2. The hand of God was made known to the Philistines in bringing a deadly destruction upon them. What was His hand said to be? (1 Samuel 5.11)
3. What did the hand of God give to the people of Judah? (2 Chronicles 30.12)
4. How was Ezra said to have come up from Babylon to Jerusalem in four months' time? (Ezra 7.9)
5. What was a man to enjoy from the hand of God? (Ecclesiastes 2.24)
6. What did Job say he would do by the hand of God in Job 27?
7. In Isaiah 62, what two things will the people of God be in His hand?
8. In Acts 7, where did Stephen say he saw Jesus standing?
9. In his first Epistle, what did Peter tell the believers to do under the mighty hand of God?
10. What did David say was in the hand of God in Psalm 31?

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Double a hired servant.
2. Ten thousand.
3. Gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, the sapphire.
4. The topaz of Ethiopia or pure gold.
5. His speech.
6. The heart of the wicked. (Proverbs 10.20)
7. Many sparrows. (Luke 12.7)
8. Thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 27.9)
9. Physicians of no value. (Job 13.4)
10. Four hundred shekels of silver. (Genesis 23.15)

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

Gracious Saviour, now draw nigh;
Hear, O hear Thy children cry:
Bid all doubtful fear to cease;
Let this new year dawn in peace.

Come, and lead our thoughts away
From the things of earth and clay,
To the shining heights above,
To Thy sweet redeeming love.

Calm the wild and restless heart,
Groaning 'neath its secret smart;
With Thy holy presence fill;
Softly whisper, "Peace, be still."

Guide our erring souls aright,
O'er us shed Thy glorious light;
Teach us, Lord, Thy will to do;
Show us what is good and true.

If we trouble must endure,
Keep our faith both firm and sure;
Lead us in the untried ways,
O'er us watch in pleasant days.

Be Thou, Saviour, ever near;
Grant that we, throughout this year,
May be looking unto Thee,
Leaning, trusting constantly.

*E. Hulett
Little Gleaner 1893*

The Friendly Companion



“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
(1 John 1.9)

February 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

When Jesus left His home in Nazareth to begin His public ministry, He went to the village of Capernaum and began to preach. He told the people that they needed to repent of their sins. Repentance is a wonderful thing. It is a gift that Jesus alone can give us. Repentance is found in the heart of one whom the Holy Spirit has quickened and convinced of his or her sin. A measure of godly sorrow will attend it. He will feel so guilty before the Lord that his heart will be greatly ashamed.

The Lord spoke a parable about a Pharisee and a publican who went up to the temple to pray (Luke 18). He said that the publican stood afar off and *“would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven.”* He felt such shame for his sins that he could hardly look upon himself. How, then, could the holy God of heaven ever look upon such a sinner? What a miserable thing he felt himself to be! His heart was so pained that he smote upon his breast and asked God to have mercy upon him. How many of us have known such an experience?

The prophet Daniel lived in the time that Israel, along with Judah, was taken into captivity for their sins. For seventy long years, they were held captive by the Babylonians. At the end of seventy years, Daniel understood by the Word of God that the time of their deliverance was near. Daniel set his face toward the Lord to pray earnestly for Israel’s deliverance. He began his prayer by confessing all their sins in departing from God’s commandments. He said that God was righteous in all His ways, but as for himself and the people, *“to us belongeth confusion of face ... because we have sinned against Thee”* (Daniel 9.2-8).

God spoke to the people by the prophet Ezekiel, saying, *“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”* (16.63).

Ezra, the priest, lived in the time when the nation of Israel had been given freedom from their captivity in Babylon.

Although they had been freed, Israel had not humbled themselves before the Lord. They had learned the ways of their ungodly captors and continued in them, even after God had shown mercy and allowed them to return to the land of Israel. When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he was told how the people had corrupted themselves by taking heathen wives and mingling with the heathen people of the land. He rent his garment as a sign of distress and grief. He fell upon his knees before the Lord, saying, *“O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens”* (Ezra 9.6).

In Proverbs 14 verse 34, we are told, *“Sin is a reproach to any people.”* It is so to those who are taught by the Holy Spirit of their wicked ways before the Lord. In Jeremiah 31, this experience is pictured for us in the person of Ephraim. Under chastisement, he began to pray that God would turn him; turn him from his sinful ways and desires, and turn him unto God. That prayer was answered, for being turned, he repented, and being instructed, he smote upon his thigh. It was a sign of godly sorrow over sin and great shame for it. He then confessed that he was made to *“bear the reproach of my youth”* (verse 19). The term *“youth”* refers to his unregenerate state; a state we are all in until God turns us. In that state, we seek satisfaction and happiness while walking in disobedience. When turned to see all our ways in God’s light, we see what misery and grief, and what eternal destruction we have brought upon ourselves.

The more the light of God (the Holy Spirit) shines, the more our understanding is opened, and we perceive how completely sin has defiled and deformed us in God’s sight. The more this is seen, the more ashamed we are before God. When brought to this place, God reveals the blood of Jesus, that *“cleanseth ... from all sin”* (1 John 1.7). The Lord purges (cleanses) with hyssop, which speaks of the application of the blood to the soul. He casts all their sins behind His back, and He will never look back.

Many years ago, some children were asked if there was anything that God could not do? One little girl raised her hand and said that God could not see her sins when they were covered by the blood of Jesus. May God give us each to know this great truth!

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Pictured on the front cover this month is a mandarin duck, with its beautiful colours and striking pattern. Mandarin ducks are native to eastern Asia, but they have established several colonies in the UK and in the USA. Due to their remarkable plumage, they are often kept in captivity. Mandarin ducks are perching ducks, which means that they often perch high up in a tree, unlike most other ducks.

As you looked at the stunning colours of this duck, perhaps they reminded you of another “coat” of many colours. *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children ... and he made him a coat of many colours”* (Genesis 37.3). It is important to remember that it was *“Israel,”* the man of faith, who made Joseph the coat of colours (pieces, in the margin). While it must have been remarkable in a natural way, how much more so spiritually! It was not Israel that set apart Joseph; it was God who did it. Even though his pathway was severely tried, Joseph’s coat of colours was a symbol of God’s favour. It was a type or picture of God’s special favour placed upon His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus, and the wonderful work He was given to do.

There is one more consideration about the beautiful colours of the mandarin duck. What we read about flowers could also be applied here: *“And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”* (Matthew 6.29). What care God takes for all that He has created! Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without His notice. Referring to God’s care for all of His creation, the Lord Jesus Christ says, *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What*

shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" – "Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6.31,26) If God demonstrates such care for a bird that has no soul, how great is His care for His people, and their needs for body and soul!

There is another remarkable trait of mandarin ducks. They generally nest in tree cavities or wood boxes, sometimes high above the ground. After the ducklings hatch, they do not wait to fly, like most other birds. Not long after they hatch, the mother leaves the nest, and the little ducklings leap from the nest to the ground and follow her. What instruction there is here! Can you not see a picture of faith? The ducklings follow their instincts and leap from the nest. They trust their mother. Do we have such trust in the Lord? Note the order also: the ducklings must first leap from the nest, and then they follow the mother to the water. In the lives of God's people, they often have to make a leap by faith, and then follow Him, as given grace. The next time we see a duck, may we be reminded of the little mandarin ducklings and ask the Lord to help us to follow Him in such a way.

Contributed

AN ENCOURAGING NARRATIVE

A godly minister, the late Mr. A.B. Taylor, has left on record an encouraging narrative concerning a boy in the Sunday school. This boy, named Joseph, was a very naughty scholar. He caused trouble for his teachers by his mischievous doings, and they did not know what to do with him. The God of truth looked down in mercy and opened his eyes to see his state as a guilty sinner before God. He was laid in the dust at Jesus' feet.

One day, Joseph was breaking the Sabbath by playing with several ungodly companions, and he heard something pass by, like a gust of wind, as he was cutting his name in the bark of a tree. Some words were spoken in his conscience: "I will bring thee to judgment." He felt the stings of a guilty conscience, and

left the place bowed down with the conviction of sin, and feeling, "I shall be in hell before I get out of this wood."

It proved to be the beginning of the good work of grace, and Joseph spent his days lamenting his sins, and crying for mercy. He said to Mr. Taylor, "I want a token for good; I'm a lost sinner."

He replied, "Joseph, you used to have much good instruction in the Sunday school laid before you."

"I hated it all then," he said. "Now I remember everything. All my sins are before me. God is just in condemning me. O what will become of me?"

The good work was carried on, and after a time, Joseph was brought to know that Jesus died to save **him**, and he rejoiced with unspeakable joy.

Joseph said to his dear friend and minister, "O, if I could live – but I am dying – I would be baptized; but I am going to glory instead of joining the church below." On his dying bed, he gave wonderful proofs of having the "good part" which Mary chose, and he went through Jordan's flood singing the praises of the Lord Jesus. And now he casts his crown at Jesus' feet and crowns Him Lord of all.

Such cases afford encouragement for godly fathers and mothers, and teachers, to continue sowing the seed of truth among the young. *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126.6).

O may the God of truth bless my dear young friends with an opened heart – "good ground" – to receive the seed of grace, and thus find the Word of God to be the Word of life eternal.

Bestow, dear Lord, upon our youth
The gift of saving grace,
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place.

Ears for Little Gleaners by H. Dawson

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**WORK BEGINS ON THE WALL**

Nehemiah came safely to Jerusalem from Babylon. He went secretly by night to view the walls that were broken down and the gates that were burned by fire. Then Nehemiah said to the Jews, *“Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem.”* He told them how God had answered his prayer before the king of Babylon, and that the king would provide them with timber to build. The Jews answered Nehemiah, *“Let us rise up and build.”*

The enemies of the Jews heard what they wanted to do, and they were angry. Their names were Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. They laughed at the Jews and said, *“What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?”*

Eliashib the high priest and the other priests rose up to begin the work. They built the sheep gate and set up the doors. Others built the next section of wall, and still other men repaired the wall next to that. All around the city, men began to work hard, building up the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS

1. When did Nehemiah go to view the walls? (2 words)
2. What did the Jews answer Nehemiah? (6 words)
3. What did Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem do? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Nehemiah.
2. Wept and prayed to God.
3. Build the walls again.

Contributed

*“The God
of heaven,
He will
prosper us”*

Nehemiah 2.20

BIBLE LESSONS**THE LAND IS DIVIDED**

Joshua and Caleb were the oldest two in the camp of Israel. All the rest of their generation had died in the wilderness during the forty-year journey. What a privilege it must have been for the people who were in the company of these two venerable and esteemed leaders!

Caleb reminded Joshua that he was forty years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land. By faith, he spied the land and brought back word to Moses, *“as it was in mine heart.”*

The children of Israel had taken possession of the valleys that spread out from Gilgal, where they were camped from the time they crossed Jordan. As they marched westward, they came to the hill country of Judea, still in the possession of the Anakims. These were the giants that the ten spies referred to when they brought back the evil report of the land. Although Joshua and Israel had conquered some of these hills, some still remained under the control of the giant Anak.

It had been forty-five years since Caleb had first seen these mountains. He was now an old man. Yet, he spoke to Joshua, *“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.”* Not only was his natural strength maintained, but his faith was as strong as when he spied out the land. How forceful were his words! *“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced.”*

Caleb reminded Joshua that they had heard the report of the Anakims, both of how strong the people were and of how fortified their cities were. In strong, yet humble, faith, he said, *“If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.”*

How pleased Joshua was when his old friend manifested such faith and courage! Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to him for an inheritance. Hebron was a very special place to the

children of Israel. It is where Abraham built an altar after Lot separated from him, and later Abraham bought a cave in Hebron, where he and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah were buried. Years later, David the king would begin his reign in Hebron.

God honoured the faith of Caleb and enabled him to drive the giant sons of Anak out of the mountain and their cities. For forty-five years, Caleb waited for God's promise to be fulfilled. Often the Lord's people are made to wait a long time before the promise God has spoken to them is fulfilled. It is one way in which their faith is tried and proven to be of God.

By God's direction, Joshua divided the land between the nine-and-a-half tribes. Because the tribe of Judah was one of the largest, they received a large section of land stretching from the Dead Sea to the Great Sea on the west. Simeon was given a portion on the south of Judah down to the country of the Philistines. The two small tribes of Dan and Benjamin received their parcels just north of Judah.

In the middle section of the country, where the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, were located, the tribe of Ephraim received their inheritance. This part of the country was blessed with very fertile ground with many springs and flowing streams. The city of Shechem was in this part, and it was here that they buried the bones of Joseph, which they brought out of Egypt.

The land just north of Ephraim was given to the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. Their land was bordered by the River Jordan on the east and the Great Sea on the west. The northern part of the land was divided among the tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali.

You can read about this in Joshua chapters 14 to 19.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Caleb ask Joshua to give him? (9 words)
2. Who was buried in Hebron? (name 6 persons)
3. What king began his reign in Hebron?
4. How long did Caleb wait for God's promise to be fulfilled?
5. In what city were the bones of Joseph buried?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Destroyed them.
2. Jabin.
3. The sand that is upon the sea shore.
4. Caleb.
5. "Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance."

PRAYER SUITABLE TO ALL PLACES

A Christian cannot always hear, or always read, or always communicate with others, but he may pray continually. No place, and no company, can deprive him of this privilege. If he be on the top of the house like Peter, he may pray; if he be in the bottom of the ocean like Jonah, he may pray; if he be walking in the field like Isaac, he may pray; if he be waiting at the table like Nehemiah, he may pray; if he be in the mountains like the Saviour, he may pray; if he be in prison like Paul, he may pray. When no eye seeth him, and no human ear heareth him, he may pray. Wherever he is, prayer can help him to find God. Every saint is God's temple, "and he that carrieth his temple about with him," says Austin, "may go to prayer when he pleaseth." Indeed, to a Christian, every house is a house of prayer, every closet a chamber of God's presence, and every place he comes to an altar whereon he may offer the sacrifice of prayer.

How sweet and solemn is the place
Where Christians meet for prayer;
Amazing, condescending grace,
Jehovah meets them there.

Swinnock (adapted from Sower 1945)

“FOR THOU, LORD, ONLY MAKEST ME DWELL IN SAFETY”

Referring to last month's article "Safety is of the Lord," I felt that perhaps I should also recount to His honour and glory (and to my shame) an event that took place earlier in my life, I believe in 1985.

I was living at home as a young man, aged twenty-three, and I was studying for my final professional exams. As such, when my family went on holiday, I decided to stay at home to study.

We lived in a large, family house in an area that had been targeted by thieves. At that time, the thieves had a practice of telephoning their target property to check if anyone would answer, and if so, who it was. This had been experienced by neighbours and was something that caused great concern.

One evening, during this period with the family away, the telephone rang, and I answered to hear somebody on the other end. When I asked who was calling, they did not answer, but there was a click at their end as they put the telephone receiver down.

Late that evening, as I was about to go to bed, this was again repeated, and I began to fear that I might "have a visitor." I was very conscious that the house was largely in darkness, the usual cars were not in the driveway and the two dogs were away with the family.

Over my bed, I had a replica battle axe, and upon going to bed that night, I decided to take it down and lay it by me for self-defence. I was very conscious that just outside of my bedroom door were the banisters overlooking the stairs, and I was in, shall we say, an advantageous position for defence.

I then picked up my Bible to read before settling down. I opened on Psalm 4, and as I read it, the last verse stood out on the page and condemned my actions: "*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, LORD, **only** makest me dwell in safety.*"

I was condemned in my actions and lack of faith, and I had to get back out of the bed, hang up my battle axe and go on my knees, looking only to the Lord for my safety. I then got back

into bed and almost immediately fell into a deep and peaceful sleep, waking in the morning to prove the Lord had watched over me.

This was a lesson “in Christ’s school” for me, and perhaps there are lessons here for each one of us: Firstly, we have an enemy of souls, the devil, who would seek to come and do us harm. We are totally unable, in our own strength, to defend ourselves; our safety must be in Jesus, our only refuge. We need to go on our knees and pray to be kept, even as the Lord taught His disciples to pray: “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen*” (Matthew 6.13).

Secondly, we each must come to the end of our life, or the evening of our life, when we have to lie down and “sleep”: then, where will be our safety – will we have “peace”? How solemn if we rely on the strength of our “own religion” – on our own arm. But how happy if we trust only in God – then we shall be able to say with Mr. Hart, one of our hymn writers:

I'll lay me down, and sweetly sleep,
For I have peace with God;
And when I wake He shall me keep,
Through faith in Jesus' blood.

Gadsby's Hymn 108

There is both the safety of the life in our body and the life of our soul to commit to His care and keeping:

Then trust Me, and fear not: thy life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power;
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,
To make thee at length in My likeness to shine.

Gadsby's Hymn 993

R. Saunders

WHY THE “YE” AND “THEE”?

One of the most criticised characteristics of the King James translation of the Bible is the use of the old English pronouns. Some unlearned scholars go to great length to make fun of thee’s, thou’s and ye’s. They say, “Why not just use ‘you’?” Yet this is one of the strongest points of the Authorised Version.

In the language of the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament, there is a very distinct difference between the second person singular and the second person plural pronouns. We make no difference in modern English – both singular and plural are translated “you.” However, in old English there exists a difference, just as there is in Greek and Hebrew. As a result, the old English used in the King James Version gives far more precise translation than would modern English.

In our King James Bible, “*thee*,” “*thou*,” “*thy*” and “*thine*” are always singular. “*You*,” “*ye*” and “*your*” are always plural. If the second person pronoun starts with a “t” (in the English translation), then it is singular. If it starts with a “y” it is plural. This information helps us better to interpret God’s Word.

It is interesting to note that, contrary to popular opinion, the word “you” is used in the King James Version of the Bible about 2,000 times, in fact. The “thee’s” and the “ye’s” are used also for accuracy and directness of translation – perhaps the so-called “old” English could better be described as good old “Bible” English.

Praise ye the Lord for it.

Dr. B. Cummons – adapted from Friendly Companion 1999

POOR JOSEPH

The well-known minister, Dr. Calamy, was preaching in a church in London, when a poor man named Joseph happened to look in at the door. Joseph was a simple man of low intellect, and he made his meagre living by carrying burdens for people through the streets. Now Joseph rested his burden and began to listen to the sermon.

Dr. Calamy was preaching from the text, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1.15). During his sermon, Dr. Calamy spoke of the Person of Christ – who He is that came into the world to save sinners, that He was in the beginning with God and was God, and that by Him all things were made in heaven and in earth. Poor Joseph listened intently. When the congregation dispersed, he was heard saying to himself, “Joseph never heard this before – that Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, and why may not poor Joseph be saved?”

Joseph continued to repeat this over and over to himself. After a time, some people came and asked him, “Yes, Joseph, but have you acted upon faith?”

“Ah, poor Joseph can act nothing; but it is *‘a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus’* – the God who made all things – *‘came into the world to save sinners,’* and why may not poor Joseph be saved?” He kept repeating the same phrase: **“The God who made all things.”** Perhaps Joseph’s faith seemed small, but it was a true faith and a living one.

At last, Joseph became sick. Dr. Calamy was sent for and came to see him. When Joseph heard his voice, he asked, “Are you the good minister who told me about Jesus Christ coming into the world to save sinners?” Then, taking a little bag of money from under his pillow, he said, “Poor Joseph had set this aside for his old age, but poor Joseph will never see old age. Take it, and give it to some of Christ’s poor people. Tell them that poor Joseph loves them, and he thinks he loves Jesus Christ for coming into the world to save sinners. Poor Joseph can act nothing, but he **thinks** he loves Jesus Christ for coming into the world to save sinners.”

This faith of Joseph, who could act nothing, had hope and love accompanying it; it was not a dead faith. He had a defence against every reason why he should not be saved: “Jesus Christ, who is God, came into the world to save sinners.” Joseph’s faith

was triumphant so far as the ability of Jesus Christ was concerned: "Jesus Christ is the Maker of all things; there is nothing that can hinder Him from saving me."

Faith that Jesus Christ can save is not a little thing. Jesus did not turn away the man who came to Him, saying, "*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean*" – "*Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean*" (Matthew 8.2,3).

(Extract from a sermon by Dr. Duncan)

*Adapted from Gospel Gleanings for Young People and
Friendly Companion 1934*

GOSPEL GEMS

The mercy seat is sprinkled with blood, to show that satisfaction is made to justice by the blood of Jesus; yea, **abundantly** made, as is intimated by the sprinkling **seven** times.

None but the high priest was to be in the tabernacle or temple when the atonement was being made. Aaron was to have no associate in this work. So, Jesus has no associate: He makes the whole atonement Himself. Not His merit and ours jointly bring pardon; but His blood alone. He, and He only, is our peace. He treads the winepress of God's wrath, and treads it alone (Isaiah 63.3,6).

John Berridge

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (2)

"The hand of the LORD is gone out against me."

Naomi had now lost her husband, Elimelech, but still had her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. It would be reasonable to suggest that the two sons were in their late teens or early twenties at this time. These sons then married two young women (Orpah and Ruth) from Moab. This may also have been a grief to Naomi, as the Lord had very clearly commanded the children of Israel: "*Neither shalt thou make marriages with them*" – the heathen – "*thy daughter thou shalt not give unto*

his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you" (Deuteronomy 7.3,4). The clear teaching here, in this gospel day, is that no person who truly fears the Lord should desire to be attached to one who does not fear the Lord. It would appear that neither Mahlon or Chilion truly feared the Lord, and they were not troubled about marrying those from an idolatrous nation.

How long these couples were married, we cannot tell. What we are told is that both Mahlon and Chilion died. This would have been a devastating loss for both of the young women, who were now widows, and also for their mother-in-law, Naomi, who had lost her husband and both of her sons. This move to Moab had proved disastrous! We wonder if Naomi was now pondering the word we read in Haggai 1.7, "*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.*" She was in a very sad place and had lost so much. Well might she say, "*The hand of the LORD has gone out against me*" (verse 13).

Now, Naomi heard that the famine in Judah had come to an end, with the Lord mercifully having sent rain and then provided a harvest of crops. She must return! Sometimes the Lord's people are left to make terrible mistakes and suffer for them. Yet, where the grace of God is manifest, they confess their wrongs and are helped to return to where they should have been. At times, the Lord, in His sovereignty, overrules these mistakes for His people's good. Thus it would be with Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. But let nobody think that they can pursue their own way, and if it does not work out, God will overrule it, and all will end well. It is very solemn to be disobedient to God, whatever your motive. Naomi had lost all those with whom she had set out, in disobedience, to save themselves from famine!

What a sight that must have been, to see three sorrowing widows leaving the place where they were in Moab, to make the

long journey to Bethlehem. At a certain place, Naomi tested the sincerity of her two daughters-in-law in leaving Moab to go to Bethlehem. *“And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept”* (verses 8, 9). What Naomi was suggesting was to go back and seek husbands in Moab, where their families and people were. Naomi went on to say that she herself was too old for a husband and would not be able to have sons for these women to marry in time to come. It was then that she cried out in grief, *“The hand of the LORD is gone out against me”* (verse 13). So, Orpah turned back. She could see the sense in returning home. But Ruth would not turn back: *“Ruth clave unto her”* – to Naomi (verse 14). Why did not Ruth turn back, as it appeared the sensible thing to do? Because Ruth had been given faith to believe in the **Lord God** of Israel. She must forsake Moab and all that it stood for: all the idols and graven images, the false gods, her ungodly family and friends – she forsook all! The Lord teaches His people that they also must forsake all and put their whole trust in Him.

Although Naomi had been living in Moab, she had not forgotten the Lord her God, His Word or His people. It appears that Naomi had been teaching Ruth (and Orpah) about the Lord God of Israel, since Ruth was prepared to leave Moab and go to a people she did not really know, even with an uncertain future before her. Perhaps Ruth asked why there was a famine in the promised land? Naomi would have to answer that it was because of the sins of the children of Israel. Ruth would learn that the God of Israel is the **living God** and not a graven image or figment of imagination. She would learn that God had rules for His people, and He would chastise and correct them when they did wrong and sinned against Him. Ruth would learn that God is merciful and ready to forgive those who truly repent of their

sins and turn to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit, feeling utterly ashamed of themselves. Ruth would also learn that God cares for His people, and those who truly trust in Him will have all their needs supplied. Ruth may have asked, if God is so kind, faithful and good, why had Naomi and her husband Elimelech left Israel to go to Moab? We wonder what Naomi would have answered!

Now, two widows were heading towards Bethlehem-Judah; neither of them knowing the future or what would happen to them. Yet both, with the eye of faith, were looking to the Lord God of Israel to go before them, take care of them and provide for them. We also do not know what the future holds, but may it be our mercy to know Him who does know and cares for His people at all times. *“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass”* (Psalm 37.5).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 12

We begin this month at verse 9 of Isaiah chapter 44. Here, through to verse 20, the Spirit of God exposes the utter folly of making and worshipping idols. The descriptions are clear, so that we can easily see the foolishness and worthlessness of these pursuits. There is a solemn conclusion at verse 20: *“He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?”* This is a warning as to how the worship of idols completely blinds the hapless worshippers. Dear young friends, beware of devoting much time and effort to the idol gods of this world. Also, beware of setting up idols with great care and application of thought in your own heart! If God is not the object of our devotions, we are on dangerous ground. May the Lord bring us to say with the poet:

Object of my first desire,
Jesus, crucified for me;

All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee.

Gadsby's Hymn 988

The remainder of the chapter, from verse 21, is a passage of sweet confirmation of the Lord's favour to His servant Jacob (and Israel): "*O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.*" Verse 22 is very similar to verse 25 in the previous chapter (see last month): "*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee.*" Verse 26 refers to the (re)building of Judah and Jerusalem before God commences the prophecy concerning Cyrus, a future king of Persia.

The beginning of chapter 45 continues with more detail regarding Cyrus. In the historical sense, Isaiah prophesies of the raising up of Cyrus, who would be instrumental in delivering the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. Many have marvelled at the accuracy of the prophecy. When Cyrus, with his army, infiltrated Babylon by way of the river Euphrates, he found that the massive two-leaved gates of brass, which led from the river to the palace, were open. They were usually locked. Hence, the surprise was complete when he reached the palace where Belshazzar and his lords were feasting and revelling. "*In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.*" (Daniel 5.30).

The prophecy is also of the coming of the Messiah, especially as the Great Shepherd and the Deliverer of His people. This is indicated in the first reference to this heathen king in chapter 44 verse 28: "*That saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*" This is followed by the opening words in verse 1 of chapter 45: "*Thus saith the LORD to His anointed...*" How mysterious are the ways of God in choosing to speak of the work of the Saviour through the type of a heathen king! This is not the only such instance: see Esther, the end of chapter 4 and beginning of chapter 5.

The word of the Lord to Cyrus in chapter 45 verse 2 has been made a help to many a poor sinner whose way is seemingly hedged up: *"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."* The purpose of God in raising up Cyrus is clearly declared in verse 4: *"For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect ..."* The prophecy concerning Cyrus is continued until verse 13, but it is more and more applicable to the Anointed One, the Messiah: *"He shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts."*

Verse 14 marks a change of direction in the prophecy, being spoken to, and of, the church of Christ: *"Surely God is in thee; and there is none else."* God the Saviour is extolled in verse 21, followed by a blessed invitation in verse 22: *"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."* What a full promise is given at the end of the chapter! *"In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."*

Chapter 46 continues the prophecy regarding the fall of Babylon. Bel and Nebo were highly promoted gods of the Chaldeans: the Lord promises their demise. In contrast, verses 3 and 4 are a word to Jacob and Israel. The promise in verse 4 has been particularly blessed down through the history of the Lord's own people: *"And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."*

Yet again, in verse 9, God emphasises His Deity: *"For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me."* What a comfort and strength these declarations should be to those who have been brought to trust in Him!

Before this chapter closes, there is a reminder of the solemn, natural state, even of the Lord's people: *"Hearken unto Me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness"* (verse 12), followed by the good news of salvation from a longsuffering God: *"I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry, and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory"* (verse 13).

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about BIRDS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What kinds of birds went into the ark? (Genesis 7.14)
2. David was told to flee like what? (Psalm 11.1)
3. What did David say about his soul? (Psalm 124.7)
4. Proverbs 7 verse 23 says a bird does what?
5. The Lord said His heritage was unto Him as what? What did He say of the birds round about? (Jeremiah 12.9)
6. In Psalm 84, what bird found a house in the tabernacle of God? What bird found a nest there?
7. What three birds did David compare himself to in Psalm 102?
8. In Matthew 10, the Lord Jesus said His people were of more value than what?
9. What bird returned to Noah in the ark?
10. What birds brought Elijah bread and flesh in the morning and evening? (1 Kings 17)

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. With great power, and with a mighty hand.
2. Very heavy.
3. One heart to do the commandment of the king.
4. According to the good hand of his God upon him.
5. Good in his labour.
6. I will teach you. (Job 27.11)
7. A crown of glory and a royal diadem. (Isaiah 62.3)
8. On the right hand of God. (Acts 7.55,56)
9. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. (1 Peter 5.6)
10. My times. (Psalm 31.15)

REPENTANCE

With melting heart and weeping eyes,
My guilty soul for mercy cries;
What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?

Till late, I saw no danger nigh;
I lived at ease, nor feared to die;
Wrapped up in self-conceit and pride,
"I shall have peace at last," I cried.

But when, great God, Thy light divine
Had shone on this dark soul of mine,
Then I beheld, with trembling awe,
The terrors of Thy holy law.

How dreadful now my guilt appears,
In childhood, youth, and growing years;
Before Thy pure discerning eye,
Lord, what a filthy wretch am I!

Should vengeance still my soul pursue,
Death and destruction are my due;
Yet mercy can my guilt forgive,
And bid a dying sinner live.

Does not Thy sacred Word proclaim
Salvation free in Jesus' name?
To Him I look, and humbly cry,
"O save a wretch condemned to die!"

J. Fawcett

The

Friendly Companion



A former Verdun battlefield

“For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.”

(Deuteronomy 32.9, 10)

March 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

How old are you? Perhaps that is a strange way to start a monthly message, yet it is a question you may be asked many times in your life. In answering the question, you might quickly say five, or eight, or eleven, or fourteen, or something in between. You do not even have to think about it to give the answer. What if you were asked how many days old you are? Now you would be put to a test. None of us could give an answer without sitting down and doing some maths. We number our lives by years, yet the years are made up of many days. Moses prayed in Psalm 90: *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* In Psalm 39, David has the same prayer: *“LORD make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.”*

Job tells us, *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble”* (Job 14.1). At the end of his book, we are told that Job died *“being old and full of days.”*

When all the days of our lives are considered, we will prove that there are different kinds of days. In Ecclesiastes 11 verse 8, we are told: *“But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many.”* Those who are taught of God will know the truth of that word. They will feel that they have passed through many *“days of darkness”* in their soul. The days of temptation are many, and such days are dark and cloudy.

Probably all of you have known days of sickness. No doubt, the number of such days throughout our lives would reach quite a sum if we were able to remember them. We are not all afflicted with sicknesses in the same way or to the same degree. There are some children who know of many visits to a doctor or hospital. Hezekiah would never forget his days of sickness, especially the time when the Lord visited him in his sickness.

It is a mercy if we know of days that are distinct from others. Some days that are set apart from the rest are the Lord’s day or Sabbath day. Have you ever considered how many Lord’s days

you have been favoured to have? There are multitudes of people who have never been taught the benefit of these days. Others, who once were taught to keep the Lord's day, have now hardened their hearts against it. Have you ever thanked the Lord for giving such a day, or perhaps more importantly, for giving you a desire for that day?

Thus, there are days of trouble, days of darkness, days of temptation, days of sickness, and Sabbath days, all of which fill up many days of our lives.

The Jews in the days of Esther experienced one special day. It was the day when God wrought deliverance for them from the sentence of death that wicked Haman had proposed. God turned that day *"from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day"* (Esther 9.22). May the Lord grant unto each of us such a day when we may be set free from the sentence of death because of our sin.

There is yet another single day of momentous importance. It is called *"the great and the terrible day of the LORD"* (Joel 2.31). It is the great day of His wrath, the great day of judgment. We shall have to give an account of all our deeds in that great day of judgment.

May the Lord help us to consider all the days of the years of our lives.

With love from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Have you ever wondered what the Bible means when it speaks of "waste places" or cities laid waste? Most of us have never seen such a place.

The word translated "waste place" is sometimes translated as "desolation" or "desert;" we might also use the term "wasteland" today. It means an area of land that is ruined and empty because of some great disaster, very often a war.

Many places ruined by war are quickly repaired and resettled once the conflict is over. However, there is an area in France that is still completely desolate because of a war that took place

over a hundred years ago! The Zone Rouge, meaning Red Zone in English, is an area of about 42,000 acres that still cannot be inhabited because of the fighting that took place there during World War I.

The area of the present-day Zone Rouge was the site of the Battle of Verdun, one of the longest and most destructive battles of the first World War. This battle between French and German forces began in February of 1916 and did not end until December of that year. During that time, the shelling between the two armies never stopped. It is estimated that nearly 60 million shells were fired during the battle.

Besides the massive loss of life during that time, with an estimated death toll of at least 300,000, there was also extensive damage to the land on which the battle was fought. The months of shelling destroyed even the trenches in which the men were fighting – one scholar described the ground as “completely churned up.” Without the trenches, men had to seek refuge in whatever small holes remained in the ground. Our front cover picture, taken in 2005, shows one of these battlefields with the ground still cratered from the shells.

Once the war was over, the government of France had to decide what to do with the land. It had once been beautiful farmland, dotted with small villages which had now been destroyed. Now, though, upon inspecting the area, one report gave the following description: “Completely devastated. Damage to properties: 100%. Damage to agriculture: 100%. Impossible to clean. Human life impossible.” It was decided to move all remaining inhabitants out of the area and close it for habitation permanently. Signs were erected reading, “Village Detruit,” meaning “Destroyed Village,” to mark the towns where people had once lived.

The ground in the area, which was then named the Zone Rouge, is still full of ammunition, grenades, human and animal remains, and unexploded shells. In some places, it is estimated there are about 120 shells per acre in the top six inches of soil. Some of those shells still contain deadly poison gas. In the area surrounding the Zone Rouge, a pickup system has been established for farmers to

drop off the shells, barbed wire, shrapnel, and bullets they plough up, which they call the “Iron Harvest.”

Not only the metal, but the chemicals that have leaked out into the soil have caused problems. Although vegetation has sprung up in some places, there are other places where the soil is so full of arsenic that 99% of plants cannot survive.

Such complete devastation is hard to comprehend – a place that is still too dangerous to live in and impossible to clean up, over a hundred years later. But there is another type of devastation that is even worse. That is the devastation of our hearts. The “waste places” of the Bible referred literally to places that had been devastated by war, just like the Zone Rouge; but they also symbolise the hearts and souls of sinners. Our souls have been ruined by sin, just like a wasteland that has been ruined by war. And as the report declared of the Zone Rouge, so it is true of our hearts: “Completely devastated...Impossible to clean.” The Bible says of mankind, *“They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Psalm 14.3).

Is there any hope, then, for those who feel their hearts to be a desolation? Yes, for while men may simply forsake a place, as they did with the Zone Rouge, the Lord will never forsake those He has chosen to be His people. His Word is full of promises to repair such waste places. In Ezekiel 36, He says, *“I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate.”* Isaiah 51.3 tells us, *“For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.”* The Lord, who created life, has the power to renew life again, even in places where death seems to reign. May He show forth His power to restore life in our fallen hearts.

Contributed

AN IRON PILLAR REMOVED

With sadness, we inform our readers of the death of a former Editor, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom. He was Editor of the *Friendly*

Companion from January 1985 to August 1996. Without question, he is better known as the Editor of *The Gospel Standard* magazine, which he was helped to do from 1971 to 2015, apart from a one-year interval (1996-97).

Perhaps Mr. Ramsbottom is much more widely known as the author of many children's books which have been circulated throughout many parts of the world. He also edited numerous other books which have been well received and made a great help to many. Books such as *Six Remarkable Ministers*, *The King's Daughters*, and *The Life of William Gadsby* have been valued by the Lord's living family for the truths they have defined and the experiences they have set forth.

Some lesser-known books that he edited are well worth reading, such as *The Life of A.B. Taylor*, which we found very profitable, along with the book on lesser-known hymnwriters, entitled *Sing Aloud in Jesus' Name*.

The term "*iron pillar*" comes from the prophecy of Jeremiah, where the Lord spoke to him, "*For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land*" (Jeremiah 1.18).

In all his labours, whether in preaching, writing or editing, Mr. Ramsbottom was indeed an "*iron pillar*." His new year messages that commenced the *Gospel Standard* each year were timely, touching on things that were encroaching into the churches, whereby the gospel message was compromised. While filled with warnings, those messages still had spiritual comfort for Satan-tempted, sin-burdened, heavy-laden souls. He laboured as a watchman on Zion's walls for over sixty years. Truly God made him an iron pillar. His death leaves a gap on Zion's walls.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his dear wife and family, with our prayerful desire that the Lord may comfort them each in the season of sorrow.

"Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalm 12.1).

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ENEMIES TRY TO STOP THE WORK**

When the enemies of the Jews heard that the wall around Jerusalem was being built, they mocked them. Sanballat asked if they took the stones out of the heaps of burned rubbish. Tobiah said that if a fox went on their stone wall, it would break.

However, the people *“bad a mind to work.”* Little by little, the wall was joined together. Then their enemies were very angry. They planned to fight against Jerusalem and try to stop the work.

The Jews prayed unto God and set a watch against their enemies day and night. Nehemiah said, *“Be not ... afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight ...”* The people armed themselves with swords, spears and bows. If an enemy attacked in one place, a trumpet was blown for all the Jews to come and fight. The people worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. They worked from the dawn of the morning until the stars appeared at night.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people have a mind to do? (1 word)
2. What did the enemies try to do? (3 words)
3. The Jews set a watch against their enemies __? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. By night.
2. Let us rise up and build.
3. Laughed at the Jews.

Contributed

*“Our God
shall fight
for us.”*

Nehemiah 4.20

BIBLE LESSONS**CITIES OF REFUGE**

Sometimes, when an inheritance is divided between family members, there are some who feel they have not received a fair portion. Such was the case with the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. They came to Joshua with the question, *“Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?”* Even though half of the tribe of Manasseh had received their inheritance on the east side of Jordan, these tribes felt that the portion given to them was too small.

Although they were a great people, they failed to destroy the Canaanites who lived in a large part of their inheritance. They told Joshua that the Canaanites had chariots of iron. Also, they believed that a large part of their land was not habitable, having great forests. Their murmuring was not really against Joshua, but against the Lord who had directed the lot that fell out to them.

Joshua reproved them with their own words: *“If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land ... for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.”* In the end, they would prove that the portion of land God had provided was sufficient for them and had an abundance of natural resources.

With Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh in possession of their land, the time had come for the tabernacle to be moved from Gilgal, where it had been set up after they crossed Jordan. Joshua and the elders of Israel wisely decided on a more central location in the land of Ephraim. The whole congregation came together to move the tabernacle to Shiloh, where it would remain until David removed it to Jerusalem.

For more than forty years, the tabernacle had been a central part of their lives. As the tribes began to take possession of their inheritance, the tabernacle would have less and less of an influence. Lest the people forget God, the Lord had given

commandment by Moses that cities in each tribe were to be given to the Levites to dwell among them. The Levites were chosen to care for the tabernacle and to lead Israel in the worship of God. They also were appointed to teach Israel the laws of God. This work of the Levites became more important as the tribes grew larger and more independent of each other. The things that might separate them must never become greater than the one thing that united them – the worship of the God of Israel.

After appointing forty-eight cities for the Levites to dwell in, Joshua was commanded to appoint six special cities. These cities were called "*cities of refuge.*" Joshua appointed three of them on the east side of Jordan and three on the west side.

In Israel, if a man was killed by another man, whether it was an accident or intentional, the relative of the dead man was to find the man responsible and pursue him to death. This relative was called "*the avenger of blood.*"

If two men were working together in cutting down trees, and the axe-head of one flew off the handle, striking his fellow worker and killing him, he immediately had to flee to a city of refuge. A watchman at the gate of the city must let him enter, while keeping out the avenger of blood.

He would then be judged by the elders of the city, and they would try to determine if he had hated the man he killed. If it was found that he had killed him on purpose, he would be brought out to the avenger of blood and put to death. However, if it was determined that he had not meant to kill the man, he would live in the city of refuge and the avenger of blood could not touch him.

The cities of refuge were well known and marked out clearly, so the fleeing man would have no hindrance in his flight. He must stay in that city until the death of the high priest. After the high priest had died, he could return to his own city and live in peace.

You can read about this in Joshua chapters 17 to 21.

QUESTIONS:

1. Which two tribes were unhappy with their portion of the land?
2. Where was the tabernacle moved to?
3. What one thing was to unite the tribes? (7 words)
4. What were six special cities called?
5. What was the relative of the man who was killed called?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. "Give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day."
2. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah.
3. David.
4. Forty-five years.
5. Shechem.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

(1 Thessalonians 5.2)

The following incident took place in March 1973 (50 years ago) in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Levell. It is slightly shortened here, but the whole account, related in their own words, was in the 2017 spring *Perception* magazine.

Alfred and Lily Levell had gone to bed very tired after a busy day. Lily had more money than usual in her handbag, and she carefully wedged it between the bedside cupboard and bed. She thought, "Anyone would have to wake me up to get that."

During the night, some strange sounds wakened Lily. Through the frosted glass of the bedroom door, she saw a light shining. It was moving around, so she thought it must be a torch (flashlight). Lily said, "There must be someone about – I can see a light."

Lily quickly got out of bed to investigate, but at that moment, the door slowly began to open. As she stood in the doorway, something seemed to rise up before her. It did not appear to have a face, and for a moment, she wondered if she was having a hallucination; but no, it was real, for it slowly rose and walked towards her. It had an oddly-shaped head, with a sort of topknot. The arms were stretched out in front, with things pointing at her. One looked like a torch and the other like some kind of knife. Lily flung herself back on the bed, screaming to waken her husband. She switched on the bed light, for she wanted to see what that strange thing was!

Looking up, she saw a man standing over her with a stocking over his head, so she could not see his face. He held their own carving knife (which must have been taken from a kitchen drawer) a few inches away from her and pointed a pistol at Alfred, who was sitting up by this time. Alfred asked, "What do you want?"

The robber, for such he was, answered, "Well, you know what I want. I want some money." He became impatient and just muttered "**money**" and held the pistol and the carving knife closer to them.

Lily waited with surprising calmness, expecting death at any moment, but the Lord's time was not yet. He stayed the man's hand. Alfred was sorely tempted to shout with a loud voice, but he felt the Lord restrained him. He quietly got out of bed and simply handed over what was in his wallet.

Now, being more awake and having put on her glasses, Lily thought she would have a good look at the man. He said, "Don't you look at me," and he held the pistol and knife more threateningly. She thought, "You are **quite** helpless and you cannot **move** that knife except God permit." A wonderful

calmness stole over her, as she felt quite sure that their God was watching over them. They were not allowed to look at the man at all. If their eyes strayed toward him, he quickly reminded them. The robber implied that he was “down and out.” He asked them not to report the matter, but Alfred said, “It depends on what you have taken.” Lily added, “We shall have to notify our insurance, so the police will have to know.”

He then threw down on the bed four National Savings booklets, saying, “I have only taken these. Are they any good?” Alfred answered, “They are to me, but they are no good whatever to you.”

The robber accepted this, and by this incident, Alfred knew that he must have opened a locked drawer in his study desk to take the booklets. The intruder told them he had been in their house for about four hours (since midnight). He told Alfred that he had seen all his “holy books.” He asked, “You believe in God, don’t you?”

Alfred answered, “Yes, we do.”

The robber said, “I used to go to chapel when I was a boy, and I would sit and cry.” He then asked them to “swear to God” that they would not report the matter until he had time to get away. They agreed to delay phoning the police until after 6 a.m. He thought about tying them up and produced three pairs of Lily’s clean stockings out of his pocket, which he must have taken off the line downstairs.

Alfred said, “We have promised not to ring the police until after 6 a.m., and we shall not. That is my word as a Christian man, and you can rely on it.” So, he did not tie them up but spoke of cutting the telephone wire.

Alfred replied, “There is no need, for we will stick to the promise we made, and it would cause a lot of inconvenience.”

Then, the robber said, “It is all right for you. You believe in God, but there is no hope for me.”

Alfred replied, “No one is beyond God’s mercy.”

Lily thought of the dying thief, which their Pastor had preached about the previous Sunday. She said, "Have you heard of the dying thief?"

He answered, "No."

"You have heard of Jesus, haven't you?"

"Yes."

Then Lily said, "When Jesus was on the cross, there was a thief on either side of Him on a cross also, and they were talking to each other. One said, 'We deserve this, but this Man between us has only been good. He helped people and was kind to them.' Suddenly, that thief realised that Jesus, in between them, was **God**. He prayed to Him, '*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*' Jesus answered him, '*To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*'"

"So, you see," she told the robber, "if you are truly sorry and pray to God, He will forgive you."

By this time, the robber had backed towards the door. He said, "I am afraid I have made an awful mess for you. Will you forgive me? I am very sorry;" adding, "I feel all of a tremble."

Lily felt her spirit within trying to pray for the man. She replied, "If God can forgive you, I'm sure we can," thinking what a lot God had forgiven her. She thought, "Whatever makes **him** tremble? It must be God!" So, with that thought in mind, she said very firmly, "**God can see you.**"

He said, "Can He?"

She answered, "Oh yes, God can see **you** and God can see **us**" (feeling so very thankful about that). "God can see everything, and He knows what you are going to do. God knows what everybody does."

The robber listened silently. Alfred had been secretly praying that he would go away quietly. He said, "If you go downstairs, you can open the front door and let yourself out. Just give it a little bang, so we know it is shut." The robber did exactly that. From the bedroom window, Alfred saw the robber go out the front gate, walk along the road, go up over the railway bridge

and out of sight. Later, their carving knife and Lily's stockings were found on the front lawn.

Afterwards, they found the study, next to the bedroom, littered with papers. Near the door was Lily's handbag. The contents had been strewn all over, but only money and stamps were gone. The man must have gone into their bedroom while they were fast asleep and taken her handbag. She then realised how wrong it was to think she could look after it herself, instead of asking for God's care and protection. Things were also strewn all over the living room floor. A deed box had been pried open and everything turned out, but somehow the robber had missed fifteen pounds that was in it.

Their son David had remained asleep upstairs during the whole episode. After he was wakened, they all three sat down amid the clutter, and Alfred gave thanks, for not a hair of their heads had been touched.

Their Pastor's text later that same evening was, "*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD*" (Psalm 130.1). He knew nothing of what had taken place until afterwards.

A few days later, Lily opened her Bible on Psalm 18 verse 48: "*Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.*" How true she felt this to be! The Lord had truly watched over and protected them in a time of great danger.

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (3)

"And the LORD, He it is that doth go before thee"

(Deuteronomy 31.8).

As Naomi and Ruth travelled towards Bethlehem Judah, they must have been deep in thought, not knowing what sort of reception they would have. For Naomi, she had left "*full*" – that is, she had her husband, two sons and sufficient means to get by. She now came back "*empty*." Nearly everything had been taken away from her. What would the people think of her? For Ruth, she was coming to Bethlehem for the very first time, to a people unknown to her. Would she be welcomed? Would she

be a burden to Naomi? She was, after all, from Moab, who were enemies to the children of Israel. What would happen to her? We know the outcome of events, but for Naomi and Ruth, they just did not know what would happen! Yet, both of them looked by faith to the Lord God of Israel, that He would go before them and supply all their needs.

As they entered the town of Bethlehem, people were looking at them and questioning: *“So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?”* (Ruth 1.19). We wonder if Naomi was well-known in the town before her departure. But now, people were wondering if this was the same person. Obviously, she was older, but now she wore the garment of a widow. She looked very sad, troubled, anxious, and perhaps embarrassed about her situation. Naomi confirmed that it was she, Naomi, who had left some time before to escape the famine, but had now returned. *“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?”* (verses 20, 21) The name “Naomi” means “pleasant,” whereas the name “Mara” means “bitter.” So we see why Naomi requested that change of name.

There may be times in our lives when we make mistakes – who does not? We may try to run away from trouble, problems or situations. It may be, as the common proverb states, “the grass is greener on the other side.” Yet, in trying to escape, nothing but sorrow and distress comes upon us. We regret taking that step or going to that place. May the Lord grant us that same grace as Naomi to return, and to return with a broken and humble spirit. We may find it embarrassing or humiliating to go back. It may well have been that Naomi did not go out of Bethlehem prayerfully, but surely she came back prayerfully. If we went out without the Lord’s consent, or never asked the Lord to go before us, or, even worse, **presumed** the Lord was with

us, we can still ask the Lord to be very gracious and merciful as we make our way back.

Chapter one ends by mentioning the beginning of barley harvest, and chapter two begins with the first mention of the man Boaz and that he was a relative of Elimelech. Both Boaz and the time of harvest would be very significant in the unfolding of events concerning these two widows.

The gathering in of the harvest would have been a very laborious task, involving many people. Unlike today, there was no machinery to assist in this. Ruth, being very industrious, asked permission from her mother-in-law to go and see if she could find a field where she would be permitted to glean during the harvest. The Lord had said, *“When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands”* (Deuteronomy 24.19). Gleaners were allowed to gather up the grain that was dropped. No doubt, Ruth had many fears about whether she would be received and how she might be treated. Back at home, Naomi must have followed her with many prayers. She would be very concerned to know how Ruth got on and if anybody would allow her to glean.

“And her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz.” That is what we might call “divine providence.” Ruth went out looking for a place to glean in a field after the reapers. It was a very menial, exhausting task, but Ruth would have been thankful to obtain food for Naomi and herself. God so ordered it that the field she came to was the very one owned by Boaz, but Boaz was not present when she first arrived. After the reapers had cut down the barley, it would be tied up in bundles, but several barley heads would fall to the ground in the process. These would be gathered up by gleaners. Nothing was wasted.

When young people commence employment, they usually start in a low position, having others over them. They are often

given some of the more menial tasks to do. Pride can be hurt when a person is asked to perform the least important tasks or things that nobody else is willing to do.

One lesson we can learn from Ruth is that she was a very diligent, conscientious, hard worker, even though gleaning was arduous work. The servant over the reapers gave a very favourable report of Ruth to Boaz when he arrived to see how the harvest was going. We do not know what the other workers and gleaners said about Ruth, or whether they were kind to her or not. However, they must have noticed that she did her very best. What we read in Ecclesiastes 9 verse 10 was most certainly true of Ruth. *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”* May it be so of each one of us, whether in education, employment or at home.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 13

Isaiah chapter 47 clearly prophesies the fall of Babylon and the Chaldeans. In it there are warnings to all, showing how the Lord will punish for sin. In particular, God shows how Babylon has sinned in her complacency, even daring to proclaim herself god above all. Twice this is recorded:

Verse 8: *“Therefore bear now this, thou ... that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me”*

Verse 10: *“For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said ... I am, and none else beside me.”* What a desolate end for Babylon is prophesied at the close of the chapter: “None shall save thee” (verse 15).

The prophecy then turns to the future for the Jews in chapter 48. The Lord does not exonerate His people in any way, but again refers to their obstinacy, impudence and idolatry (verses 1-8). Then in verse 9, He clearly gives the reason for the promise of their deliverance: *“For My name’s sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.”* Then follows a wonderful declaration of His electing

love, which has been blessed to many of those who have had to walk the path: *“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction”* (verse 10). This is followed by yet further confirmation of the future deliverance: *“For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another”* (verse 11).

The remainder of chapter 48 is a confirmation of what the Lord would do in delivering the Jews from their Babylonish captivity. It begins in verses 12 and 13 with a reminder of whom their God is: the Creator, then in verse 17: *“thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”* The continuation of the Word in verse 17 says: *“I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”* The chapter ends with a short, but salutary, declaration: *“There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked”* (verse 22).

In chapter 49, the Holy Spirit moves His servant Isaiah to prophesy of Christ. This is one of the more frequently visited passages in Isaiah. Certainly, the language is inspired and inspiring; the content reaches to heaven itself: *“They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them”* (verse 10). See also very similar words in Revelation 7.16, 17.

The closing verses are specifically for those in captivity: *“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob”* (verses 24-26). What a powerful end to this chapter! Surely there is hope for poor captives.

Perhaps the most precious part of the chapter for sinners is verses 14 to 17 in the middle. After the joyful notes of verse 13,

the prophet turns to sombre reality in verse 14: *“But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.”* What better than a glimpse of a crucified Saviour to cheer these mourning souls: *“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me”* (verse 16).

Then, verses 18 to 23 speak wondrous promises which really signify the rebuilding of spiritual Zion. What a scene is depicted of blood-bought children coming to Zion here below! *“Thus saith the LORD God, Behold I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me”* (verses 22, 23).

Chapter 50, though short, tells first of sinners: *“Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away”* (verse 1). Then the Saviour comes: *“Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?”* (verse 2). Verses 3 to 9, which follow, can all be taken as the voice of the Lord Jesus Himself. In verse 3, there is a hint of His power in His deity. In verse 4, we have a glimpse of Jesus as the great Teacher (see also chapter 48 verse 17 above). Verses 5 and 6 tell of His willingness to obey His holy Father’s will and the spite He would endure as a consequence of His obedience in suffering for His people. Verses 7, 8 and 9 tell of His confidence and trust in God the Father to help Him. Then verse 10 invites a poor sinner walking in darkness to put his trust *“in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”* A solemn warning concludes the chapter regarding those who walk in sparks of their own kindling.

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about NEW THINGS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What does Paul say a man in Christ is? What becomes new unto him? (2 Corinthians 5.17)
2. When Elisha healed the waters of Jericho, what did he command the men of the city to bring to him? What did he put in it? (2 Kings 2.20)
3. What does the opening verses of Psalm 96 and 98 tell us to do? (Psalm 96.1 and Psalm 98.1)
4. What does Jeremiah say are new? How often are they new? (Lamentations 3.22, 23)
5. What two things does the Lord say He will create? (Isaiah 65.17)
6. In John 13, what new commandment did Jesus give to His disciples?
7. In Ezekiel 36 what did the Lord say He would give? What would He put within His people?
8. In Hebrews 9, the Lord Jesus is said to be a Mediator of what? (Hebrews 9.15)
9. In Hebrews 10, believers enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by what? (Hebrews 10.20)
10. In Revelation 2, Jesus said that to him that overcometh, He would give to eat of hidden manna and give him a white stone with what written upon it?

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Every bird of every sort.
2. As a bird to your mountain.
3. Hasteth to the snare.
4. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.
5. A speckled bird. They are against her.
6. The sparrow. The swallow. (Psalm 84.3)
7. A pelican of the wilderness, an owl of the desert, and a sparrow alone upon the house top. (Psalm 102.6,7)
8. Many sparrows. (Matthew 10.31)
9. The dove. (Genesis 8.9)
10. The ravens. (1 Kings 17.6)

DIVINE PROTECTION

It is a word proved true;
It makes rebellion cease;
"The LORD shall fight for you,
And ye shall hold your peace."

Fear not to stand quite still
Though enemies surround;
They cannot reach to kill
For this is holy ground.

No need to cry aloud
Or fear the foe's great might;
The pillar of the cloud
Shall hide thee from their sight.

The waters are before,
But God will them divide;
And to the further shore
Thou shalt in safety ride.

Then shall thy tongue be free
And songs of triumph sing;
All glory Lord to Thee,
My Saviour and my King.

R.J.B. – Friendly Companion 1968

The

Friendly Companion



“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am
alive for evermore, Amen.”
(Revelation 1.18)

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

This month, there will be many services around the world to remember the death of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection. Satan had an evil design in the death of Christ. However, God had a higher purpose in it. What Joseph said regarding the evil dealings of his brothers and the overruling hand of God, must be said of Satan's work in the crucifixion, *"Ye thought evil ... but God meant it unto good"* (Genesis 50.20).

In the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world. All of mankind, whether religious or irreligious, know that they will depart (die) at some time. Only Jesus knew the very hour when He would depart. He not only knew the hour, but He knew the way in which He would depart.

There were times in the ministry of the Lord Jesus when His enemies sought to kill Him, but His hour was not yet come. The day, the hour, even the very minute that He would depart was known by Him. He knew that the way of His departing would be through great suffering, agony and sorrow. Yet, *"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"* (Hebrews 12.2). For Jesus to depart from this world meant the joy, blessing and the perfection of heaven; a place free of sin, sorrow and shame.

When we depart from this world, we leave behind our relatives and friends, or if they depart, we are left behind. When Jesus departed, He told His disciples, *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28.20). How can this be? The Lord Jesus told His disciples, *"It is expedient" – necessary – "for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter" – Holy Spirit – "will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you"* (John 16.7). By the Holy Spirit being sent unto His people, the Lord Jesus was still abiding with them.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi that he was in a strait (bewildered state) because he had a desire to depart

and be with Christ in heaven, yet he felt it necessary to remain on earth for a time for the preaching of Christ and the building up of the church. Some years later, he wrote to Timothy that the time of his departure was at hand. He was expecting it very soon. He was not troubled at the thought of it, but rather, he was longing for it. He knew that he had finished his course and had the joy and expectation of all the fulness of heaven.

May the Lord prepare us each for the time of our departure from this world.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE THE COBBLER'S SHOE ANVIL

My siblings and I recently met up to clear out our late dear father's garage. Dad was a very practical man, would turn his hand to most things and had a large selection of tools. As we cleared the workbench, I pulled out from beneath it an antique cobbler's shoe anvil – with one of the three “feet” broken off (as shown in the photograph on the front cover). Immediately, childhood memories flooded back, and both of my siblings who were present, when they saw it, recounted separately to me the events leading to the loss of the third foot. There had been a lesson in it, not only to my dear dad, but it had clearly stuck in the minds of his children, and it is worth sharing.

Dad had inherited this cobbler's shoe anvil from his father and regularly used it for repairing his family's shoes, so that he became very efficient at these repairs. Whenever a heel or sole started to come off, Dad would take the shoe to his shed, get out the old anvil, and placing the shoe over the correct “foot,” he would tack it back on, and return the shoe mended to us.

However, there came the day when a nail was protruding through the sole of a shoe, needing the use of the anvil and hammer, and Dad took the shoe to his shed to use the anvil and do this – but it was on the Lord's day!

Maybe we are each guilty of having done something similar; maybe some will say it is a small thing, but God knows the

thoughts that go with our actions, and others do not. Jesus said, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone”* (John 8.7).

The Lord’s eye was upon Dad, and as a loving father corrects his child, He put forth His hand: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”* (Revelation 3.19). As soon as Dad started to use the anvil, the heavy cast iron broke! Dad, who had a tender conscience, straight away put the anvil and tools aside and left the shoe unrepaired for the Lord’s day, confessing to his family (and no doubt within himself, to the Lord) that he should not have turned to his tools on the Lord’s day: *“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work”* (Exodus 20.8).

God’s ways are perfect, and Job says, *“Who teacheth like Him?”* I was not old enough to recall the event occurring, but this damaged anvil continued to be used by Dad throughout my childhood. I used to watch him repairing shoes in his shed, struggling to balance the damaged anvil: the anvil was designed with three feet, so that there were always two on the bench to support and steady it while working on the third foot, but now with only two feet remaining, it had become unsteady to use.

Each foot on the anvil is a different size and shape, and the one which had become Dad’s favourite to work with was that which had broken off: there was a punishment for the sin and some of Dad’s comments made to me in the shed, show me that he humbly acknowledged the truth of those lines of Gadsby’s hymn 315.

Just His judgments, fit His rod
To correct our folly.

When God corrects by way of a punishment, this is referred to in the Scripture as “to chasten” or “chastening,” and when the Lord “chastens” His children, it is in love, such that it is a blessing if we know something of the Scripture: *“I will be his*

Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him” (2 Samuel 7.14).

We see time and again the Lord’s children being taught the value of the Lord’s correcting hand. Job was taught this: *“Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5.17).* Then again, we see the teaching David received: *“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose” (Psalm 25.12).*

If we turn to the New Testament, we find the Apostle Paul in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews saying, *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, 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. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (verses 5-7)*

But then we have the warning that follows: *“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (verse 8).* This is a solemn warning. The word “bastard” in the Bible is used to describe one who is not a child within the marriage of Christ and His church – one that is out of the secret, not taught of the Lord – a most solemn character, and we might solemnly say, one that is not one of God’s elect people.

Well might we sing with Mr. Joseph Hart, one of our hymn-writers (Gadsby’s hymn 872):

His chastening, therefore, prize,
The privilege of a saint;
Their hearts are hard who that despise,
And theirs too weak who faint.

The prayer of Jeremiah is left on record for us to plead: *“O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10.24).*

R. Saunders

RESISTING TEMPTATION

Striker Stowe was the head workman in the large steel works at Glasgow. He held the position of “boss striker” in those works. All the men in the foundry were hard drinkers. Stowe himself had been one of them for many years. However, one day it was announced among the workmen that Stowe had become a Christian and had joined the church.

The next time one of the men asked him to drink, his reply was, “No, my lads, I shall never drink any more strong drink. The Bible says that no drunkard ‘*shall inherit the kingdom of God*’” (1 Corinthians 6.10).

The men smiled at each other when they heard this. They said, “Wait till hot weather comes. When he gets as dry as dust, he will give in. He cannot help it.”

But right through the hottest summer weather, Stowe worked away till the sweat poured off him in streams; yet he never touched a drop of strong drink.

One day, the superintendent of the works said to him, “Well, Stowe, you used to drink a good deal of strong drink. Don’t you miss it?”

“Yes, I do.”

“But how do you manage to get on without it?”

“I will tell you. See, there is my almanac. From seven to eight o’clock this morning, I asked the Lord to help me to resist this temptation to drink. He did so. Then I put a dot in my almanac. From eight to nine He helped me, and I put down another dot. Just as I put it down, I prayed, ‘O Lord, help me another hour.’ So I go on through the day, and it keeps me full of peace and joy to think that the Lord is near, helping me all the time.”

Here we see how beautifully the promise of the text, “*I will help thee*” (Isaiah 41.10), was fulfilled in this man’s case, as the Lord helped him to resist temptation. One chief way in which we need the help of God is in resisting temptations.

Cheering Words 1989-90

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE WALL IS FINISHED**

The enemies of the Jews tried to make them afraid. They wanted to weaken their hands, so they could not finish the wall. Four times, they asked Nehemiah to meet with them in one of the villages outside of Jerusalem. They wanted to hurt him, but Nehemiah refused to go, saying, *"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come."*

Then Sanballat sent a letter, saying that Nehemiah was planning to make himself king. Nehemiah answered that it was not true, and Sanballat had made it up.

Next, Nehemiah was told to hide in the temple and shut the doors, for his enemies would come to slay him in the night. Nehemiah would not listen to them. He said, *"Should such a man as I flee?"*

Finally, the wall was finished, and Nehemiah set up the doors. When their enemies saw this, they were sad. *"They perceived that this work was wrought of our God."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the enemies of Jews try to make them?
2. What did Nehemiah say he was doing? (3 words)
3. What did they say Nehemiah was planning to do?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Work.
2. Stop the work.
3. Day and night.

Contributed

*“O God,
strengthen
my
hands.”*

Nehemiah 6.9

BIBLE LESSONS**THE ALTAR OF WITNESS**

The promise that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the land of Canaan would be given to them and their seed was finally fulfilled, although a few centuries later. When each of the tribes had taken possession of their part of Canaan, Joshua appointed a number of cities within each tribe for the Levites to dwell in. Even on the east side of Jordan, where the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had their possessions, cities were appointed for the Levites to live among them.

Joshua called for the men of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh to come before him that he might send them away to their possessions on the east side of Jordan. Joshua commended them for obeying all that both he and Moses had commanded. The long-awaited time had come when they could return to their wives and families. The rest of their brethren had their part of Canaan in possession.

In dismissing them, Joshua lovingly charged them to do the commandment and the law as Moses had spoken, *“to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”* The Levites who were sent to dwell among them were to remind them of all God’s commandments.

In overthrowing all the kings and their cities, the children of Israel had gathered abundant riches of cattle, silver, gold, brass and iron, along with clothing. Joshua divided the spoils between the tribes. Thus, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh did not return empty. They, too, were to have their share of all that was accumulated.

What joy the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh must have felt as they made their way back to their families on the east side of Jordan! No doubt, it was with a mixture of sorrow also, in that they were leaving Joshua and the tabernacle of the congregation behind. They began to think of what might

happen in years to come, when their generation had passed away. Then, perhaps, the children of their brethren in the land of Canaan might say to their children, "Ye have no part with us in serving the Lord." Thus, before they crossed over Jordan, the men from these two-and-a-half tribes built an altar, "*a great altar to see,*" that resembled the altar before the tabernacle on which the priest offered burnt sacrifices unto God.

When the news of this altar reached Joshua and the rest of Israel, they gathered together at Shiloh and prepared to go to war against the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. Before taking action, they wisely sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, and ten princes with him to enquire of the two-and-a-half tribes why they would sin against the Lord in turning away from His commandment. The altar that was before the tabernacle at Shiloh was the only place that God allowed for the sacrifices to be offered. The Lord had spoken to Israel, "*Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.*" (Leviticus 17,8,9)

Phinehas reminded the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh how on a former occasion when Israel sinned, the Lord slew twenty-four thousand of them. Likewise, when Achan disobeyed, the whole of Israel suffered a solemn defeat.

Then the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh answered Phinehas and the princes, saying that God knoweth if they had made the altar to rebel against Him, or rather as a witness to the rest of Israel that though they were so far off from the other tribes, yet they were still part of Israel and could point to the altar and say, "*Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between us and you.*"

How pleased Phinehas and the princes were at these words! They answered, "*This day we perceive that the LORD is among*

us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the band of the LORD."

The children of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh called the altar *"Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God."*

You can read about this in Joshua chapters 21 verses 41 to 45 and chapter 22.

QUESTIONS:

1. When each tribe had their possession, Joshua appointed cities in each tribe for whom?
2. What did the altar resemble that the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh built? (5 words)
3. Before going to war against the two-and-a-half tribes, who did Joshua send to them?
4. What response did they give when they heard the reason the altar was built? (10 words)
5. What name did the children of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh give to the altar? What was the witness given? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Manasseh and Ephraim.
2. Shiloh.
3. The worship of the God of Israel.
4. Cities of refuge.
5. The avenger of blood.

He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

Corrie ten Boom

THE CROSS APPOINTED

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16.24). These are the words of our Lord Himself. *“His cross”* is the expression used to signify the trial or sorrow, whatever it may be, appointed by God. Our salvation was procured by the death of Christ; it is by His stripes that we are healed, but suffering of some sort is appointed for all with whom God dealeth as with sons, *“for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth”* (Hebrews 12.6). It is not left to us to choose our own cross. We are called to bear what the Lord appoints for us, because it is His will and must therefore be best for us. Perhaps we all acknowledge this in words, but are we not too prone to murmur, and to regard the lot of others as easier to bear than our own? In Psalm 73, Asaph confesses that in considering the prosperity of the wicked, his feet had *“well-nigh slipped.”*

Some who are almost in despair from sorrow of heart imagine that they could bear bodily suffering if it were accompanied by mental peace. Others who are racked with pain think that if they had health and strength, they would never murmur. Some have riches and honour, but have been deprived by death of the dearest objects of their affections. When they see others who are poor in this world’s wealth surrounded by children, relatives or friends, they think they would willingly part with houses and lands, if they could have the cherished beings they have lost instead.

To all who are comparing their own lot with others, our Lord’s rebuke to Peter seems applicable: *“What is that to thee? follow thou Me”* (John 21.22). Were we permitted to penetrate the mystery of God’s providential dealings with His creatures, every Christian would be convinced that the lot He has chosen for us is far easier, as well as wiser and better than our own folly and blindness would choose. This truth is well illustrated in the following story.

An industrious, God-fearing carpenter set out one summer day from the town where he dwelt, to carry to a gentleman’s

house some work that he had finished, and for which he expected to be well paid. He had laboured very hard to get it done quickly, for his wife was in delicate health, and he wished with the money to procure some additional comforts for her. The way was long and his burden heavy, and he felt much fatigued, for the day was very warm.

As he passed through a wood, he felt a strong inclination to lie down under the shade of the trees and sleep for a little while. However, he debated about whether or not to do so, for his children were very young, and he feared his wife might need some assistance with them. The grass looked soft and inviting under the canopy of the trees, the birds sang sweetly, and the perfume of the fresh hay in a neighbouring meadow was so refreshing that he decided that half an hour's rest would strengthen him to go with double speed afterwards. He lay down, full of thoughts of his wife and children, and that he should like to have money enough to hire a young girl to attend upon them. He thought how little it would cost, and how hard it was that he could not afford such an indulgence, while his neighbour, who did not work more than three days in the week and whose wife was strong and healthy, was able to keep a servant.

But the carpenter could not long give way to such thoughts without perceiving their sinful lack of submission. He soon became aware of how far he was giving way to envy, and after a short prayer for forgiveness, he drew a book from his pocket and began to read. It was a portion of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a favourite work of his. As he became interested in the story, sleep gradually stole over him, and as he slept, he dreamed.

In his dream, he saw a pilgrim carrying a heavy cross. The pilgrim seemed very unhappy and overburdened. At last, he raised his eyes to heaven, saying with a deep sigh, "Oh, Father, I know Thou hast appointed to every one born of woman some cross that he must carry. I am content to do so, but this is too heavy for me. I shall sink under its weight before I reach the

end of my journey. Do but give me one proportioned to my strength, and I will carry it thankfully and cheerfully.”

The pilgrim seemed immediately caught up into the clouds by an invisible hand, and placed in a chamber where crosses of various sizes and different materials were placed all around, while a voice said, “You are permitted to choose your own cross.”

The pilgrim seemed well pleased, and at once began to examine them. One that looked very large seemed, notwithstanding its size, to be very light, being made of the most beautiful flowers and blossoms. He laid hold of it, but his hands were instantly covered with blood; the thorns were so numerous and so strong that his fingers were torn by them.

He then drew near to one that looked small and was made of gold, studded with precious stones. The pilgrim thought that would suit him well, being so small and so beautiful; but when he tried to raise it, he staggered and nearly fell, it was so heavy. Thus, he went round and found nothing to suit him. Some crosses were much too large, some too heavy, and some badly shaped.

When he thought he had examined all of them, he said, “I must look through them once more. There must, among so many, be one to fit me.” As he went round the second time, he saw one that he had overlooked in his first round, and taking it up, he found it suited him better than any he had tried. When he went out of the room, he stopped to examine the cross he had chosen. He was astonished to find it the very same cross he had complained about and wished to reject!

His exclamation of surprise awakened the carpenter, who, on rubbing his eyes, saw that he was under the tree where he had fallen asleep, his book lying beside him, having dropped from his hand. He thanked God for the refreshment of sleep and went on his way rejoicing in the instruction derived from John Bunyan’s dream and from his own.

E.M.P. – The Little Gleaner 1889

BURDENS

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened” (2 Corinthians 5.4)

John Newton once wrote, “I compare the troubles which we have to undergo in the course of the year to a great bundle of fagots (sticks), far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole bundle at once. He mercifully unties the bundle, and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today, and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow, and so on. This we might easily manage, if we would only take the burden appointed for us each day; but we choose to increase our troubles by carrying yesterday’s stick over again today, and by adding tomorrow’s burden to our load, before we are required to bear it!”

We are indeed subject to much trouble and many burdens. Yet, we often increase our load by assuming unnecessarily that which God has not laid upon us by refusing to forget “those things which are behind,” and by anticipating those for which the promised grace has not yet been provided. Yes, there are certain burdens which must be borne, but these are much more easily endured when we have first taken the inspired advice of the psalmist and cast ourselves upon the Lord’s mercy. *“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee”* (Psalm 55.22). Strengthened by His sustaining hand, we shall find His yoke “easy” and His burden “light”!

Burdens, too, can often be stepping stones. A biologist tells how he watched an ant carrying a large piece of straw. The ant came to a crack in the earth which was too wide for it to cross. It stood for a time as though pondering the situation; then it put the straw across the crack and walked over upon it. What a lesson! The burden can become a bridge for spiritual progress if we endeavour to live by God’s help.

Upon the Lord thy burden cast,
To Him bring all thy care;
He will sustain and hold thee fast,
And give thee strength to bear.

Our Daily Bread

SHALL WE CHANGE THE LABEL?

A minister preached a sermon that dwelt upon sin and misery. One man was upset and came to see him. The man said, "Sir, you should not preach so strongly about sin. That will scare our young people away. That is not healthy preaching."

The minister left the room and came back with a bottle. The label was written in large red and black letters. It said, "**Poison – Caution – Fatal if swallowed!**"

"I think I should change the label on this bottle, don't you?" asked the minister. "Maybe I should just call it something which sounds nicer."

"No!" said the visitor. "People have to know how dangerous that poison is!"

"I agree," said the minister, "and so it is with sin."

Adapted from 3,000 Illustrations for Christian Service

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (4)

"But my God shall supply all your need."

While Ruth was busy in the field gleaning, an important man came. He was the owner of that field and had come to see how the harvest was going. He surveyed the scene and all the workers. Then he took special interest in one of the gleaners. There may have been several gleaners labouring together, but Boaz showed an unusual interest in this one: it was Ruth, the Moabitess. He questioned the man who had the oversight of the reapers, "*Whose damsel is this?*" We do not really know the motive behind his question, but it may be that, having heard about Naomi and Ruth, he wondered if this was Ruth the Moabitess! If so, then his thoughts were confirmed. "*And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab*" (Ruth 2.6). He also informed Boaz that she was a very diligent gleaner. Boaz then called Ruth unto him and spoke so kindly. "*Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from*

hence, but abide here fast by my maidens" (verse 8). Boaz was now telling her that she was to stay working in his fields, and he would take care of her.

The Lord has sometimes used this text to instruct His people to stay in a certain place, whether at a chapel, a house or place of employment. It is a very blessed thing to know we have the Lord's gracious approbation in any place that we may be found. Whatever difficulty or trouble we may come into, we not only know that we are in our right place, but also may appeal to the Lord for His promised help. Naomi may have had difficulty feeling this when she was in Moab, knowing that she should never have been in that place.

What a reply Ruth gave to Boaz! *"Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"* (verse 10). Ruth may have first feared that this man would cast her out of his field or treat her harshly, as she was from Moab (Moab being an enemy of Israel). But, no; he spoke with such kindness!

May it be our great concern to find grace in the sight of the Lord. Moses spoke of this in Exodus 33, *"For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth"* (verse 16). If we have found grace in the sight of God, then we shall be blessed with grace in our hearts, causing us to be separated (by grace) from those in the world. Ruth had been separated from her own people in Moab, and now the God-given grace in her heart, being shown in her life, recommends her to Boaz.

The true grace of God in the hearts of His people will always cause a change: a real separation from the world, its pursuits, fashions, sports and many such-like things. Yet, there will also be a seeking to be found amongst the people of God, following the ways of God, and finding a sweet union to those who also have found grace in the sight of God.

What a reply Boaz gave to Ruth! *“It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust”* (verses 11, 12). It was not that Ruth left Moab for a better life in Israel, but she sought to be a true worshipper of the Lord God and put her whole trust in Him. Really, it was the work of faith – God-given faith – whereby she forsook all to be a humble follower of the Lord, believing in His precious Word, committing all to Him, and looking to Him to supply all her needs. Surely, Ruth felt that she was being accepted, and the Lord had gone before her thus far, being very gracious to her. Her hope was that the Lord would yet be mindful of her.

It is a beautiful expression, *“under whose wings thou art come to trust.”* May it be so with us. However poor, weak, sinful and unworthy we may feel to be, may we be given that same faith to venture unto Him, to fall down before Him and cast ourselves under the shadow of His wings.

Boaz was a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, meaning that there were many things in the character of Boaz that would be found more perfectly in the Lord Jesus. As Boaz was very kind to Ruth, who had come to glean in his field, so the Lord Jesus is also very kind to all poor sinners who come to glean in His gospel field.

A.T. Pickett

CHASTENED BY THE HAND OF A LOVING FATHER

God's children are not all chastened with the same rod, but they are all chastened by the same **hand**. They are not all corrected in the same **way**, but they are all corrected by the same wise, holy and loving heavenly Father.

Sower 1885

*BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES***THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 14**

Isaiah chapter 51 ushers in a line of prophecy which continues more or less unabated until the end of the book. Again and again, there is set before us the contrast between the low state of Israel in captivity, her being brought out of it, and the glories of the Lord's blessing upon her in the gospel dispensation, at times touching upon the glory of heaven itself.

Thus, how appropriate and commanding are the opening words of chapter 51: *"Hearken to me."*

Dear young friends, it will be well for you (and all of us) to consider the message in verses 1 and 2. Of course, not all can look on God-fearing parents: that is not a prerequisite for salvation – never. Yet, we are instructed to consider how the Lord has called out and blessed those who have gone before. Then immediately there is a promise: *"For the LORD shall comfort Zion"* (verse 3). It is remarkable that reference is made to Eden here, that first perfect garden which Adam and Eve had to leave because of their disobedience.

Again in verse 4, the Lord says: *"Hearken unto Me, My people,"* and yet again in verse 7: *"Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness."* Surely then, we should take heed and listen carefully to what follows! The Lord speaks, as it were, to Himself: *"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; as in the ancient days"* (verse 9). He reminds His people of the great deliverance wrought so long ago in bringing them out of Egypt and how He will do the same again for His redeemed: *"Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion"* (verse 11).

The next few verses (12-15) are directly addressed to those who are afraid of man, of the fury of the oppressor, of dying in the pit. *"I, even I, am He that comforteth you"* (verse 12); then: *"But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is His name"* (verse 15). Verse 16 gives sweet intimation of what Christ will do for Zion. From verse 17 to the end, there is a remarkable prophecy of what the

Lord will do for His suffering people. It begins with another rousing call: *“Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem.”* O what deliverance is promised to Jerusalem in verse 22: *“Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, and thy God, that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again.”* These verses so graphically describe how low the inhabitants of Jerusalem had to be brought before their deliverance. *“Thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over”* (verse 23).

The next chapter (52) begins with another rousing call: *“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion.”* This is literally a call to the Lord’s delivered people to get up from the ground where they have been forced to lie, as spelt out in verse 2: *“Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”* Then, twice we have the foundation for this exhortation given in verse 2: *“For thus saith the LORD”* (verse 3); *“Thus saith the Lord GOD”* (verse 4).

Another glimpse of the people’s suffering is revealed in verse 5: *“They that rule over them make them to howl.”*

One of the most well-known and loved gospel promises is then uttered: *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* (verse 7). How we long, even today, for the performance of the word in verse 8: *“For they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.”* These things will indeed merit the song of praise introduced in verse 9: *“Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem.”*

The Lord then commands His servants in verses 11 and 12, including the exhortation: *“Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.”*

The last three verses of chapter 52 seem to belong more to chapter 53, as the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings becomes

the wonderful subject of the prophecy: *“As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men”* (verse 14).

Isaiah chapter 53 has perhaps been read more than any other in this prophecy. It was the place where the eunuch was reading on his return journey to Ethiopia (Acts 8).

Dear young friends, in reading the books of prophecy in the Word of God, do you ever have questions arise in your minds? The Ethiopian eunuch did, and he asked Philip (whom God had sent to him): *“I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”* May you and I be given by the Holy Spirit such a spirit of enquiry. The eunuch was well answered and rewarded: *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”* (Acts 8.35).

Do read this chapter through, and may the Holy Spirit apply the Word to your hearts! This will do more than any words of mine.

I will just quote from one verse of this sacred chapter: *“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied”* (verse 11). This is a complete promise of the perfect salvation wrought out for His people by the glorious Redeemer.

In closing, I realise that, God willing, it will be the lovely month of April when you read this. There is a short anthem which is very fitting for the Subject of this chapter, and it goes like this: *“All in an April evening ... I thought on the Lamb of God.”*

Brian Mercer

NEEDFUL TRIALS

Temptations and tribulations will shake us to the root; yet without them we can no more grow than herbs or corn without rain.

Sower 1880

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about CORRECTION. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. The man whom God correcteth is said to be what? (Job 5.17)
2. The Bible tells us we should not be ___ of God's correction? (Proverbs 3.11)
3. What does the Bible tell us about those whom the Lord correcteth? (Proverbs 3.12)
4. With what does God correct man? And for what? (Psalm 39.11)
5. From whom is correction not to be withheld? (Proverbs 23.13)
6. In Proverbs 15, what is correction said to be to him that forsaketh the way?
7. In Proverbs 29, a son who is corrected will give what two things?
8. What will the rod of correction do to the foolishness that is bound in the heart of a child? (Proverbs 22)
9. Why did the Lord say to His ancient people in Jeremiah 2 that He had smitten their children in vain?
10. In 2 Timothy 3, what did Paul say was profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness?

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. A new creature. All things.
2. A new cruse. Salt.
3. Sing unto the Lord a new song.
4. Every morning.
5. New heavens and a new earth.
6. That ye love one another. (John 13.34)
7. A new heart. A new spirit. (Ezekiel 36.26)
8. New testament. (Hebrews 9.15)
9. A new and living way. (Hebrews 10.20)
10. A new name. (Revelation 2.17)

THE SEARCHER OF HEARTS

Great God, and can it really be,
My secret thoughts are known to Thee;
Those thoughts which angels cannot scan,
And hidden are from prying man?

Naked and open to Thy eyes
Each secret of my bosom lies;
Nor can I speak, nor aught can do,
But it is open to Thy view.

My past and present sins appear
Before Thee always plain and clear,
The darkness of the deepest night
Hides nothing from Thy piercing sight,

And shall I always guilty stand,
Condemned for sins on every hand?
Is there no way that I can be
From sin and guilt accounted free?

“Sinner, there’s naught can do thee good,
Or sins remit, but Jesus’ blood;
There virtue is in that alone,
That only could for guilt atone.

“That thou mayest not for ever die,
The Holy Spirit must apply
The virtue of that precious blood;
For nothing else can do thee good.”

A.H. Friendly Companion 1949

The

Friendly Companion



“For Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all
people.”
(Isaiah 56.7)

May 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By J.R. Rutt

(A divine charge to children and young people)

My dear young friends,

This divine charge is found in Ecclesiastes 12.1: *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”* “Now” is very much the operative word here. God is our Creator. I understand that in the original Hebrew it says “Creators” in the plural. The reason for this is that it refers to the three Persons in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We read in 1 John 5.7: *“These Three are One.”* One blessed, infinite, almighty LORD Jehovah.

In Psalm 33, we read, *“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”* God did not have to do anything except speak, and it was done. Nine times in Genesis 1 we read, *“And God said.”*

We read in 2 Corinthians 4.6, *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

It is one thing to know God as our Creator and another thing to know Him as our Saviour. My dear young friends, to know God as our Saviour in Jesus Christ, we must be born again. When God shines in our heart by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, He discovers (makes known) our inward darkness and sin, and then the Holy Ghost works faith in our heart and discovers Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinners.

In the gospels, we read of the holy life of Jesus Christ and how He had compassion on the poor, the sick and afflicted, the needy and the helpless. He spake and it was done, because He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He only had to speak, and the deaf could hear, the blind could see, the lame could walk and devils were cast out of poor people.

It is this same Jesus who now sits at the right hand of His Father in heaven and says, *“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11.28-30). He also says, *“Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 19.14). We read in Hebrews 4.16, *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* May you be able to use the language of the hymn writer in Young People’s Hymn 142 (see back cover). Dear young friends, never forget the words of King Jesus in Luke 11.9,

*“Ask, and it shall be given you;
Seek, and ye shall find;
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE “WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE”

I was a young man and going out with one who was later to become my wife. We went on holiday with her brother and sister-in-law and their family to North Wales, and on this particular day, we were climbing Snowdon (shown on the front cover). It was a lovely day for it, and we climbed up to the top, had lunch, and then came back down. As we were nearly back to the cars and walking across the lower grassy slopes, my girlfriend and I walked and talked together and lagged behind. Then, suddenly, I realised that I had lost a contact lens – it was no longer in my eye.

Contact lenses were becoming common in the 1980s and I wore what was known as “gas permeable hard” lenses: little glass lenses (smaller than your little fingernail – shown in the inset on the front cover) that would be kept and cleaned daily and last a year or more. They had to be looked after and were expensive.

The realisation of the fact that I had lost my lens was a shock, and I turned to my girlfriend, exclaiming, “**My contact lens is missing – I’ve lost it – I must find it.**” I had no idea where or when during the day I had lost it. Understandably, she looked back at the mountain and pointed out that we had just climbed all the way up there and come all the way back down, and it could be anywhere – it was impossible!

I responded something to the effect that it was not impossible with God and that I had to pray. I got down on my hands and knees in the open field to pray silently and asked the Lord to find it for me, as He knew where it was. I did not know (and have never asked) what she thought or what the family would think if they turned round, but I believed that the Lord would help – and that was where I had to take the matter.

Imagine my amazement! As I opened my eyes from praying, not knowing what to do or where to look – there, glistening in the light, so as to attract my eye, stuck to a blade of grass immediately in front of me (I was still on my knees) was my contact lens! The grass was fairly long, and I had to pick the lens delicately off the blade, else, if it fell down, it would be (naturally speaking) hard to find again.

Although the Lord had in my childhood and youth been pleased to give me some clear instances to demonstrate that He is a prayer-hearing and answering God, yet this demonstration that He **did** know exactly where on the mountain the lens was, and that He could reveal it to me, was to me miraculous, and a lesson never to be forgotten.

Now, why do I recount this too you? It is because: “*Ye are My witnesses*” (Isaiah 43.10), and these things are not only for my personal encouragement, but for encouragement to pray. Yes, this was providential, but I cannot tell you how many times I have had to go back to this touch-stone to encourage myself in the Lord my God, who has so clearly shown me that:

The fictitious power of chance
And fortune I defy;

**My life's minutest circumstance
Is subject to His eye."**

Gadsby's Hymn 70

The Lord teaches that "*the very hairs of your head are all numbered*" (Matthew 10.30). Do we believe it? It is absolutely true! By referring to His tender care towards His creation and His created, the Lord directs us, in faith, to seek the kingdom of God: "*If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? ... **But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you***" (Luke 12.28, 31).

Has God heard one of your prayers? Can you deny that? Well, the same God who hears your prayers in matters of providence, hears your prayers in matters of grace. Pray on, dear friend – look at the next verse: "*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

R. Saunders

GOD'S AWESOME PRESENCE

Many professing people speak so glibly of the Lord's name and presence, that we feel the following solemn observations by John Bunyan are worthy of careful attention.

The **presence of God is dreadful**, not only His presence as our Creator, but also His special presence – His most comfortable and joyous presence. When God comes to bring a soul news of mercy and salvation, even that visit, that presence of God, is fearful. When Jacob went from Beersheba towards Haran, he met with God in the way by a dream, in which he saw a ladder set upon the earth, whose top reached to heaven. In the dream, from the top of the ladder, he saw the Lord and heard Him speak to him, not threateningly, not as having any fury, but in the most sweet and gracious manner, giving him promise after promise of goodness, to the number of eight or nine (Genesis

28). Yet, when he awoke, all the grace that discovered itself in this heavenly vision could not keep him from the dread and fear of God's majesty; *"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not ... How dreadful is this place!"* (mark and learn). *"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."* Jacob had another memorable visit in which he prevailed with God; yet even then, there was such a dread of God's majesty that he wondered that his life was preserved (Genesis 32.30).

Man crumbles to dust at the presence of God; yea, though He shows Himself to us in His robes of salvation. We read of how dreadful and terrible the presence of angels has been to man, even when they brought good tidings from heaven. Daniel had the vision of salvation sent from heaven: *"O Daniel,"* said the messenger, *"a man greatly beloved."* Yet the dread and terror of the person speaking fell with weight upon Daniel's soul, so that he could not bear up under it. *"I ... saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption"* (Daniel 10.8).

By the presence of God, when we have it indeed, even our best spiritual things are turned into corruption and polluted rags. Let not man think that he can see God at any time, nor lower the standard of His dignity and majesty. Alas, there is a company of poor, light, frothy professors in the world. What they call the presence of God is more like to antics (amusements) than to the sober, sensible apprehension of the sacred presence of the Lord that true Christians are given.

John Bunyan

Adapted from Friendly Companion 1949

*FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES***READING THE LAW**

After the wall was finished, all the people gathered in the street before the water gate in Jerusalem. Ezra the scribe brought the book of the law that God had given to Moses. A pulpit of wood (high platform) was made for him to stand on. Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people and they stood up. Ezra blessed the Lord, and the people bowed their heads and worshipped.

Ezra read the law from morning until midday before the men, women and children who could understand. They listened very carefully, and the rulers and Levites taught them the meaning of the words.

The people wept when they heard the words of the law. Nehemiah and Ezra said, *"This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep ... neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* Then the people went their way to eat and to drink with great joy because they had understood the words declared unto them.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Ezra bring? (5 words)
2. What did Ezra stand on? (4 words)
3. How long did Ezra read the law? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Afraid.
2. A great work.
3. Make himself king.

*“And Ezra
opened the book
in the sight
of all
the people”*

Nehemiah 8.5

BIBLE LESSONS**JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS**

It had been many years since the children of Israel had crossed over Jordan and taken possession of the land of Canaan. Each tribe had received the part of Canaan that God had appointed for them. However, some portions of the land were still possessed by the Canaanites. The Philistines held several cities in the south. The Amorites remained in certain strongholds. Likewise, the Jebusites held a key mountain in the possession of Judah. They would hold it until David became the king.

Joshua, the esteemed leader, had become an old man. Knowing that he soon must die, Joshua called for the elders of all the tribes to come to him at Shechem, that he might give them his last words of advice and warning. Although he could no longer lead them in battle against the enemies that remained, he was sure that God would be with them, if they would cleave to Him and obey His commandments given by Moses. Joshua added, *“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them ... Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God bath given you.”*

Joshua was instructed by the Lord to rehearse all that He had done for them from the days of their father Abraham, when He called him out of idolatry and brought him into the land of Canaan. Having brought Abraham into the land, He gave him the promised son Isaac. Isaac was given twin sons, Esau and Jacob. At this point, Joshua's account takes up the strange, mysterious way of God. Esau was given the land of Mount Seir, while Jacob, to whom the land of Canaan was promised, had to go down to Egypt for many years.

Jacob's seed became slaves to the Egyptians and were sorely oppressed by the taskmasters. However, the Lord remembered them and sent Moses and Aaron, along with the plagues, and brought their fathers out of Egypt and destroyed their enemies in the Red Sea.

The Lord reminded the people of the wonderful provisions and great deliverances He wrought for them in the long wilderness journey. Further, the Lord declared that He had brought them into the land of the Amorites on the east side of Jordan and had given the land of Sihon and Og to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh. Even Balaam's attempt to curse them, God had turned to be a blessing.

Joshua's great concern for the people was to make them understand how much God had done for them in all the provisions He had given them and in their victories over Jericho and all the rest of Canaan.

Having been brought into the land of Canaan, God had caused them to dwell in cities which they did not build, and to possess a land for which they did not labour, and to partake of vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted.

Joshua knew that some of them were holding to the idol gods of Egypt, while others were ensnared by the gods of the nations around them. He reproved the people, saying, *"If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* The people answered Joshua, *"Therefore will we also serve the LORD; for He is our God."*

Joshua warned the people that God was a holy God and a jealous God. He set up a great stone, saying, *"This stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which He spake unto us: it shall be a witness unto you lest ye deny your God."*

You can read about this in Joshua chapters 23 and 24.

QUESTIONS:

1. Joshua told the people that God would be with them if they would do what? (7 words)
 2. If Israel made a union with the nations of Canaan, what would they become? (5 words)
 3. What would they be in their sides? In their eyes?
 4. What did Joshua say that he and his house would do? (5 words)
 5. What did Joshua warn the people that God was? (7 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. The Levites.
 2. The altar before the tabernacle.
 3. Phinehas and ten princes.
 4. "This day we perceive that the Lord is among us."
 5. Ed. "That the Lord is God."
-

PERHAPS YOU WILL THINK ABOUT IT

My thoughts sadly wandered yesterday morning as I sat in the house of God, and the minister was preaching his sermon. Do your thoughts wander under the sound of the gospel? What if the messenger of the Most High were sent down to close God's house and to seal up the mouth of His minister? A solemn thought! Is it not enough to make us anxiously attentive to every word that is spoken? **Perhaps you will think about it.**

A short time ago, I knelt down in a hurried manner to offer up my morning praises and petitions at the throne of grace, and after a few words, hastily rose to pursue some worldly object which demanded my attention. However, my conscience smote me and told me I had offered an affront to the Lord. Do you ever hurry over your prayers? What if the high and holy One should issue forth an unchangeable decree, "No more prayer

from your lips shall find favour at this mercy seat?" What an overwhelming thought! How precious it seems to make the throne of grace! **Perhaps you will think about it!**

The other day, I looked at my Bible as it lay on the table and thought about how much I had neglected it. Do you ever neglect to read your Bible? What a lesson it would be if an angel were sent down to seal the pages, even for twelve months! **Perhaps you will think about it!**

Adapted from Old Humphrey's Addresses

THE MOTHER'S LEGACY TO LUCY

After experiencing the power of saving grace, a deep concern is often felt for unsaved relatives and friends. There is a longing desire for them to know the same blessing of salvation.

That was true for the mother in this account. As soon as she felt the pardon of her sins, she began to pray earnestly for her husband and two daughters, Lucy and Rachel. Her husband never attended a place of worship. Although he did not dislike ministers or doubt the truth of the Bible, he was simply indifferent about religious things for himself.

Martha, the mother, had attended Sunday School as a child, but it was not until after her marriage that she began to be concerned about eternal things. Then, Martha went with her children regularly to the house of God. Lucy was six years of age and Rachel was four. Martha went with the prayer of the publican, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18.13). The power of God's forgiveness came to her by a still, small voice, and her joy was very great. One evening, she could not refrain from telling her husband and young children what she had experienced. Her husband listened patiently but made no reply. The children wept, not really understanding why. However, Lucy never forgot that night.

When Lucy was about twelve, she went to work at a mill, and it was about that time that her mother's health began to fail. One evening, Lucy and Rachel were talking together about their

mother and how much they loved her. Lucy thought that she looked so beautiful with her rosy cheeks. Rachel wondered why father had said that she needed to see a doctor. Lucy thought it was because she coughed so much. The children did not understand that the red cheeks and cough were common signs of consumption (tuberculosis), a disease that was very prevalent at that time and nearly always fatal. For several months, Martha was able to attend to her housework. However, little by little, she lost strength. She loved her family and wanted to live for their sakes, not because she feared death.

About that time, several of the teachers at the Sunday school where Lucy and Rachel attended met together for the special purpose of praying that the Lord might send the converting power of the Holy Spirit among the scholars. God heard their prayers, and many began to seek the Lord and believed to the saving of their souls. Lucy was one of them, to the great joy of her mother. Then, Rachel began to be concerned about her soul, asking, "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16.30).

Mr. John Ashworth, a minister from Rochdale, became acquainted with the family around that time. After he had addressed a large gathering of young people, Lucy requested him to come and see her mother. He found Martha seated in an armchair with a woollen shawl around her. Although not yet fourteen, Lucy had left her job at the mill to care for her mother, which she did willingly.

Martha was dying, and she knew it. She remained calm and unspeakably happy, resting her soul, body and circumstances on Jesus, in whom was all her hope. By faith, she viewed the home that He had prepared for her above. Lucy sat on a stool beside her mother, trying to catch every word. Martha told Mr. Ashworth about her conversion and of the peace she had enjoyed since that time. She spoke of the goodness of God in permitting her to see her two children choosing "*that good part*" in their early days, like Mary in Luke chapter 10. She paused for a time and was silent, being under deep emotions. Then, she said, "Oh how I did want to see my husband converted

before I die. I have long prayed for him and believe it will come." Taking Lucy's hand, she said, "Lucy, my child, I want you to promise that you will never give him up; no, never!"

Lucy buried her face in her mother's lap, weeping, and said, "Mother, I never will, I never will."

Martha smiled through her tears, saying, "Thank you, my child, for that promise. Your young sister will help you, and I leave this to you as a legacy, especially to you, Lucy."

We should not think lightly of this affectionate, dying mother's request to Lucy, or doubt the influence of young believers. Many of the brightest ornaments of the church of God have been converted while young. They have had an influence for good among their youthful friends and especially among their own family. "*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou has perfected praise*" (Matthew 21.16).

The sad time of Martha's death came two months later in the humble cottage. The father held the hand of his dying wife, while Lucy and Rachel knelt at her side in great sorrow. A few last words were faintly spoken: "Dear husband, see what religion can do in my greatest need. I wished to see you a Christian before I departed, but I have left a legacy to my children. When I am gone, Lucy will tell you what it is." The last few words were faintly spoken, and then she was taken to glory.

For several months after his wife's death, the father was very regular in returning home from work. He went less to the public-house, and once or twice, he attended church with his children. He had some suspicion about the legacy of his dying wife but did not ask. Lucy did not dare to tell him, and nearly two years went by. Lucy did most of the work in the home, with a little help from neighbours. There was one thing that caused concern – Father was not a Christian. Lucy sometimes feared that he would never be saved but grow harder and harder with indifference. However, she held fast to her promise to her mother and did not give him up.

A circumstance occurred that greatly encouraged Lucy to persevere. A young friend, named Ellen, had a careless,

prayerless mother. Ellen set aside ten minutes every evening. She went to her bedroom and prayed earnestly for the Lord to convert her mother. Ellen often asked her mother to go with her to chapel, but there was always some excuse. The mother noticed that Ellen went upstairs about the same time each evening, and sometimes her eyes were red from weeping. One evening, the mother quietly went half-way up the steps and listened. She heard a soft, earnest voice speak words that made a deep impression. One evening, while they were quietly working together, the mother asked Ellen if she had been praying for her. Ellen was astonished at this unexpected question and said, "O, Mother, I could not help it. I feel so concerned for your soul." Soon after, Ellen had the great joy of walking beside her mother to the chapel, and eventually of seeing her become a member of the church.

When Lucy heard of this, she, too, set aside a special time each day to pray for her father. One evening, he returned home earlier than expected and wondered where his daughter was. Hearing a voice upstairs, he was about to call her, but quietly listened instead. He heard Lucy pleading in prayer for the conversion of his soul. Not wanting her to know that he had heard, he silently went outside for a walk. "That is the mother's legacy," he thought. "I always believed my children were the best in the world, but now I love them more than ever."

About that time, the father lost his job, and they had to move to another county for work. Eleven years later, Mr. Ashworth was conducting a religious meeting in that place. In his address, he mentioned "the mother's legacy." He noticed that two young women, sitting near the front, seemed to be greatly affected. After the meeting, the two women followed him into the vestry, and he then recognised them as Lucy and Rachel.

Lucy told Mr. Ashworth that the last Sunday before they moved away, their father went with them to chapel, and they visited their mother's grave. The father said, "You left a legacy to your children, Martha, and I now know what it is, and thank you for it." Lucy and Rachel had never told him, and they

wondered how he knew. Before going to bed that last evening, the father said, “Lucy, I heard your prayer for me, and now I understand what Mother’s request was. I know that you are both anxious for me to go with you to chapel and to be a Christian. Do not give me up. Will you kneel down now and pray for me?” They did kneel, but they could only weep, and rose again without speaking a word. What a night it was!

The following Sunday, all three went to the chapel. During the sermon, the father was completely broken down. He eventually found peace for himself, and they became a very happy family.

This narrative is an illustration of the words in Scripture: *“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy”* (Psalm 126.5). Many times, a child has been the instrument used in the salvation of parents. To those who have loved ones who are careless about their souls, we would say, like Lucy’s mother, “Never give them up.” The Bible has this promise, *“All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matthew 21.22). When you feel discouraged and tempted to despair, remember the mother’s legacy to Lucy.

Adapted from Strange Tales by John Ashworth

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (5)

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3.20).

While Ruth was busy gleaning, back at home, Naomi would have been very concerned about how Ruth was getting on. Would anyone allow her to glean in their field? How would the people of Bethlehem treat her? Would Ruth come back dejected and empty-handed? All these questions and many more must have been filling her mind with anxious thoughts. What a wonderful promise the Lord gives to His people: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (Philippians 4.6). Although Naomi did not know how Ruth was

getting on, God did! Naomi needed God's help to leave Ruth in His gracious hands and under His care. That did not mean she was to be careless about the matter – not at all! The Lord will have His people pray unto Him. They all need that same help to commit their way unto Him: *“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you”* (1 Peter 5.7).

At times, we may be tempted to think that God does not care for us because things seem to go wrong. Sometimes, we may struggle with various illnesses or difficulties, and our prayers and cries for help appear to go unanswered! Jeremiah may have felt that way in Lamentations 3 verse 8, when everything in his pathway was so trying: *“Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer.”* But God does **not** shut out the cries of His people, and Jeremiah proved this, as a few verses later, he says, *“It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not”* (verse 22). Also, he says, *“For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies”* (verses 31, 32). Naomi may have been very fearful that because of her terrible sins, God would not be favourable unto her. Yet, she would be brought to see something of God's compassions and tender mercies.

For Naomi, it was likely a long day of waiting for Ruth to come home, to find out whether the Lord had been gracious to them both. Then, Ruth walked in, no doubt smiling, and she was not empty-handed. Naomi was very interested to know where Ruth had been that day, for her first question was, *“Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee”* (verse 19). When Ruth told Naomi that she had gleaned in a field belonging to a man called Boaz, Naomi must have been very touched and extremely thankful. Boaz was a very close relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech; perhaps a brother or cousin. Naomi also noticed that Ruth had brought back an ephah of barley, which is about as much as she could carry home. Ruth told Naomi that Boaz gave

her permission to continue gleaning in his fields until the end of the harvest. By all that happened to Ruth, there was a sweet hope in Naomi's heart that God had heard her prayers. He had displayed His gracious favour, but she must continue praying and watch the Lord's hand over the following weeks of harvest.

Although Naomi was wrong in going to Moab and had lost so much, yet she was helped to commit her way unto the Lord and to trust in Him. How often we also make mistakes, do things wrong, and bring troubles upon ourselves. But, whatever trouble we are in, the Lord is still very gracious and merciful. *"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder"* (Psalm 107.10-14). Satan will do his utmost to stop us from praying. When we feel that we only have ourselves to blame for our troubles, he will present the case as hopeless and tell us that we have no right to call upon God for help. It is at such times that we really need God's gracious help to overcome our fears and misgivings and to enable us to cry unto Him. Naomi knew that she was not worthy of any of God's blessings, but she came to God upon the grounds of God's mercy. Jonah also cried unto God when he must have felt to be in a hopeless situation, yet God mercifully heard and answered his prayer and delivered him.

It is a truly wonderful thing when we begin to perceive that the Lord, in His great mercy, has answered our poor prayers, perhaps gradually beginning to appear for us in various needs. *"And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me"* (Isaiah 12.1).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 15**

We have seen how Isaiah chapter 53 prophesies of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and especially sets forth the results (although that is far too poor a word here) flowing from those sufferings. For example: *“With His stripes we are healed”* (verse 5), and *“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied”* (verse 11).

In chapter 54, the Holy Spirit beautifully directs the prophet into the outworking of the love of Christ in the hearts and lives of His dear people: *“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear”* (verse 1). The barren womb, amongst Jewish women in the years before Christ’s birth, was regarded as a mark of God’s displeasure and consequent judgment upon that person. It is another figure in the Word setting forth a sinner in the sight of God. Hence, chapter 54 begins with the sinner, but in the verses that follow throughout the chapter, we see the covenant blessings showered upon those who are married to Christ.

It is also true that the prophecy here foretells of the reviving of the church, especially in Judea, and their outreach under God to the Gentiles in the days of Christ and the apostles. The opening exhortation to *“sing”* is fully supported by the unfolding of revival in New Testament times. So sure and certain is this prospect that there is a most encouraging word for the poor, barren ones in verse 4: *“Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed.”* What blessed assurance is given in verse 5: *“For thy Maker is thine Husband!”*

The Lord then comes right down to where His poor people are brought from time to time: *“As a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God”* (verse 6). Then, in verse 7 the Lord continues: *“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.”* Yes, the Lord’s people will taste a little of what their Saviour bore: *“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”* (Matthew 27.46)

Another perspective is clearly described in verse 10: *“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee.”*

Further prospect of blessing for the *“afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted”* is foretold with two *“I wills”* from God Himself in verses 11 and 12, concluding with the secret of it all in verse 17: *“This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD.”*

The next chapter (55) is the third in a row of well-loved and much-read portions of this Book. The gospel invitation is so clear in verse 1: *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* There is no hint of any conditional offer here – it is repeated three times emphatically: **“Come.”** This invitation is clarified further and coupled with a blessed promise in verse 3: *“Incline your ear, and **come** unto Me: bear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”* Again, the Lord Jesus is set before us in verse 4, and the salvation of the Gentiles in verse 5. Then, another compelling **invitation** is given in verse 6: *“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.”*

Mercy for the wicked, and the unrighteous returning unto the Lord, are promised in verse 7. The next four verses (8, 9, 10 and 11) are designed by the Spirit to be creature-humbling: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts”* – and how the realisation of this brings proud nature down to the earth and glorifies God – in consideration of the certain effect of the going forth of the Word of God from His own mouth.

The next verse (12) shows the benefit experienced consequent upon the going forth of God’s Word in the lives of preachers and hearers alike: *“For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.”* The last verse gives in a figure the great change which takes place in the conversion of a soul by the entering in of the Word: *“Instead of the thorn shall come up the*

fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Then, in the last clause of the chapter, it is all glory to the Lord.

The first eight verses of chapter 56 are clearly prophecy regarding the Lord's future work amongst the Gentiles, referred to in verse 3 as "*the son of the stranger,*" and even more cogently in the same verse as "*the eunuch.*" This figure would have meant much more to the Jews of Isaiah's day, when we consider the solemn exclusion of eunuchs declared in Deuteronomy 23.1. So, in a different way, but equally clearly, the Gentiles also had no place in the congregation of the Lord.

The figure of the eunuch spiritually considered (in other words, a completely barren, unfruitful sinner) is used very tenderly by the Holy Spirit in verses 4 and 5: "*For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*" This is the promise of Christ the Redeemer to all quickened souls who feel themselves to be so poor and lifeless as to be deprived of any hope of being one of the Lord's chosen people.

The last four verses of chapter 56 are on a different line altogether – the condemnation of those who will make trouble in the church of God in the latter days. This prophecy has solemnly been fulfilled many times over in the history of the church on earth.

Brian Mercer

NECESSITY OF PRAYER

There is no living without prayer. It plucks up the weeds of sin, prunes luxuriant branches, waters the flowers of grace, and sweeps the avenues of the heart that Christ may walk therein with delight.

Little Gleaner 1916

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about CONTINUING. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. There were many priests who were not suffered to continue by reason of what? (Hebrews 7.23)
2. What is Christ said to have because He continueth ever? (Hebrews 7.24)
3. In 1 John 2.19, John writes that some did not continue with them in order to manifest what? (1 John 2.19)
4. What did Paul tell Timothy to continue in? (2 Timothy 3.14)
5. What did Daniel continue unto? (Daniel 1.21)
6. How did Paul say in Acts 26 that he was able to continue to that present day?
7. In Nehemiah 5, what did Nehemiah continue in?
8. In Ruth 2, the servant of Boaz said that Ruth had continued doing what? And from what time?
9. In Acts 14, what did Paul exhort the believers at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to continue in and for what reason?
10. In 1 Samuel 12, what did Samuel tell the people they would continue to do if they would fear the Lord, serve Him and obey His voice?

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Happy.
2. Weary.
3. He loves them.
4. With rebukes. For iniquity.
5. The child.
6. Grievous. (Proverbs 15.10)
7. Rest. Delight unto thy soul. (Proverbs 29.17)
8. Drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22.15)
9. They received no correction. (Jeremiah 2.30)
10. All Scripture. (2 Timothy 3.16)

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

Lord, teach us how to pray aright,
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight,
We may, we must draw near.

We perish if we cease from prayer;
O grant us power to pray,
And when to meet Thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way.

Give deep humility; the sense
Of godly sorrow give;
A strong desiring confidence,
To hear Thy voice and live;

Faith in the only Sacrifice
That can for sin atone;
To build our hopes, to fix our eyes,
On Christ, on Christ alone;

Patience to watch, and wait, and weep,
Though mercy long delay;
Courage, our fainting souls to keep,
And trust Thee, though Thou slay.

Give these, and then, Thy will be done;
Thus strengthened with all might,
We through Thy Spirit and Thy Son
Shall pray, and pray aright.

James Montgomery

The

Friendly Companion



“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”
(Isaiah 59.1)

June 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

It is very encouraging to read in the Word of God of prayers that were offered up on behalf of children and young people. Perhaps you may remember the prayer of Jacob for Manasseh and Ephraim, the two sons of Joseph. How beautiful were his words! We are told that Israel (Jacob's new name) said, "*God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them ... and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth*" (Genesis 48.15, 16). It was a very special prayer!

It was Joseph's desire, as well as Jacob's, that his two sons, who were born and grew up in Egypt, should become identified with the children of Israel. All they knew up to that time was the splendour and pomp of Egypt. No doubt they lived in a beautiful house, and they had a grandfather who was a famous priest. What a sacrifice it would mean on their part.

Manasseh and Ephraim would have spent a large part of their childhood knowing only their mother's father, whose name was Potipherah. He was a priest of the god Ra and thus an idol worshipper. He would have worn very costly garments and performed great rituals in the worship of his god. How different from their grandfather who had come from the land of Canaan! He worshipped and loved the God of heaven, just as their father Joseph did. For a long time, Joseph had stood alone in the worship of God. Even though he was second on the throne, and all the people of Egypt bowed to him, yet Joseph greatly humbled himself when praying and worshipping his God.

Now that their grandfather Jacob had come, he told them of how the God of heaven had appeared unto him and blessed him. Even though he lived in tents and had no possession of land, yet he could speak of a land that God had promised to give to his seed. What a favour it was to hear their father Joseph and grandfather Jacob tell of the great things the God of heaven had done for them. In contrast, their grandfather Potipherah could

never tell of what his god had done for him, only what he had done for his god.

Manasseh and Ephraim observed that the brothers of their father, who came with their grandfather, were shepherds with many flocks. However, to the Egyptians, shepherds were an abomination (despised). The life of a shepherd was exceedingly hard, caring for their flocks under the burning sun by day and the biting cold of night. Shepherds wore the simplest clothing. These things must have made Manasseh and Ephraim consider well the hardships that Israel endured, compared to the comforts of Egypt.

The real test would yet come for Manasseh and Ephraim. Would they be identified with their mother's people, the Egyptians, or with their father's people, the Israelites? Yet, in their choice to go with the children of Israel, Jacob's prayer for them was answered; for God truly did multiply them and gave them a portion with His people in the land of Canaan.

It is a wonderful thing if there are those you can listen to while they tell what God has done for them, and who also pray for you, that God would be gracious unto you.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

On the way to our holiday cottage in October of 2021, we came across a lane called "God's Blessing Lane." The sign is shown on the front cover. The name immediately made us think of God, and what a blessing it would be to live in a lane that was blessed by Him. After having lunch there at the garden centre, we went on our way, feeling very contented.

We continued our journey until finally arriving in the area of our destination. By that time, the roads had become lanes, and those lanes had become very narrow. Our satellite navigation took us round and round in circles, and we could not find our cottage, even though the postcode had been entered into the data. Eventually, we typed in the name of the cottage, which was "Seaview," and then the "Sat Nav" took us straight there!

How this made us think of another journey – the journey to heaven! *“We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you”* (Numbers 10.29). Those who have been blessed with the forgiveness of their sins and known the joyful sound of the gospel, feel happy and contented. The days after the Lord has first blessed them are very special. It is sometimes called the time of “first love,” but they cannot stay in that place; they must journey onward. They are travelling all their lives here below to live with Jesus in heaven above at last. As they journey, they may have some lovely, smooth roads to go along. Yet, sometimes the way seems to get narrower and narrower as they meet with various difficulties.

On our holiday journey, sometimes there were steep banks on either side. The concrete kerb (curb) stones in one place would have damaged the car had we driven over them. There was the hazard of meeting another vehicle and having to go in reverse until it passed by. The navigation guide took us round and round, but not to our destination. Yet, when the right name was entered, we went safely to the right place.

These things made us think of how much we need the right name of Jesus to be our guide to heaven at last. Otherwise, we might think we are on the right road, only to find that we are wrong at last. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4.12).

M.S.

God saves the outermost of sinners, with an innermost salvation, to the very uttermost of time.

Sower 1910

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**NEHEMIAH REPROVES WRONG DEEDS**

Nehemiah, the governor, went back to Babylon for a time and then returned to Jerusalem. While he was gone, Tobiah, an enemy of the Jews, had been given a dwelling place by the house of God. Nehemiah cast out Tobiah and all his household stuff.

The people had stopped bringing their offerings of money and food (tithes) for the Lord. Thus, the priests had to stop working in the temple and go to work in the fields. Nehemiah asked, *“Why is the house of God forsaken?”* Then the people brought tithes again.

Some people were working and selling goods in Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. Nehemiah asked, *“What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?”* He ordered the gates to be shut on the Sabbath day.

Some people had married wives from other nations. Their children could not speak the language of the Jews. Nehemiah asked, *“Shall we ... do this great evil against our God in marrying strange [foreign] wives?”*

QUESTIONS:

1. Who had been given a place by the house of God?
2. Some were working and selling goods on what day?
3. Some had married wives from where?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. The book of the law.
2. A pulpit of wood.
3. From morning until midday.

*“Remember
me, O my
God,
for good.”*

Nehemiah 13.31

BIBLE LESSONS**THE GENERATION AFTER JOSHUA**

What a faithful leader Joshua had been! From his youngest days to the end of his life, he served his generation faithfully. How faithful he was in following the Lord God of Israel as the young servant of Moses and then as captain of all Israel! Apart from not asking counsel of the Lord in the matter of the Gibeonites, Joshua did not turn aside from the commandments of the Lord.

Joshua was supported by Eleazar, the high priest, who was instrumental in establishing cities for the Levites in each tribe. There were also elders from the various tribes who loved and feared the God of Israel. These elders guided the people of their tribes in taking possession of their land. They had known the works of the Lord in all that He had done for Israel. As children, they had experienced the deliverance from Egypt, the opening of a passage through the Red Sea, along with the overthrow of Pharaoh and his army. They had also experienced the miracles in the wilderness for forty years and the promised entrance into Canaan.

Each generation of those who know and fear God will experience times of joy and blessing, and times of sorrow and loss. It was so for Israel at this time. Their esteemed leader Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten years. The father of his tribe, Joseph, had died at the same age. Joshua was buried in Mount Ephraim, and when the high priest Eleazar died, he was also buried in Mount Ephraim. Just as the era of Moses and Aaron came to an end, so the era of Joshua and Eleazar came to an end.

The death of such good and gracious leaders brings changes to those who follow. Israel enquired of God who should go first in the battles that needed to be fought against the remaining Canaanites. The Lord answered, "*Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.*"

The tribe of Judah asked the tribe of Simeon to go with them, as the portion of Simeon was next to that of Judah. The Lord

delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hand. The men of Judah also took Adonibezek, king of Bezek. They cut off his thumbs and great toes. We might think that was a strange act. However, without thumbs, the enemy could not hold a spear or throw a javelin. Without great toes, they would be slow in running. Those were necessary things for warriors in that day.

Adonibezek confessed, *“Threescore and ten [70] kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.”* This is a solemn warning that as we do to others, it shall return unto us.

In obedience to God, the tribe of Judah went on fighting against the Canaanites, as God gave them further victories. One of the cities they came to was called Kirjath-sepher. It was near the land that Joshua had given Caleb. Caleb’s zeal for the glory of God had not diminished. He perceived the danger of idol-worshippers living nearby. He gave a challenge to the men of Judah: *“He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.”*

Othniel, Caleb’s nephew, was quick to respond, and he was as jealous for the glory of God as his uncle. After his victory over the city, he was given his uncle’s daughter for his wife. The land which became his possession lacked a good supply of water; thus it was not very suitable for grazing cattle or growing crops.

Achsah, his wife, showed herself worthy of such a brave and honourable husband. She went to her father Caleb and asked for *“a blessing;”* a needed blessing, even *“springs of water.”* *“Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.”*

May the Lord teach us to ask Him for the *“springs of water.”* The upper springs of heavenly blessings: the Holy Spirit poured upon us, the precious blood of Christ applied to our hearts, the love of Christ shed abroad in our souls. These can be understood as those *“upper springs”* of water. The *“nether springs”* may be understood as God’s providential blessings made known throughout our lives. It is a wonderful thing if we

see the provision of homes, families, friends, and many other such things as coming from the Lord.

You can read about this in Joshua 24 and Judges chapter 1.

QUESTIONS:

1. What other leader of Israel, besides Joshua, died? What was his position?
2. Who did God say should go us first in the battles yet to be fought?
3. Who confessed that as he had done to others, so had God done to him?
4. Who smote the city of Kirjath-sepher? What relation was he to Caleb?
5. What did Achsah ask her father to give her? What did he give her?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. Cleave to Him and obey His commandments.
2. Snares and traps unto you.
3. Scourges. Thorns.
4. "We will serve the LORD."
5. A holy God and a jealous God.

AFAR OFF

Legh Richmond, the well-known author of *The Dairyman's Daughter* and *Annals of the Poor*, had a son who was a sailor. An interesting account is given of him in his father's memoir.

Nugent Richmond was brought up by God-fearing parents and was the child of many prayers. He grew up, as many others have done, to manifest an opposition to those things that his parents loved. Neither tender warnings nor fervent prayers had any effect upon him.

At last, in the summer of 1814, his father yielded to his desire to go to sea, and Nugent embarked in the *Arniston*, a merchant vessel bound for Ceylon. His father saw him off at Portsmouth and gave him a Bible, which he begged him to read carefully. He lingered on the shore until the white sails were no longer discernible. As Mr. Richmond mused on the past, the present and the future, he thought, "My poor child will soon be afar off." The next moment, the word came to him, "*The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off*" (Acts 2.39). The thought consoled him as he returned home, praying for his children, that God would speak peace to those "afar off" and to those nearby.

The expected time of absence was two years. Mr. Richmond received letters from his son, written from various places where the vessel landed. These letters expressed regret for his past conduct, and a hope that he might some day prove a comfort to his parents.

Some months afterwards, Mr. Richmond read in the public papers that the *Arniston* had been lost in a dreadful gale of wind near the Cape of Good Hope, and it was feared that every person on board had perished. Having received no official report, the parents waited in most painful anxiety.

At length, it was stated that the *Arniston* was wrecked near the Cape, and only six passengers had survived. The name of Mr. Richmond's son was not listed among them. The whole family went into mourning. The father sorrowed greatly for his lost son, not knowing the state of his soul. He felt more than ever to need the rod and staff of the Great Shepherd to comfort him. Like Aaron, when his sons were dead, he "*beld his peace*" (Leviticus 10.3).

The following winter, a letter came to Mr. Richmond in the handwriting of the very son he had mourned as dead. Circumstances had prevented his son from sailing in the *Arniston*, and he seemed unaware that it had perished.

The transition of feeling upon receipt of this letter was very great. Mr. Richmond afterwards said that he felt, in this

wonderful instance of divine providence, a hope that his son was spared to manifest a spiritual change, which would fill him with gratitude and praise: "*For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found*" (Luke 15.24).

Nugent Richmond was employed in merchant vessels sailing from Calcutta and other ports of India to the Isle of France and Gibraltar. From thence, in 1820, he wrote to his father, urging a meeting between them. His letters expressed much affection for his parents, sorrow for the past and desires of amendment. Several persons who had been with Nugent gave testimony of a change in his character and conduct. The officers under whom he had served spoke highly of his attention to duty.

About this time, Nugent suffered shipwreck but escaped from the sinking vessel with some others on a roughly-constructed raft. Writing to his father, he said, "Oh, my dear father, no one can conceive the horrors of shipwreck but those who have experienced them! In this unfortunate occurrence I have lost almost everything. I saved nothing but a very small trunk, in which I put my Bible, the *Annals of the Poor*, two suits of clothes and my watch. How my hopes and expectations are frustrated! Oh, that this may be for my good! When the ship struck, I went below and prayed with heart and soul to Almighty God to save us. A certain something – a kind of comfortable thought – seemed to arise, and say, 'Thy life shall be saved,' and not all the shocks, seas, or wind could make me fear the contrary."

Nugent arrived at Calcutta in a most destitute state, but through the great kindness of a clergyman, he was provided with necessary things and soon obtained employment on another vessel.

In 1825, Mr. Richmond suffered the loss of his second son through consumption (tuberculosis), but he had a good hope that it was well with his soul. He was eagerly anticipating a visit from Nugent, who was expected to arrive soon. Then, he heard a report that Nugent had died on his voyage homeward.

A few weeks later, a letter arrived from Mr. Thompson, the clergyman from Calcutta. He stated that Nugent had been ill

with fever, from which he was not completely recovered at the time of his sailing. Afterwards, he was exposed to very severe weather and had a relapse. To the surprise and grief of all on board, one morning Nugent was found dead in his cabin. A little ivory box was found near him, containing a few small gifts intended for his brothers and sisters. On the inside cover, the following lines were written in pencil by his own hand, apparently a short time before his death –

Where vice has held its empire long,
 'Twill not endure the least control;
 None but a power divinely strong
 Can turn the current of the soul.

Great God, I own Thy power divine
 That works to change this heart of mine;
 I would be formed anew, and bless
 The wonders of renewing grace.

Mr. Richmond wrote to his daughter that Nugent was buried in the depths of the ocean; but he said, “The sea shall one day give up her dead, and I trust he shall then appear a living soul.”

A memorial tablet was erected by Legh Richmond in the church at Turvey, with the following quotation: *“By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea”* (Psalm 65.5).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1885

“HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER THEE”

Elizabeth Witte was converted while living in Holland when she was about twelve years of age. A carnival had come to town, and she begged her God-fearing mother to allow her to go, but permission was refused. She was determined to sneak to the carnival anyway. She walked out the door with a basket under her arm as if to go to the market, but the Lord stopped her.

Elizabeth was the subject of several remarkable providences. Once, when on the way home alone from an evening conventicle (gathering) with God's people, she noticed that she was being followed by a man who appeared to have evil intentions. While begging the Lord for His protection, she noticed a large, black dog walking next to her. This dog stayed with her until she reached her door, and then it trotted off into the night. She could prove in other ways also that "*He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways*" (Psalm 91.11). The Lord watches over His people in every age.

Ebenezer, 100 Years of God's Mercy and Faithfulness

A VERY PRESENT HELP

Many years ago, when a large portion of America was unsettled, people often moved west, hoping for a better life and the prospect of owning land. In one of those vast, rural areas was a small farm, with a plain, lonely house. An honest farmer lived there, along with his wife and little children. A young woman, named Ellen, lived with them to help with the little ones and the farm work. The Fentons (as I will call them) were Christian people, and when illness brought Mr. Fenton to his death-bed, they met the blow with courage and submission to the will of God. Mr. Fenton was anxious to make all the arrangements for his family. He felt that the greatest difficulty with their lonely situation had been the lack of a place of worship and fellowship with other believers. He advised his wife that after his death, she should sell the farm and livestock, and buy a house in a town where she would be near other people and be able to attend worship services.

When Mr. Fenton died, his poor widow was stricken with grief. However, she hastened to carry out his wishes. and one day a sale was held at the farm. People came from long distances, and everything was sold: house, barns, livestock and all that there was. As the farmer had expected, a considerable

sum of money was realised, and the whole of it was handed over to Mrs. Fenton.

Finally, the sale was over and the farm deserted. Friends and neighbours said a kind farewell, and they left the widow and her little family to spend the last night in their old home. "Are you sure it is wise to keep all that money in the house, now that you haven't anyone to protect you?" asked one kind friend. "I have lost my husband, it is true," replied Mrs. Fenton, "but I still have a Protector; God Himself will be my defence, and I am not afraid."

The dark night drew on. While it had been a lovely, fair day, the night became wild and stormy. Ellen put the children to bed in the room upstairs. After talking over affairs with Mrs. Fenton for a while, she went to bed in the same room upstairs. The widow locked the money safely away in the desk in the kitchen, and she was sitting quietly, pondering over the past and praying for the future. Suddenly, she heard a little noise at the door. There was a scratching and a whining that showed plainly the unexpected visitor was a dog! Mrs. Fenton was surprised. There was no dog on the farm, and all the livestock had been sold. However, by this time, torrents of rain were pouring down. It was no night for even a dog to be outside without shelter. So, she opened the door, and a large dog bounded into the house. She was hardly able to shut the door again for the blast of wind and rain. Shaking the water from its coat, the dog alarmed Mrs. Fenton for a moment. Then the animal made straight for the inner room and lay down quietly before the fire. Satisfied that the dog was well-behaved, Mrs. Fenton got together a good plate of scraps, and was pleased to see the dog eagerly eat the food.

The widow now prepared to retire for the night. She locked and barred the outer door, bolted the door between the kitchen and the pantry, and made sure that all was safe. Leaving the dog sleeping quietly on the rug, she joined her little family in the upstairs room, and soon all were sound asleep.

It was about midnight when both Mrs. Fenton and Ellen were suddenly awakened by stealthy noises outside, the sound of

shuffling feet and of men's subdued voices. The two women sat up trembling with fear. "They are after the money, mistress!" said Ellen, holding her breath. Then came louder noises. Somebody was forcing his way into the pantry. It was useless at such a distance from human help to think of resistance. The two women crept out of bed and noiselessly dragged some heavy furniture against the door. Then, having barricaded themselves in, they committed themselves in fervent prayer unto their heavenly Father, and waited, while breathlessly listening.

Meanwhile, a consultation seemed to be going on in the pantry below. Presently, with a great crash, the door into the kitchen was smashed in, and the thieves rushed into the room. But what was that new sound? A low, blood curdling growl was heard, and Mrs. Fenton's heart leaped within her, as for the first time, she remembered the strange dog! A dreadful turmoil followed; the oaths and shouts of the thieves mingled with the ferocious growling of the dog. Evidently a furious fight was going on, but the great dog was too much for the men. A moment later, there was the sound of a helter-skelter flight! The night had cleared, and by the light of the risen moon, the women saw the figures of two men running hard, with the great dog at their heels, leaping and snapping! The lonely widow and the faithful Ellen knelt to give thanks to the gracious God who had so wonderfully preserved and protected them!

When the morning came, it was found that an entrance had first been forced through a window in the pantry. Everything was in confusion, but nothing had been taken, and the desk remained untouched. Mrs. Fenton looked all day for the dog to come back, but it never came. Nor indeed did anyone find out to whom it belonged. Someone suggested that it might have come with its master to the sale, and then having strayed, returned to the farm, expecting to find him there. But the mystery was never explained. It seems not unlikely that He who prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah may have now prepared the dog to protect the poor widow. In any case, the story is one more encouraging illustration of how God can give His angels

charge over His children, to keep them in all their ways: *“He that spared not His own Son...how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?”* The children of the heavenly King, adopted into His family by the blood of Jesus, have a rich heritage; no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper.

Adapted from A Link in the Chain

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (6)

“As the eyes of servants look unto the band of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the band of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God” (Psalm 123.2).

Ruth continued gleaning in the field that belonged to Boaz throughout the barley harvest and the wheat harvest that followed. Thus, the needs of both Naomi and Ruth were supplied. But what would they do when the harvests had come to an end? Rather like Elijah at the brook Cherith: what was he to do when the waters stopped flowing? Likewise, when Jesus asked Philip, with a huge congregation before them, *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* (John 6.5) At times in our lives, we come to those places when something we have been doing comes to an end. Perhaps we have come to the end of our education, or a sudden, unexpected event has taken place in our lives. What are we to do? It is at such times that we need the Lord to help us to look to Him for direction. A wonderful statement follows the question Jesus asked Philip: *“And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do”* (verse 6). That is, the Lord Jesus knew exactly what He would do in that situation, and how He would feed that whole congregation, even from the small provision of five barley loaves and two small fishes. Jesus would have Philip and the rest of His disciples look to Him. So, when we come to similar times of want, may we also be helped to look to the Lord, for He alone knows exactly what to do. King Jehoshaphat, when he was in a very trying situation, cried to the Lord, *“Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee”* (2 Chronicles 20.12). David

had also learned that valuable lesson when he said, *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth”* (Psalm 121.1, 2). The hymnwriter Joseph Swain wrote of the Lord Jesus as such a kind and faithful Friend: “With heaven and earth at His command, He waits to answer prayer” (Gadsby’s hymn 132).

Coming back to Naomi and Ruth, they must look to the Lord their God, under whose wings they had come to trust. Naomi, as she had told Ruth some time before, felt that she was too old to have a husband. But Ruth was not! We are not told the age of Ruth, but we have every reason to believe that she was still comparatively young, certainly young enough to bear children. Naomi knew that Boaz was a near kinsman, who would have the right to purchase all that belonged to Elimelech, and this now included Ruth. In Old Testament times, amongst the children of Israel, it was very important for a married couple to produce a male heir, as the land of inheritance passed from father to son. If the husband died without having a son, then a brother or another very close male relative would have the right to marry the widow, hoping to produce a male heir to maintain the inheritance that belonged to that family. That was called a **levirate marriage**, and we read of it in Deuteronomy 25 verses 5-10.

The question was: would Boaz perform the part of a kinsman and be willing to marry Ruth? We feel sure that both of these God-fearing women would have made it a matter of prayer. They must continue to commit their way unto the Lord and watch His hand in the unfolding of events that lay before them. Although the Lord knew exactly what He would do, these two women did not. However, they did discern a possible way in which the Lord might provide for them. An approach must be made by Ruth to Boaz without the knowledge of anyone else, to see if he would be willing to perform the part of the kinsman. These things may appear very strange and unusual for us to

understand, yet it must have been right in the sight of God, with the outcome being to the glory of God.

A venture must be made by faith. At times in our lives, we may also need to make a venture by faith. Such a venture should always be accompanied by much prayer. Moses cried unto the Lord, *“If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Exodus 33.15). Esther cried, *“So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish”* (Esther 4.16). The Syrophoenician woman, and many others in the gospels, ventured to the Lord Jesus, seeking His merciful help. What a great mercy, if the Holy Spirit has taught us our need of the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins, and so we venture to Him as our only hope of salvation. Perhaps there is an opening before you, and you are not sure if it is the right step to take, but wonder if the Lord’s hand may be in it. In venturing, you look to Him to make it plain, but still need to keep looking to Him in every step that is taken, to be found under His smile and blessing.

A.T. Pickett

NEVER-FORGOTTEN ADVICE

Once, when William Tiptaft was addressing the Sunday school children, he said:

First – “Be very particular what company you keep.” There was a pause, and then with a raised voice he said again,

Second – “Be very particular what company you keep.” There was another pause, and then with increased emphasis he repeated,

Third – **“Be very particular what company you keep!”**

The effect on parents and children who heard the address was great, and the advice of Mr. Tiptaft was **never forgotten!**

Gathered Gems

In helping to lift another’s burden, we often lighten our own.

Sower 1910

*BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES***THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 16**

As I briefly reflect on last month's piece, it is relevant to say here that the "different line" which begins at verse 9 of Isaiah chapter 56 marks a different approach, which continues into chapters 57 and 58 and to the close of chapter 59. In these three chapters, God has a controversy with His chosen people and, by direct implication, with His church here on earth. Many are the failings and sins of those who should have known better. Dr. Gill sums it up in two words: hypocrisy and formality. These reckonings of God with the church (and there are similar passages in the prophecy of Malachi) precede the commencement in chapter 60 of prophecy regarding the blessings which will be bestowed upon His people in the latter days, including the advent of Christ Himself.

So the theme begun at the end of chapter 56 is pursued and amplified in the first twelve verses of chapter 57. Strong language is used in verse 3: *"But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore."* Again, the wickedness of these solemn characters is described, for example, in verse 9: *"and didst debase thyself even unto bell."* Then the Lord begins to draw a contrast in verses 13 and 14: *"but he that putteth his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain; and shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of My people."*

Hence, interspersed through the midst of the exposure of His people's sins are most instructive indications of the way back to God. This continues here in chapter 57 with the clear declaration of those whom God will favour: *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"* (verse 15). This is followed by a most benevolent promise to guilty, mortal man: *"For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always*

wroth: for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made” (verse 16)

Chapter 58 continues in a similar vein, but here the Lord calls on His watchmen to help point out the errors of the people: *“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”* (verse 1). Instruction is given to expose false fasting (verses 3-5) and then set before the people the true fasting which will bring the smile of approval from their God (verses 6-7).

From verse 8, there is much instruction and encouragement for the Lord’s servants in the preaching of the gospel. (This passage was greatly blessed to the writer’s late dear father in the early days of his ministry.) The Lord also proclaims in the same passage the singular blessings which will accompany such preaching.

In chapter 59, there is further exposition of the grievous state of the church before the Lord looks on and brings salvation (verse 16). The opening verse is a most encouraging word: *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”* Then there is a very solemn and revealing interjection: *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not bear.”* These words are still a lesson to be heeded today!

Verses 3 to 8 describe in solemn detail the sins of the church. Then, from verses 9 to 14, the language becomes confessional, as though uttered by the church itself. In verse 15, all is summed up in three solemn words: *“Yea, truth faileth.”* Now, dear young friends, we are living in such a day where truth is fallen in our streets (set aside). Yet, what a mercy that “the Lord saw it” – then and now.

The remainder of chapter 59 prophesies of the coming of the Lord Jesus; first, as Saviour (verses 16-17), then as Avenger (verses 18-19) and third as the Redeemer of His people (verses 20-21).

As mentioned above, it seems as though chapters 57 to 59, though often in solemnity, make ready for the bountiful blessings promised in chapters 60, 61 and 62. Therefore, what a different scene is dramatically ushered in at the beginning of chapter 60! *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee”* (verse 1).

I differ somewhat from Dr. John Gill and others in their interpretations of these prophecies and others like them. The intellectual capacity of man is tainted by sin, and unless the Holy Spirit guides, we can soon fall into error. So we need to be careful about what some call “the personal reign of Christ in the New-Jerusalem state.”

I venture to say that firstly, this 60th chapter of Isaiah speaks of Christ’s first coming to this earth. Compare *“the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee”* (verse 1) with *“the glory of the Lord shone round about them”* (Luke 2.9).

Consider also that creation work began with: *“Let there be light”* (Genesis 1.3) after *“the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”* (verse 2). So, the coming of the Lord Jesus to this earth is likened to the appearing of “light” in many places; for instance, as previously noted in this series at the end of part 2, regarding Isaiah chapter 9 verse 2: *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.”* Also, in the gospel of John chapter 1 verses 1 to 9: *“And the light shineth in darkness.”*

Secondly, this 60th chapter touches on the prospect of heaven itself, as in verses 19 and 20. *“Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended”* (verse 20).

Brian Mercer

The Holy Spirit can teach a sinner a lesson in a moment that he will not forget through eternity.

Sower 1910

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about PROPHETS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who was the first man in Scripture to be called a prophet? (Genesis 20)
2. In Exodus 7.1, who did God say would be a prophet for Moses?
3. In Jeremiah 38.12, 13, who drew up a prophet from a dungeon? What prophet?
4. In Matthew 12.38-40, the sign of what prophet did Jesus say would be given to the people?
5. What was Jesus called in Matthew 21.11?
6. In 1 Kings 17, what was commanded to feed the prophet Elijah?
7. In Luke 7, of whom did the Lord Jesus say there was not a greater prophet born of women?
8. In 2 Kings 6, what prophet made iron to swim? Where did he lead the Syrian army?
9. What prophet did God send to David in 2 Samuel 12 to show him his great sins of adultery and murder?
10. In 1 Kings 18, what prophet prayed for fire to come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice?

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. Happy.
2. Weary.
3. He loves them.
4. With rebukes. For iniquity.
5. The child.
6. Grievous (Proverbs 15.10).
7. Rest. Delight unto thy soul. (Proverbs 29.17)
8. Drive it far from him (Proverbs 22.15).
9. They received no correction (Jeremiah 2.30).
10. All Scripture (2 Timothy 3.16).

PRAYER FOR THE YOUNG

Jesus! over all supreme;
Jesus! mortals' highest theme:
Thou whose glory Gabriel sings,
Lord of lords, and King of kings.

For Thy blessings now we plead;
For these children intercede;
Take, O take them 'neath Thy wings,
Lord of lords, and King of kings.

Through life's journey be their Guide,
All things that they need provide,
And in danger, let Thy wings
Keep them safely, King of kings.

If according to Thy will,
Grant a richer favour still,
Even grace (from Thee it springs);
Give them grace, Thou King of kings.

Young People's Hymnal 137

The
Friendly Companion



“I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto
me, and heard my cry.”

(Psalm 40.1)

July 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Last month we considered the prayer of Jacob for his two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and how God made them willing to be joined with the children of Israel. Although they were not servants in Egypt, they were strangers in the land.

This month, we would consider a case very similar to that of Manasseh and Ephraim. This also took place in Egypt, but at a time when conditions in Egypt were very trying or difficult for the children of Israel. They were no longer esteemed because of their relationship to Joseph. By this time, Joseph and his brothers, along with their children and grandchildren, had passed away.

In the intervening years, the children of Israel had multiplied exceedingly and become a large nation. The new Pharaoh knew nothing of Joseph and the great deliverance brought to Egypt through him. This Pharaoh greatly feared the children of Israel and advised the Egyptians to afflict or treat them harshly. However, the more they afflicted them, the more they grew.

Pharaoh commanded that every son born to the Israelites should be cast into the river. What a fearful time it must have been for the people of Israel! A man of the tribe of Levi, named Amran, and his wife Jochebed, had a daughter and a son born to them before this solemn charge of Pharaoh. Their third child, a son, was born during this time of trouble. What prayers they put up for God's help, protection and deliverance! They did not even give the child a name.

In Hebrews chapter 11, we are told that *“by faith ... he ... was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper”* – beautiful – *“child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”*

When they could no longer hide him, his mother made a little ark (covered basket) out of bulrushes, sealing it with slime and pitch. She placed her baby son in the ark and laid it in the reeds by the river's brink. Many prayers must have been offered for the child's safety. It was Pharaoh's own daughter who found the

little ark. The crying of the beautiful little baby so touched her that she determined to keep him for herself.

In a wonderful way, the child's mother was called and asked to nurse him for Pharaoh's daughter. When he was sufficiently grown, the child was brought to live with Pharaoh's daughter. She named him Moses, because she drew him out of the water.

Now, the child was under the teaching, guidance and influence of the Egyptian ruler in the palace. Again, many prayers must have been put up for him night and day before the throne of God! There was no more contact between Moses and his parents. It must have seemed utterly hopeless at times. It was, no doubt, very hard for them not to be able to witness the changes as he grew from a child, to an adolescent, to a grown man. Still, they must have continued in prayer.

For nearly forty years, the only influence Moses had was that of Egyptian culture, education and religious teaching. We are not told whether the father or mother of Moses lived to see the day when he *"refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."*

Like Manasseh and Ephraim, Moses was helped to leave the life of luxury and ease in Egypt, to endure hardships, wants and reproaches for Christ's sake. After forty years, those prayers were answered.

For those who are burdened in prayer for children and young people, these accounts provide great encouragement. May God grant that we may be the subject of such prayers and feel the constraining of the Holy Spirit to be found among the poor and afflicted people of God.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

Faith in Jesus is the trust and reliance of the heart on Him, for help and deliverance.

Venn

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE CONSIDER THE LILIES

Whenever we see flowers in their beauty, like the lily on the front cover, we are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus as He taught the people. The multitude gathered around Him were so earnest to hear His words, that they trod upon each other. In Luke chapter 12, we read: *“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”*

“Consider” – should we not more readily remember this beautiful admonition? All the glory of Solomon has long ago passed away; not a vestige of it remains. However, the lily still grows in its many and varied forms, to teach its own simple lesson. It calls to mind the gentle admonition of Him who *“spake as never man spake”* before.

What a reminder not to seek after the clothing of our poor, perishing bodies, to the neglect of our never-dying souls! All these things the nations of the world seek after. Leave these things to them. They must perish with the using. That which is needful, a loving Father will provide; *“but rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Luke 12.31). *“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Colossians 3.2). Consider Him, who, at the little home in Bethany, reminded Martha not to be *“careful and troubled about many things,”* but rather to choose, with Mary, that better part which should never be taken away. *“The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever”* (1 Peter 1.24,25).

Adapted from Old Jonathan – Friendly Companion 1953

What is honour, and riches, and the favour of creatures, so long as I lack the favour of God, the pardon of my sins, an interest in Christ, and the hope of glory! O Lord, give me these, or I die; give me these, or else I shall eternally die.

Thomas Brooks

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE GREAT KING AHASUERUS**

King Ahasuerus sat on the throne at Shushan the palace. He reigned over the great kingdom of Persia and Media; a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. After three years, Ahasuerus made a great feast for all his nobles and princes. For nearly six months, he showed them his great riches and the majesty of his kingdom.

Then, for seven days, he made a feast for all the people at Shushan the palace. Vashti the queen made a feast for the women at the palace. On the seventh day, the king asked his servants to bring Vashti in her royal apparel and crown to his feast. He wanted to show the people her beauty, but the queen refused to come.

The king was very angry! He asked his wise men what should be done to Vashti for disobeying him. They told him that her action would cause women in the land to dishonour their husbands. They said that Vashti should no longer be queen and her royal office should be given to another.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Ahasuerus make for his nobles and princes?
2. Whom did the king ask his servants to bring?
3. What did she do? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. The book of the law.
2. A pulpit of wood.
3. From morning until midday.

Contributed

*“But the
queen Vashti
refused to come
at the king’s
commandment”*

Esther 1.12

BIBLE LESSONS**ISRAEL TURNS TO IDOLS**

One would think that after all God had done for the people of Israel, and after they had promised to serve Him faithfully, they would never bow down to idols and worship them. However, they failed to keep God's commandment: "*Ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars.*"

The Canaanites were not completely destroyed from each tribe, as God had commanded. They continued to live there. Their idols were left standing under green trees and in high places for the Israelites to see. The Israelites were the only people in the world who worshipped the Lord God. Other nations worshipped images made by men, or such things as the sun, moon, stars or planets.

The Israelites began to make marriages with the Canaanites, taking their daughters for wives and giving their daughters to the Canaanites. Soon Israel was ensnared! They had never seen God with their bodily eyes. To worship Him, they had to make a long journey to Shiloh where the tabernacle was. How much easier it was to have an image close at hand to bow down to.

How quickly they turned out of the way! Three times in the year, they were commanded to appear before the Lord in Shiloh. No doubt, after a time, the three journeys became two, and then only one, until they left off the worship of God completely.

When we begin to depart from God's ways, we will find in the end that we have departed from God. Having left the worship of God for idol-worship, the Israelites soon fell into evil practices.

Although they had forgotten their promises to God, He did not forget His promise to chastise them if they turned away from Him. He raised up the king of Mesopotamia to oppress them. The Bible tells us that "*the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel.*" For eight years, they served this king. He took the grain of their fields and the oil of their olive trees.

In their distress, the children of Israel remembered the Lord and cried unto Him. Although they had greatly sinned against God, He had mercy upon them and raised up a deliverer. This first deliverer, or judge, was Othniel, who had conquered Kirjath-sepher at the request of Caleb. He would be one of many deliverers for Israel. The Bible tells us: *"The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chusban-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand."*

When the rest of Israel had fallen into idol worship, Othniel had to stand alone. Having obtained such a great victory over the king of Mesopotamia, he earned the esteem of the people, and he restored the worship of God in Israel. Othniel ruled in Israel for forty years, and God gave them rest from the oppression of their enemies.

After the death of Othniel, the children of Israel soon turned away from the Lord. There arose another generation in Israel. Like their fathers and grandfathers, they refused to listen to the priests and Levites, and turned again to the worship of idols.

We are told that the Lord *"strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel."* More than fifty years before, Balak king of Moab had hired Balaam to curse Israel. At that time, God defended Israel, but now God took away His protection.

Eglon joined forces with Ammon and Amalek, two other perpetual enemies of Israel. The Moabites had a courageous leader, while Israel had no leader at all. They had forsaken God, and God had left them. Without God's help, Israel was quickly defeated. They were made to serve the king of Moab for eighteen years. What unhappy years they were! Each year, a tribute (tax) had to be paid to the king of Moab. The Moabites grew richer, while the Israelites suffered from extreme poverty.

In Deuteronomy, Moses had warned the Israelites that such a day would come; even the nations around Israel would say, *"Wherefore hath the LORD done this unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken ... the Lord God ... for they went*

and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom He had not given unto them” (Deuteronomy 29.24-26).

You can read about this in Judges chapters 2 and 3.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God command Israel not to make with the inhabitants of Canaan?
2. What were they to do with their altars?
3. How long did they serve the king of Mesopotamia?
4. Who was the first deliverer or judge that God raised up?
5. Whom did the king of Moab join forces with against Israel?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Eleazar. He was the high priest.
2. Judah.
3. Adonibezek.
4. Othniel. He was Caleb's nephew.
5. A blessing (or springs of water). The upper springs and the nether springs.

WHAT CAN IDOLS DO?

A missionary in India told the following story of a little boy who had been taught about the one true God and about Jesus in a mission school.

The little boy lived in a house with a heathen, a man who worshipped idols. One day, he said to the man, “There is only one God, the One who made the earth and sky and everything. He gives us the rain and the sunshine. He knows everything we do, and He can save us or kill us. These images that you pray to are only lumps of baked clay. They cannot see or hear. How can they do any good, or save you from any trouble?”

The heathen man paid no attention to the boy, and soon afterward, he went on a journey. While he was gone, the little boy took a stick and broke all the images, except the largest, and put the stick into its hands.

When the man returned, he was very angry at what happened and asked, "Who has done this?"

"Perhaps the big idol has been beating his little brothers," the boy suggested.

"Nonsense!" the man said. "Do not talk like that. Do you think I am a fool? You know as well as I do that the thing cannot raise its hand. It was you, you little rascal. To pay you for your wickedness, I will beat you to death with that same stick!" Seizing the stick, the man went toward the little boy.

"But," the boy said quickly, "how can you worship a god like that? Do you suppose that he can take care of you and the world if he cannot take care of himself and the other idols, let alone be able to make you?"

Then, the heathen man stopped to think, for this was a new idea. The more he thought, the more senseless the idol seemed. After a time, he became a believer in Jesus, and he knelt down and prayed to the only true God.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1907

ANSWERED PRAYER

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He beareth us" (1 John 5.14).

Early in July 1952, I received the following letter, which is a story of answered prayer:

"It is now over twenty years since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance in London. You were attending a convocation of Free Church representatives, and during your brief visit were the guest of Mr. G.B. of Harlesden.

"During your visit, I was engaged by Mr. B. to drive you to the hotel where you were staying in Nicol Road; maybe you will recall the incident to which I refer. It was late at night, and I was feeling, and obviously looking, utterly miserable. You asked

what was worrying me, as I drove you to your hotel. I remember my inward struggle to hold back the tears as I told you my story: how I had just come from home, having left my wife in tears, and my baby daughter lying so still on the bed, critically ill with pneumonia; how the doctor at her bedside had gravely told us that there was little or no hope of saving her life.

“No, I did not want to leave her and do that hire job, but I knew that I could do nothing more, that I should only have broken down and further upset my wife; so I came out and picked you up. I shall never forget the miracle that followed; how we stopped at the roadside, yes, just at the roadside; and you prayed to God that she might be made well again.

“You know, sir, that roadside service was more impressive than if it had been held in the world’s largest cathedral. After we had prayed, I knew, and I must say again with every emphasis, I knew that my daughter would live.

“She will be celebrating her twenty-first birthday on the first of September, and I just could not let this day go by without sending you my heartfelt thanks for teaching me the power of prayer. Yours very sincerely, B.G.B.”

You can imagine my surprise and joy and thanks to **almighty God** to receive this letter after so long a time, and I think of His sovereignty, love and grace. *“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days”* (Ecclesiastes 11.1). The following is culled from my reply:

“You write: ‘I shall never forget the miracle that followed!’... *‘With God all things are possible’* (Mark 10.27). Have you ever considered that ‘to believe on the **Lord Jesus Christ** as one’s **Saviour**’ requires a miracle too? *‘Ye must be born again’* (John 3.7). Every true believer is a miracle of grace – the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

Grace makes the Saviour known,
And purifies the heart.
Grace will conduct me to the throne,
And endless life impart.

Joseph Irons – 1816

I paid a surprise visit to the home of the family referred to in the letter on October 19 – twenty-one years after this great answer to prayer. What a welcome I had!

G. Gordon Keeling

FIGHTING ON THE KNEES

John Macdonald was an eminent Christian, much given to prayer, and known as “the man who would fight only on his knees.” A misunderstanding arose between him and his landlord, who not only threatened to eject him from his croft (small farm), but actually laid violent hands on his person. John Macdonald quietly bore his landlord’s blows, and said good-humouredly: “I will not fight you standing, but I will try you on my knees.” Hearing this, the landlord went away in a great rage, believing himself to be highly insulted.

Meeting another of his tenants, the landlord complained to him of the insult John had offered by proposing to fight him on his knees. “He will do it too,” said the tenant; “and I fear you will have the worst of it.”

“How so?” asked the landlord.

“John Macdonald,” he replied, “has much to say with heaven, and he usually gets whatever he asks from the Almighty. It was in this way that he proposed to encounter you on his knees, and if he does so, you will be sure to lose the day.”

On hearing this, the landlord became frightened and never rested until he had asked forgiveness from John Macdonald. He was very kind to him ever after.

The Apostle of the North by John Kennedy, D.D.

MODEST CLOTHING – A WORD OF CAUTION

What is your model for clothing or fashion? Are you guided by principles in the Bible or by the world? In recent years, we have noticed an increase in the amount of flesh being displayed by girls and young women in their clothing. This is true of some

who attend our churches, including some who have professed to be followers of the Lord Jesus. Is this what girls and young women should be doing? Is this what parents should be allowing their daughters to wear?

Should those who fear the Lord (and their children) be dressing to fashion themselves after the world? While the people of God must live in the world, they are exhorted to be separate from it. Their bodies are called *“the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”* (2 Corinthians 6.16, 17).

The Bible instructs us to dress modestly: *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array”* (1 Timothy 2.9). Is wearing a short skirt or a low-cut top, dressing modestly? Our clothing should not display areas that should be kept private, drawing attention to ourselves and causing men to lust.

Boys and girls should not be following all the latest fashion trends of the world, wanting to wear the most fashionable clothing labels, rather than that which is practical and useful. The Apostle John gives important, practical admonition to those who fear the Lord: *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (1 John 2.15-17). His words of advice are also applicable to our clothing and outward appearance.

The way that we dress and allow our children to dress is observed by the world. By wearing immodest clothing, we may bring dishonour upon the name of the Lord. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5.16). Our

appearance is also observed by those who attend services with us. Children who are taught to dress modestly, may be confused by those who wear more revealing clothes. Immodest clothing sets a poor example and may prove a stumblingblock to others. *“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak”* (1 Corinthians 8.9).

May we consider these thoughts when we choose what to wear or allow our children to wear. May we be enabled to walk in the fear of the Lord and set a good example for the younger generation. *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10.31).

Contributed

THE BLIND BOY

Copaul lived in India and was born blind. His home was a pit that had been dug in the ground. The roof was made of branches and twigs, so that it was almost level with the ground. He shared this wretched dwelling with his grandmother and his faithful dog. The elderly lady was an idol-worshipper, and she often sat at the entrance of the pit with her spinning wheel. Each day, the dog led the boy from house to house to beg for food.

One time, the dog guided Copaul to a house located in the centre of a garden. The dog could see what the boy was not able to see – a white man sitting on the porch. The dog pulled his master to the open door and stood still. Copaul, who sensed someone was nearby, bowed deeply so that his nose almost touched the ground, but he had no idea who was there.

The man was one of God’s servants. Through divine providence, the blind boy had been sent here to receive instruction about God and the Bible. The missionary took pity on this boy. The little clothing that he was wearing was nothing more than rags. The missionary questioned him: “Where do you come from, and why are you here?”

Copaul answered, “I am hungry, sir!”

The missionary wanted to know if Copaul was really blind or only pretending. He took a coin out of his pocket and tossed it

at Copaul's feet. The lad did not even acknowledge the coin. The dog, however, was accustomed to gathering coins for his master. He grabbed the money with his mouth and dropped it into Copaul's hand. The missionary was now satisfied that the boy had been truthful. He gave him some clothes to wear and sent him to the Christian school located next to his garden.

Day after day, the dog guided Copaul to school and waited for him until evening, when it was time to return home. Copaul was quick to memorize many Bible verses. Blind people often have a good memory, and he remembered all that he learned.

Soon, the missionary was required to go on a journey. He was gone for about two months. When he returned, his first visit was to the school; but Copaul was not there. He was told that the grandmother had forcefully taken Copaul back home because she was a heathen who worshipped idols. She was convinced that the Bible was an evil Book. She would rather go hungry than allow her grandson to attend the Christian school.

The missionary hurried to the wretched dwelling of Copaul. He crawled inside and found the poor, blind boy in a very pitiful condition. His bed was a little bit of bamboo and his pillow was only a few rags. His loyal dog lay at his side, but as soon as he saw his master's friend, he jumped up and greeted him joyfully.

"Copaul, my dear boy," said the missionary, "why are you lying here?"

There was no response, but as soon as the missionary took hold of the boy's hand, the lad realised that someone was near. Not knowing who it was, he thought it was his grandmother. Slowly, he began to speak: "Oh, Mother, Mother, let me die! I do not want to be in the dark. I want to go where it is light, where God is; the God who sent His Son into this world so that sinners can be saved." He then whispered all the Bible verses that he had memorised at school. He especially repeated over and over again the text, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," until he lay totally exhausted.

The missionary knelt beside Copaul. He prayed with him and for him. The Lord was acknowledged for this precious jewel

that He had drawn out of the dust of India. When the word “Amen” was spoken, the lad cried out, “I see; oh, I see Him in His beauty!”

These were his last words. We may hope that, by grace, he experienced a blessed portion – that which no eye has seen nor ear has heard.

Adapted from For the Generations to Come, Volume 2

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (7)

“The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will bear their cry, and will save them” (Psalm 145.18,19).

Ruth must now take this venture in faith. Everything seemed to depend upon the response of Boaz, but really, everything was in the Lord’s hands! *“My times are in Thy band”* (Psalm 31.15). We can so easily forget that God has everything under His control, with all events at His command. It is a great comfort when we can leave everything in His wise, skilful and almighty hands. But still, a step had to be taken – and taken in faith!

We must remember that the days in which Ruth was living were very different to the days in which we are living. Society was different, customs were different, and the culture was different. The ways certain things were done was also very different. But God is the same!

“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do” (Ruth 3.1-4).

Such instructions may appear very strange to us. Yet, surely, if it was bad advice, Scripture would be very clear in stating this. But we do not read of any reproof from the Lord, either to Ruth or Naomi. Ruth gives a very clear answer: *“All that thou sayest unto me I will do”* (verse 5).

We might do better in viewing the beautiful **types** set forth here: Boaz as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Ruth as a type of one of the Lord’s people. Then, the instruction for a needy soul to go by faith, and lay at the feet of Jesus, becomes very beautiful. Remember the words of Naomi, *“And he will tell thee what thou shalt do.”* How much more so the dear Lord Jesus, to those who seek grace to lie before Him, falling into His hands, and know no will but His!

Ruth had to lie until midnight, waiting patiently for Boaz to speak. So also, we must wait until the Lord speaks and not try to rush matters along. *“And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him”* (Isaiah 30.18).

The reply of Ruth to Boaz, when he questioned who was at his feet, is also very expressive. *“I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman”* (verse 9). Ruth requested Boaz to take care of her as a husband, that she might be provided for, and that she might find rest in being looked after.

The type here is also wonderful – a poor sinner at the feet of Jesus, seeking the dear Lord to be very gracious and cover with His loving care and protection, along with the supply of every need! It has also been said that this skirt might be viewed as the robe of Christ’s righteousness, to present a poor sinner perfect in the sight of God.

What a wonderful answer Boaz gave to Ruth, amply showing that he was not cross or upset to discover that it was Ruth at his feet! If Ruth had any fears (and we can only imagine that she did), all of them would have been taken away in a moment! The very first word he spoke is *“Blessed,”* which means “to favour”

or “to approve.” When Boaz said, “*Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter,*” he was seeking a blessing from God upon Ruth, as he detected the grace of God in her heart.

How encouraging to those who come to the Lord Jesus in prayer! There may be many fears, concerns and apprehensions, yet the Lord delights to see poor sinners come before Him, seeking His mercy and grace. Jesus Himself says, “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6.37).

It is a great privilege and favour to come before the Lord in prayer. Indeed, the Lord will only bless those who come to Him. It is a very sad truth that if we had no need to pray, we would not! We would carry on our lives without ever coming to the Lord in prayer. Or, if only outwardly religious, then we would be satisfied with a mere **form** of prayer, but no prayer with a true sense of need.

I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?

Young People's Hymn 120

When the Holy Spirit begins the work of grace in the hearts of His people, very soon that **true** spirit of prayer will be given. Something used of God, whether spiritual or providential, will **compel** them to cry unto Him in prayer. Something will bring them down upon their knees at the feet of Jesus.

Boaz was a mighty man of wealth, but he was also very kind and gracious. How much more so is the Lord Jesus, who has heaven and earth at His command and waits to answer prayer! “*He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee*” (Isaiah 30.19).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 17**

Isaiah chapter 61 begins with one of the most wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament: *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach ...”* (verse 1). The Hebrew name “Messiah” means “the anointed One,” and the Greek name “Christ” means the same. We must never forget that Jesus Christ is the Word of God (John 1.1). Hence, this prophecy marks the very centre of the saving truths of the Bible.

It is significant that the first and part of the second verse were read in the synagogue at Nazareth by the Lord Jesus immediately after He had been tempted of the devil. He then bore testimony to the truth of the prophecy when He said: *“This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”* (Luke 4.21). How honoured therefore are all the servants of God who are called to preach the gospel!

Verses 1 to 3 spell out one of the most concise, yet comprehensive, declarations of the blessed, effectual ministry of the Saviour in the Word of God. Many sermons have been preached down through time based on one or more of these verses. But do consider the outcome of it all: *“that they”* – that is, saved sinners – *“might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified”* (verse 3). How significant are those last five words! In effect, verses 4 to 6 speak of the same occupation performed by poor, sinful men. Yet, through the blessing of the Spirit of the Lord God resting upon their labours, they shall be called *“the Ministers of our God.”*

Verses 7 to 9 refer more particularly to the Lord’s work amongst His own nation and the effect of this among the Gentiles, before the Lord Jesus is represented in verse 10 as the heavenly Bridegroom. The chapter closes with a promise which is graphically likened to the life and production of fruit in creation – the springing forth of righteousness and praise before all the nations.

Chapter 62 focuses more on the outcomes of the blessings which will be manifested upon the church here below. Zion

(Jerusalem) will be seen in all the glory of her imputed righteousness, which she receives from the Saviour. This is declared in verse 3: *“Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the band of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the band of thy God.”* The contrast could hardly be more clearly drawn when referring to her former state in verse 4: *“Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah”* – My delight is in her – *“and thy land Beulah”* – Married.

Verses 6 and 7 speak of the occupation of the watchmen whom the Lord has set upon the walls of Jerusalem. All who speak in the Lord’s name should heed the command: *“Ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence”* (verse 6)! This is followed by further commands to these watchmen in verse 10.

Then, the last two verses bring this part of the prophecy to a resounding conclusion: *“Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.”*

Chapter 63 returns to the One who has accomplished His great work of salvation to procure all these great blessings for His church. The first verse is so telling, as a question is put and answered: *“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”*

Mighty to save is Christ the Lamb;
 Let all the saints adore His name,
 And make His goodness known;
 With one accord proclaim abroad,
 The wonders of their Saviour, God,
 Whose blood did once atone.

Gadsby’s Hymn 592

Verse 5 is very similar to the almost plaintive word in chapter 59.16: *“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore ...”* Thus, the first 6 verses tell of the Lord Jesus coming to subdue the enemies of the church. This brings the latter to acknowledge her precious Saviour and a little of all that He has done for her in verses 7, 8 and 9. Many have blessed their Saviour personally in being brought to experience a little of the sacred comforts of verse 9: *“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”*

A sad and solemn reflection indeed is verse 10, concerning past rebellion against the Holy Spirit. This is followed by remembrances (verses 11-14) of the Lord's great mercies in those former days, especially being led by the right hand of Moses through the wilderness by the Spirit of the Lord. These are used to bring the church to prayer (verse 15 to the end).

The prayer is heartfelt, acknowledging the Lord's claim upon His people as in verse 16: *“Doubtless Thou art our Father ... Thou, O LORD art our Father, our Redeemer.”* Again, in verse 19: *“We are Thine: Thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by Thy Name.”*

This prayer continues with great feeling and urgency in chapter 64: *“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!”* God willing, I will gather this up in the last essay on Isaiah next month.

Brian Mercer

TRUSTING – CLINGING

He who trusts in his own strength will surely fall, but he who believes will see the glory of God. The Angel of the covenant dislocated Jacob's thigh, but not his arms, by which he clung round His neck.

Krummacher

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about BUYING. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. When a man found treasure in a field in Matthew 13.44, what two things did he do?
2. In Matthew 25.9, what were the five foolish virgins told to go and do?
3. What happened when they went to buy?
4. What were the thirsty told to buy in Isaiah 55.1? How were they to buy it?
5. What had they spent money for in verse 2?
6. On what day did Nehemiah determine they would not buy wares (goods) or victuals (food)? (Nehemiah 10)
7. What did the Lord counsel the church of Laodicea to buy of Him in Revelation 3?
8. What did David want to buy from Araunah in 2 Samuel 24? For what purpose?
9. In Proverbs 31, what does a virtuous woman consider? What does she then do?
10. What are we told to buy in Proverbs 23? What are we not to do with it?

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Abraham.
2. Aaron.
3. Ebedmelech. Jeremiah.
4. Jonah. (or Jonas)
5. The Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.
6. The ravens (1 Kings 17.4).
7. John the Baptist (Luke 7.28).
8. Elisha (2 Kings 6.6); Samaria (verse 20).
9. Nathan (2 Samuel 12.1).
10. Elijah (1 Kings 18.36-38).

THE UNCHANGING GOD

Jehovah, God! Thy gracious power
On every hand we see;
Oh, may the blessing of each hour
Lead all our thoughts to Thee.

If e'er by duty called we speed
To earth's remotest bound,
Thy hand will there our footsteps lead,
Thy love our path surround.

Thy power is in the ocean deeps,
And reaches to the skies;
Thine eye of mercy never sleeps,
Thy goodness never dies.

From morn till noon, till latest eve,
Thy hand, O God, we see;
And all the blessings we receive
Proceed alone from Thee.

In all the varying scenes of time,
On Thee our hopes depend;
Through every age, in every clime,
Our Father and our Friend.

J. Thompson

The

Friendly Companion



“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”
(Luke 15.7)

August 2023

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Front cover photo: Febb, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clams_on_Sandy_Hook_beaches_-_panoramio.jpg

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

The last two months, we have been writing of children for whom prayers were made and how the Lord answered them. There were, no doubt, many others who were the subject of such prayers, but the Bible does not specifically mention them. There were also those for whom we do not read of any prayer being offered up, and yet we may rightly conclude that prayer was made.

In the Second Book of the Kings, and in the prophecy of Isaiah, we can read of the prayer of Hezekiah upon his sickbed. Hezekiah was told: “*Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live*” (2 Kings 20.1; Isaiah 38.1). At that time, Hezekiah had no children, especially not a son to carry on the kingdom. It appears that Hezekiah may not have yet taken a wife. The wife that Hezekiah took after his recovery was named Hephzibah, which means “my delight is in her.” Isaiah later wrote of Jerusalem, in chapter 62, that it would not be termed “*forsaken*” or “*desolate*,” but “*Hephzibah*” (My delight) and “*Beulah*” (married) – a picture of Hezekiah’s state. God was pleased to answer Hezekiah’s prayer by adding fifteen years to his life.

Three years after he recovered from his sickness, Hezekiah and Hephzibah had a son whom they named Manasseh. What great joy he must have brought to them! Oh, the prayers they would have put up for him, knowing that one day he would become king in the place of Hezekiah. They knew that he would be a young boy on the day he became king. How they must have prayed that the Lord would be with him and give him a wise and understanding heart! They would have prayed that the Lord would help Manasseh to honour the Lord in all his ways and to obey His commandments. They were the fervent prayers of a godly father and mother, and we might think that he would be as tender and obedient as Samuel was in his early days. Hezekiah died when Manasseh was twelve years old.

When Manasseh became a young man, he hardened his heart and turned away from the instruction of his father and mother.

He rebuilt the high places that his father had destroyed. Upon these high places, he raised up altars for Baal. Next, he worshipped the sun, moon, stars and planets. The Bible tells us that he served *“the host of heaven.”*

The heart of Manasseh became bolder and more brazen. In the glorious temple that Solomon had built, and where the Lord said that He would put His name, Manasseh built more altars for the worship of idols. In the courts of the temple, he raised up altars to the host of heaven. Manasseh had no love for the house of the Lord as his father had. It had been the desire of Hezekiah to go up to the temple when he was recovered from his sickness.

It seemed that the teaching of his father and mother in the days of his youth had no effect upon Manasseh. Their prayers and supplications for him seemed to have been in vain. We cannot say with any certainty if his mother lived to see how her son provoked the Holy One of Israel, but at least his father was spared from the heartache and sorrow of it.

Wicked as these things were, yet the worst was still to come. He made his own children to pass through fire, which the heathen around him did in offering their children to their gods. He conferred with wizards and familiar spirits and used enchantments, all of which are condemned by the law of God.

Manasseh caused the people of Judah to do greater evil than all the nations whom God destroyed before their fathers to give them the land. He shed much innocent blood.

The wrath of God upon Manasseh and Judah was so great that He visited them with great evils. When people heard what God was doing to them, it made their ears to tingle, wondering how anyone could endure such judgments.

God caused Manasseh to be bound in fetters with thorns and carried down to Babylon. There, in all his affliction, *“he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.”* There, in that pitiful condition and far off from the temple of God, he prayed. His heart was broken. Like his father Hezekiah on his sickbed, now Manasseh cried

unto God, and God was ready to save him. The prayers of his mother and father were answered!

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The picture on our front cover this month shows the open shells of clams. Dead clams, like many other sea creatures, have much to tell us about the flood of Noah's time. Clams are known as bivalve molluscs. They have two valves that are hinged together, and they can close their shells very quickly to protect themselves from predators. When a clam dies of natural causes, the clam's grip on its shell is released, and the shell opens within a matter of hours. If a buried clam shell is found shut tight, it shows that the clam was buried suddenly.

We mention this because fossil clam graveyards are found all over the world – even on mountain tops – containing millions of clams with their shells shut tight. This speaks to us of a catastrophe that buried billions of clams very quickly; in other words, the worldwide flood of Noah's time. Since these fossil clam beds are found all over the world – and are often high above their natural habitat – it can only mean that the biblical worldwide flood is a fact of history.

Now, if the Bible is right about the worldwide flood, the earth is much younger than it appears to be, so there simply is not enough time for evolution to take place. Graveyards of closed clams have given us an open-and-shut case for biblical creation!

Creation Moments – ICR

“PRAISE IS COMELY FOR THE UPRIGHT”

Praise is the believer's helper in his trials and his companion after his trials. Jehoshaphat's army sang praises before the battle. David sang praises in the cave; Daniel, when the trap was set for his life, prayed and gave thanks three times a day.

Young People's Treasury 1902

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE NEW QUEEN**

A new queen was to be chosen for King Ahasuerus. The king appointed officers in every part of his kingdom to find beautiful, young women. They were brought into a special house for women at Shushan the palace. Each maiden would have a turn to come before the king. Then he would choose which young woman would be the queen.

Living near Shushan was a Jew named Mordecai. He had brought up Esther, his uncle's daughter, after her parents died. Esther was very beautiful, and she was among those taken into the king's house. Mordecai asked her not to tell anyone that she was a Jew. Every day he walked by the house for women to know how Esther was and what would become of her.

Finally, it was Esther's turn to go before the king. King Ahasuerus loved Esther above all the other young women, *"and she obtained grace and favour in his sight."* He chose Esther to be the queen and set the royal crown upon her head.

QUESTIONS:

1. Which Jew lived near Shushan?
2. What beautiful young woman had he brought up?
3. What did she obtain in the sight of the king? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. A great feast.
2. Vashti (or the queen).
3. Refused to come.

Contributed

*“And she
obtained
grace and
favour in his
sight”*

Esther 2.17

BIBLE LESSONS**THE SECOND AND THIRD JUDGES**

After many years of hardships and oppression under Eglon, king of Moab, the children of Israel remembered the Lord and cried unto Him. They realised their sin and felt humiliation for it. They took an offering to the high priest to offer on the great altar before the tabernacle. These things were all necessary before the Lord would raise up a deliverer.

The men whom God uses are often in very unlikely places. It was so with the deliverer (judge) whom God raised up at this time. He was found in Benjamin, the smallest tribe. The Bible tells us that he was "*a man leftbanded.*" In chapter 20, we are told that of all the great number of men who drew the sword in Benjamin, "*there were seven hundred chosen men leftbanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss*" (Judges 20.16). Ehud may well have been one of those skilled in slinging stones.

The children of Israel made a special gift for Eglon, the king of Moab, by which they hoped to win his favour and have their burdens lessened. Ehud was the man appointed to bring the gift. Ehud was a very brave and wise man. Secretly, he made a dagger with two very sharp edges. At that time, no Israelite could carry a sword or any weapon. The dagger was not nearly as big as a sword. Thus, he could hide it under his clothing upon his right thigh.

Ehud went with representatives of Israel, who carried the gift to the palace of Eglon, and presented it from the children of Israel. After Ehud had offered the gift to Eglon, he sent away those that carried the gift for him.

When the other Israelites had gone, Ehud turned back into the palace, saying, "*I have a secret errand unto thee, O king.*" Eglon answered, "*Keep silence.*" And all the king's servants that stood by him went out. Then Ehud was alone with the king, and he approached the king, saying, "*I have a message from God unto thee.*" Although Eglon worshipped idols, he rose out of his chair to hear a message from God. Ehud put forth his left hand, took the dagger, and thrust it into the king's belly. Because

Eglon was a very fat man, the dagger went in with the handle, and the fat closed around it, so it could not be pulled out. It was a message of death. You and I might be tempted to think that it was murder. In truth, it was God's judgment upon Eglon. From the beginning of their conquest of Canaan, Israel had been commanded to destroy all the Canaanites. In his lifetime, Eglon had also slaughtered many innocent people.

Ehud locked the doors to the parlour and escaped. When the servants of Eglon came to his room, they found the door locked. Thinking the king had laid down for a rest, they delayed opening the doors. During their delay, Ehud returned to the camp of Israel. He blew a trumpet in Mount Ephraim, and the children of Israel followed Ehud to battle. Without their king, the Moabites were very weak.

Under Ehud, Israel was strengthened. They quickly took the fords (places of passage) over Jordan to cut off any escape. They slew ten thousand men of valour, the mightiest men of Moab. Ehud proved to be a mighty warrior and a very good judge. For eighty years, Israel had rest.

After the death of Ehud, God raised up Shamgar. We are not told much more about him, except that he delivered Israel from the Philistines. He slew six hundred men, and his only weapon was an ox goad – a piece of wood about eight feet long, with an iron spike on one end.

You can read about this in Judges chapter 3.

QUESTIONS:

1. From which tribe did Ehud come?
2. When Ehud was appointed to bring the present, what did he secretly make?
3. What was the message from God to Eglon?
4. How many men of Moab did Israel slay?
5. What weapon did Shamgar have?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. A league.
2. Throw them down.
3. Eight years.
2. Othniel.
5. Ammon and Amalek.

A FAITHFUL DOG

Nancy and her family lived a short distance from a large pond. Their house stood alone, but a little farther down the road were a few more houses where neighbours lived. A little girl named Susan often played with Nancy.

The girls, who were both about five years of age, often played together in the garden. Lad, the dog, was a fine playmate, and he was always nearby. Woe be to anyone who tried to hurt Nancy or Susan, for he would growl and show his big teeth. Nancy's father and mother always felt more at ease when the dog was with them for protection.

Nancy knew that she was not allowed to go near the pond. She was only permitted to go there when her father went with her, and then she had a wonderful time. He sometimes took her out in a little boat. Naturally, Susan was allowed to go with them sometimes.

One warm, summer day in the month of August, the sun was shining brightly in a beautiful, blue sky. In the afternoon, Nancy and Susan went outside to play together. Lad was walking about nearby. The girls threw a ball to see if Lad would chase after it, but he seemed to have no desire to play just then. Nancy and Susan did not feel much like playing either, for it was a very warm day. For a time, they just lay on the grass talking together.

"How warm it is," said Susan. "Let's go down to the pond and sit on the edge with our feet in the water."

"I cannot do that! Mother will never let me," replied Nancy.

"No, I do not mean to go into the pond itself. We can just sit along the edge with our feet in the water."

Susan stood up, and then Nancy walked right along with her. At first, they went slowly toward the pond. Then they went a little faster, and finally, they were running to the pond. Lad ran along behind them.

When they got to the pond, they quickly took off their shoes and socks. The two little girls sat with great delight, splashing their feet in the water. It certainly felt good! Nancy looked around for a moment. Far away, she saw the roof of her house, and a little farther off, the roof of Susan's house. No one was to be seen. She hardly remembered that they were doing something that was forbidden by her parents. They soon forgot about everything and everybody. Lad was lying stretched out in the sand near a little bush. He seemed to be sleeping in the shade.

Susan suddenly found a stick and threw it out a little way into the pond. The stick floated gently upon the water. It did not go any farther away, and it did not come any closer.

"I want that little stick back again," said Susan. And when Nancy splashed the water with her feet, they noticed that the stick came a little nearer to them.

"Over there is a long stick," exclaimed Susan. "I'll use that to get my little stick back again,"

"O yes," said Nancy, "let me try," and she ran to get the long stick. She had it in her little hands before Susan could reach it. Nancy began to hit the water, and the little stick began to float a little way towards them. Nancy struck the water with the long stick with all her might, until suddenly the stick broke. Nancy plunged headlong into the water!

Oh, how frightened they were! Susan screamed, but Nancy was paralyzed with fear. She was driven away from the shore. Suddenly, before they knew what had happened, Lad jumped into the water and swam swiftly towards Nancy. Lad swam around her for a moment, and then grasped her dress with his strong teeth. Holding onto her firmly, he swam to the shore.

Susan was crying and shouting, but she did not know what to do. Suddenly, she heard someone calling. It was Nancy's

mother coming to the pond. She had wanted to give the girls something cold to drink. When she did not see them anywhere, she became uneasy and went to find them. Full of fear, she walked towards the pond. She could not believe the children would go there alone, knowing they were not allowed to go to that dangerous place for small children.

When she saw that they had gone to the pond, she became angry at those naughty little girls. However, she suddenly heard Susan screaming and began to run, for something serious must have happened. While she was running as fast as she could, at the same time, she prayed to the Lord for help and deliverance. It was the best thing she could do, for only the Lord could help. As she came nearer, she saw Lad swimming and holding Nancy by her dress. How frightened the mother was! When she got to the pond, Lad was just pulling Nancy onto the shore. Then, all three of them wept in their fright and in their gladness.

Quickly, the mother took the girls home and put Nancy to bed. She sent Susan to her own home, for Susan was also very much upset. I am sure you can understand that Susan's mother was also frightened when she heard the story.

How differently things might have turned out! Both Father and Mother had a very serious talk with Nancy. Now she understood why her parents considered the pond to be so dangerous. She promised that she would never play near it again. The Lord had wonderfully spared her life and caused Lad, the good and faithful dog, to jump in after her. Lad was also happy. He jumped and ran wildly around the house. Nancy's father gave him a nice piece of meat as a reward, and he certainly had earned it. They all loved Lad more than ever.

And now, dear children, will you also be very careful not to play alone near the water? Especially, obey your parents in everything and always do what they say! After reading what happened to Nancy, you can see how soon something terrible can happen. So many children have been hurt or died when they were disobedient and did things that were forbidden.

Pray that you may be given the fear of the Lord in your youth. *“Come, ye children, hearken unto Me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD”* (Psalm 34.11). We need the Lord to keep and protect us from all the dangers in our lives and in this world around us.

Adapted from Christian Stories for Young Children

SEEKING AND FINDING

Many years ago, in the island of Skye, lived a little girl, in whose heart there sprang up an earnest longing to find God. She thought He was not in her native isle, and she determined to go and seek Him. There was no kind friend to point out the Lord Jesus to her or to tell her the way to God.

She left her parents, who did not hinder her, thinking that her mind had given way. She crossed the ferry to the mainland and wandered on. She stopped everyone she met to ask if they could tell her where God was, because He was not in her native isle. Going up to the houses that she passed, she made the same inquiry. People pitied the poor girl, thinking that she was out of her mind, but no one told her where to find God.

She journeyed on for weeks, until she reached Inverness. The first person the girl met at that place was a lady, to whom she said, “I am come from Skye, where God is not. Can you tell me where to find Him?”

The lady was startled at the question and at the earnest face and manner of the young girl. She conversed with her, thinking at first, like the others, that the poor child’s mind was wandering. But she soon saw that it was not so, and being one who knew and loved God, she said, “Come with me. Perhaps I can show you where you may find God.”

The kind, Christian lady took the young wanderer home with her. On the next morning, which was the Sabbath, she took her to church. There, for the first time, she heard the Word of life. Before long, she found the One whom she had been seeking for, and her heart rejoiced in her Saviour.

The girl never returned to Skye, but she lived many years with the family of the lady who had proved to be such a kind friend. She lived an earnest, Christian life near the place where she had learned to know "*the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent*" (John 17.3), whom to know is life eternal.

Most surely, she could not forget her native isle in prayer. Many years after she left it, many in Skye, moved by the Holy Spirit, sought and found God. Often, in speaking to each other, these people would remember the little girl who had left their island and was led by a way that she knew not to a knowledge of the living God. They would say, "Who can tell but that the prayers of this little girl are now receiving their answer."

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1889

SPARE NOT CORRECTION

A certain farmer in England had an only son whom he loved most dearly. He could never bear to correct him for any fault. The indulged child grew up to be wayward and uncontrollable. Eventually, while still young, he ran away from home. For nearly twenty years, nothing was heard of him.

One day, the farmer, who was now an old man, was obliged to go on a journey, taking a large sum of money. Passing through a wood, he was suddenly stopped by a robber who seized his horse and demanded his treasure. The old man protested, but he was finally forced to deliver his money.

The robber stared intently at the man for a while. Finally, he said, "You do not know me!"

"No," said the old man.

"Well," said the robber, "I am your son! If you had corrected me when I was a boy, I might have been a comfort to you; but now I am a disgrace to you and a menace to society." He then handed back the money and disappeared into the forest, leaving the astonished father to pursue his journey.

Adapted from The Friendly Companion 1924

“THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER”

“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” (Deut. 22.5).

It appears that this word of the Lord has been forgotten or is being ignored or “got round” by some people, young and old, who attend Strict Baptist chapels. **The Lord's purpose in this command is that the difference between the male and female shall be clearly seen in the way we dress.** This is also His purpose in commanding that the male shall have his hair cut short, but the female shall not, and shall wear a head-covering in the house of God (1 Corinthians 11.1-16). The Apostle Paul, very importantly, identifies that these are gospel commandments centring in the precious doctrine that the God-Man, Christ Jesus, is the Head of His church, the “woman” – His bride. Very subtly, this is what the devil is aiming at in the evil transgender ideology.

In these solemn times, when many deny our Creator's distinction between male and female, it is even more important that nothing be done by us to blur the distinction between boys and girls, men and women.

No one who is acting in the fear of the Lord can wilfully continue to break one of the Lord's commandments when it is pointed out to them, especially when the Lord condemns it with such strong words as, *“for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.”*

The commandment applies to every boy and girl, man and woman. But in these days, it is especially God-fearing girls who face the difficulty of being different to others if they do not wear trousers, which in our society are in God's eyes the clothing of boys and men. However, the boys and men whose sisters, friends and wives wear skirts or dresses often share the reproach when they are together in public. May grace be given to **them** to support and encourage in this. It saddened us to hear recently of a school requesting that the boys should dress as girls

for International Women's Day. Such evils must be resisted in the fear of the Lord.

Some people will say that if trousers are bought from the girls' or women's department of the shop, then they are not boys' or men's clothing. But that reasoning will not stand when we consider why God gave the commandment – **so that the distinction between males and females should be very clear**. The two types of trousers most often worn by girls and women are jeans or black trousers. Apart from minor differences in the cut and fit, what is the difference between the boys' and the girls' clothing? Would anyone know if a girl was wearing boys' jeans or a boy was wearing girls' jeans? Another excuse is that if a female is going for a walk in the countryside or a farm visit or something like that, then it is "necessary" for her to wear jeans or trousers. Why is it "necessary"? Not because of modesty or practicality – the jeans and trousers worn by females are often very immodestly tight-fitting. It is deemed to be necessary because it is fashionable. A girl or woman wearing a skirt or dress will often be in a minority of one. But isn't that what Christians are called to? Are they not called to be different to the unbelievers? The fear of the Lord makes a person want to be different from the ungodly – inside and out. They desire to do that which the Lord delights in, not what their sinful nature wants or what others want them to do. Jesus said, "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matthew 6.24).

As with all the Lord's commandments in such matters, His word identifies a secondary way in which disobedience is damaging. Those who do obey the Lord's command concerning clothing often feel very confused when they meet other Strict Baptists who do not. Does not this difference put up barriers to friendship? The number of "chapel friends" is already small, but if that number is further reduced by these barriers being put up, is it surprising that some feel so lonely? This issue has divided churches and congregations and is one of the things dividing the Strict Baptist churches. Some will say that it is the heart that is important, not the outside appearance. It is true that someone

could appear to be obedient on the outside, while their heart is unchanged by God. But how could anyone who has been given a new heart which fears God, trusts in Him and loves Him, wilfully disobey any commandment He has given? This is loving obedience, not legality. May the Lord help you each. Never fear being reproached for Jesus' sake.

JESUS, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise;
Whose glories shine to endless days?

Gadsby's Hymn 427

T.J. Pocock

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (8)

"Fear not"

As Ruth lay at the feet of Boaz that memorable night, she knew that his response would determine her future pathway. Although she looked beyond Boaz to the Lord God of Israel, she may have been full of fears about how Boaz would react. Would he be cross and reject her? Would he be sympathetic, but unwilling or unable to help her? Or, would he be gracious and receive her? Two things in particular would concern her: what he would say, and what he would do. His lovely response answered both. *"And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest"* (Ruth 3.11). In a moment, any fears that Ruth may have had were taken away. This kind, gracious, wealthy man promised that he would take care of her.

The Lord's people have many fears as they live their lives upon this earth. Many fear the unknown future and what might lie before them! There may be great fears about certain situations and problems that are encountered. Young people may have fears about examinations, with so much depending upon what the results will be. Then, there is the fear of death! It is a tremendous blessing to be taught by the Holy Spirit that

there is One to whom we may go with our many fears. One who can be trusted. One who can help, encourage and undertake to manage all. This One is the Lord Jesus Christ – the **greater** than Boaz.

In Luke chapter 5, we read that the disciples had been out fishing all night and caught nothing at all. After teaching the people from the ship, the Lord Jesus instructed Simon Peter to go out into the deeper water and let down the nets for a draught of fishes. This being done, a great multitude of fishes were caught. Simon Peter was overwhelmed with this astonishing miracle, and the power of the Lord Jesus to command such a thing. Yet the Lord Jesus replied, ***“Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men”*** (verse 10).

After Jairus had constrained the Lord Jesus to come and heal his dying daughter, the apparent delay caused by the woman with an issue of blood, and then the servants telling Jairus that his daughter had just died – Jesus kindly spoke to Jairus, ***“Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole”*** (Luke 8.50).

Even the Apostle Paul, in that terrible storm in the Mediterranean Sea, when all hope that they should be saved seemed to be taken away, was spoken to by the Lord, ***“Fear not, Paul”*** (Acts 27.24).

The above accounts provide ample proof – and there are so many more throughout the Bible – that the Lord is able to come with a ***“Fear not”*** when His people most need it. One ***“fear not”*** in Scripture that has been made such a blessing to many a person in difficult and trying circumstances, is in Isaiah 41.10: ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.”*** Everything is promised by God, who is very able to strengthen, help and uphold in every time of need.

Boaz did not only say, ***“Fear not,”*** but he went on to say, ***“I will do to thee all that thou requirest.”*** Remember, at the beginning of the chapter, Naomi showed such a loving concern for Ruth’s welfare and future. She desired rest for Ruth, that it might be well for her. Naomi knew that she would not always

be there for Ruth, so she sought a way for Ruth's needs to be provided. The Bible is very clear that a husband is to provide for his wife (and children), while the wife (mother) is to be a keeper at home (Titus 2.3-5). Boaz was promising Ruth that he would take full care of her, so she would have nothing to fear. How much more shall the Lord Jesus take care of those who come to Him, seeking to find grace in His sight!

Psalm 23 begins with those well-known words of David, *"The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want."* Throughout his life, David came into many dangers, times of trial, conflicts and distressing situations, but he always proved the Lord to be his helper. God never failed him. *"I love the LORD, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live"* (Psalm 116.1, 2). May we also prove the Lord, in His mercy, to be our helper. The Lord knows all about our troubles and difficulties, and He is more than able to manage all.

May the Lord be pleased to teach us the great need we have for the salvation of our souls. As sinners, we deserve the punishment that is due, which is eternal death. Yet, God, in His great mercy, has devised a way to escape, a plan of salvation. Every poor, guilty, condemned sinner who comes seeking for his soul's salvation, is led by the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope of eternal life, the salvation of our never-dying souls. He alone can say, *"Fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest."* In His life on this earth, Jesus never sinned, so He wrought out that spotless robe of righteousness. And in His death, He shed His own heart's blood to make atonement for sin. The Lord Jesus has done everything required to save His people from their sins and to give them eternal life. May the Holy Spirit lead us each to the feet of Jesus – for none can perish there!

A.T. Pickett

Youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows.

The Little Gleaner 1889

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – PART 18**

Last month, I closed with a brief reference to the prayer in Isaiah chapter 63 verse 15, which continues into chapter 64. The whole of chapter 64 is indeed an example of heartfelt supplication, combined with the most honest confession, and also the acknowledgement of the Lord, the Creator and Saviour, as in verse 8: *“But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand.”*

Yet, in the midst of this self-abasing supplication and confession, there is a precious exercise of living faith in the prospect before the Lord’s people: *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him”* (verse 4). The last verse expresses the humility and most urgent needs of the supplicants: *“Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O LORD? Wilt Thou hold Thy peace, and afflict us very sore?”*

This prayer does not go unanswered, and the last two chapters speak of wonderful things which the Lord will do. However, chapter 65 opens with a clear condemnation of the Pharisees, as God declares: *“These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day”* (verse 5). Their sins will not go unpunished, as set out in verses 6 and 7. Then the Lord interjects a promise of His favour in a wonderful word: *“Thus saith the LORD, 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”* (verse 8). The sweet prospects of blessing to come are continued in verses 9 and 10. God refers to Achor – a solemn place in the Old Testament history, where Achan was buried – but now it is foretold that this very spot is to be *“a place for the herds to lie down in”* (verse 10).

The prophecy continues with further judgments upon those who have not sought the Lord. In these few verses (11-16), the

Lord God compares the future lot of His servants with the sorrows which will come upon the disobedient. Then, verse 16 begins to introduce a tremendous promise of future good. As the Lord tells that He will slay the idolaters, leaving His servant, who *"shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from Mine eyes"* (verse 16). This ushers in the signal promise in verse 17: *"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* Much has been fabricated upon this promise, but those taught of God, in the fear of the Lord, agree that primarily it heralds the first coming of the Lord Jesus and the commencement of the gospel day. What blessed things are foretold!

I mention only the last two verses – verse 24: *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."* What encouragement to pray! The Saviour confirmed this when He said: *"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him"* (Matthew 6.8).

Verse 25: *"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together ..."* This is a more concise repetition of the prophecy in chapter 11 verses 6-9. How amazing it is when the Lord fulfils it! Alas, how sad when the opposite prevails, and the wolf gets in amongst the flock (John 10.12).

Chapter 66 begins with a word that has often been a comfort and encouragement to the poor in Zion: *"For ... saith the LORD; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word"* (verse 2). After further warnings to idolaters, the Lord comes again: *"Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at His word ..."* (verse 5). Then the Lord prophesies of prosperity and sets before us Jerusalem as the mother church: *"That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory"* (verse

11). The prospect of peace and blessing is completed when the Lord says: “*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem*” (verse 13).

Again, in verses 15-18 the awful vengeance of God against His enemies is proclaimed. The contrast with the blessed prospect for “*him that is poor and of a contrite spirit*” is once more graphically highlighted. Dear young friends, the difference between the lost and the saved is perhaps never so clearly shown as here. The lost are “*they that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves*” (verse 17). The saved, on the other hand, are those for whom the Saviour prays: “***Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth***” (John 17.17).

The prophecy closes with the focus on “*My holy mountain Jerusalem*” (verse 20), with the prospect: “*And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the LORD*” (verse 23). The last word, though, in verse 24, delineates the solemn, awful fate “*of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.*”

It has taken eighteen months to reach the end of this beautiful and powerful prophecy. I have passed over much, only bringing out a few points as, I trust, led by the Lord.

Brian Mercer

TRUST IN A TIME OF STORM

A Christian woman stood one night in the doorway of her home listening to loud, reverberating thunder. “Are you not afraid to stand there on such a night?” someone asked her.

“Why should I fear?” she answered, “I am listening to my Father’s footsteps.” It is He who is passing by. “*Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed*” (Psalm 46.2).

Adapted from In all Their Affliction by Murdoch Campbell

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THINGS PREPARED. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did God prepare for David in Psalm 23?
2. What did God prepare for Jonah in Jonah chapter 1?
3. In Jonah chapter 4, we are told of three other things that God prepared for him. What are they?
4. Who said, "I go to prepare a place for you"? (John 14)
5. In 1 Corinthians 2, of what things did Paul say, "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*"?
6. In Hebrews chapter 10, Paul writes of the coming of Christ into the world. What did he say God had prepared for Him?
7. In Luke 1, of whose ministry was it prophesied that he would: "*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*"?
8. What prophet wrote to Israel, "*Prepare to meet thy God*"?
9. Who "*prepared an ark to the saving of his house*"?
10. In the Book of Esther, for whom did Haman prepare his gallows? Who was hung on them?

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. Sell all that he hath and buy that field.
2. Go to them that sell and buy for yourselves.
3. The bridegroom came.
4. Wine and milk. Without money and without price.
5. For that which is not bread.
6. On the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 10.31)
7. Gold tried in the fire. (Revelation 3.18)
8. The threshingfloor. To build an altar unto the Lord. (2 Samuel 24.21)
9. A field. Buyeth it. (Proverbs 31.16)
10. The truth. Sell it not. (Proverbs 23.23)

SPIRITUAL LONGINGS

Come, dearest Lord, and speak to me;
I long to hear Thy gracious voice;
My willing spirit would awake
And in Thy love alone rejoice.

Oh that the world awhile were gone,
And I might be alone with Thee!
Like Mary, at Thy feet to sit,
And from all earthly cares be free.

Forgiveness to my soul make known,
And wash me in Thy precious blood;
The Holy Spirit's witness give
That Thou art mine – my Lord, my God.

In silent adoration there
With tears Thy sacred feet I'd kiss;
No other place but this desire,
No joy can be compared with this.

Sweet foretaste of Thy bliss above,
To know and be for ever known,
Here would my happy soul begin
The song of praise around the throne.

Friendly Companion 1949

The

Friendly Companion



“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

(Ecclesiastes 11.9)

September 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

One of the most remarkable instances in the Word of God of parents praying for a child was the account of Manoah and his wife. They experienced the trial of being childless, along with many others who are mentioned in the Scriptures. This, no doubt, drew out prayer that God would favour them with the birth of a child.

God was pleased to answer their request. He sent an angel to Manoah's wife with the announcement that she would bear a son. She was to be very careful not to drink any wine or strong drink, nor to eat any unclean thing. Moreover, the hair of their son was never to be cut, for he was to be a *"Nazarite unto God from the womb"* (Judges 13.5). Samuel was a Nazarite, and also John the Baptist. A Nazarite was to be separate from others and dedicated to God's service. What a special son he would be!

When Manoah was told of the visit by the angel and the message he brought, he intreated the Lord to send the angel again to teach them how they were to bring up the child. To be given such a child was an exceeding great favour, and they felt their need of special grace to bring him up and train him in the ways of the Lord. The angel had promised that their son would begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

In answer to his prayer, the angel of God came again, appearing to the woman as she sat in a field. She went quickly to tell her husband, who came to the man, asking what they must do unto the child who would be born. The same thing could be said of Manoah and his wife that God had said of Abraham many years before, *"For I know him, that he will command" – teach – "his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD"* (Genesis 18.19). The angel told Manoah that all he had spoken to his wife before, she must be very careful to observe.

We are sure that many prayers were offered up for Samson in his growing years; prayers that God would bless him and help him to keep the godly Nazarite law. The Bible tells us that *"the child grew, and the LORD blessed him."*

The prayerful exercises and great diligence of Manoah and his wife stood out in striking contrast to the greater part of Israel, who had gone after the idol gods of the nations around them. Likewise, their prayers and faithful regard to obeying God's command in the Nazarite vow. It must have seemed almost of no avail when Samson became a man. While the outward signs of drinking no wine and no razor coming upon his head manifested purity and holiness, his heart revealed unrestrained lusts.

The Bible tells us that *"the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan."* Sadly, there were other times when his own spirit reigned and controlled him. He was continually attracted to the daughters of the Philistines – women who were immoral; women who were so unfit for a Nazarite, and who, though the weaker vessel, seemed stronger than Israel's deliverer.

How these things grieved his father and mother! It must have compelled them to pray that he might be delivered from the powerful snares of the Philistines. All their warnings seemed to have no effect upon him. There are some verses of the Bible that are difficult for us to understand. One such verse is found in this case of Samson. The Bible tells us: *"But his father and mother knew not that it was of the Lord"* – marriage to a Philistine woman – *"that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel."* Samson had such a promising beginning (obtained by faith), and he was doubtless the object of many prayers. He obtained many great victories, yet there was so much sadness for Samson, his parents and the people of Israel. How different was the end of Ephraim, Manasseh and Moses, those about whom we have written previously. Samson's last days (perhaps years) were spent in serving the Philistines. Yet, in his death, he was given a great victory over the Philistines. In Hebrews 11, Samson is listed among those who wrought great victories through faith.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

There are many things in nature that show forth the wonderful power and wisdom of God in creation. *“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches”* (Psalm 104.24). The diabolical ironclad beetle, shown on the front cover this month, is an example of God’s amazing design in a small insect.

The diabolical ironclad beetle is flat and low to the ground. It is as hard as a rock and almost as indestructible. It can survive being run over by a car and stamped on by a human foot. It is like a tiny tank on six legs. The outer shell cannot be pecked, cracked or squashed. The ironclad beetle can live for seven or eight years, which is much longer than other beetles. It lives mostly on rotten wood and dead plant matter.

Found on the West Coast of the United States, the beetle is protected by body armour that can withstand loads up to 39,000 times its weight, which is like a two-hundred-pound man surviving a 7.8-million-pound crush. The exoskeleton is made of impact-absorbing, tightly interlocked structures, which help to distribute stress. The shell is formed in two halves. The top and bottom halves at the front end of the beetle are tightly stitched together, creating a rigid shield around the vital organs within. At the rear end, the top and bottom halves can shift in relation to each other, relieving pressure on the vital organs in the front.

Now scientists are beginning to understand what makes this insect nearly indestructible. Analyses of microscope images, 3-D printed models and computer simulations have helped to reveal the secrets of the strength of the diabolical ironclad beetle. It is hoped that this may provide inspiration for the development of impact-resistant materials and sturdier designs for body armour, aeroplanes, buildings, bridges and vehicles.

Adapted from *Science News* and many other sources

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**HAMAN**

King Ahasuerus gave the highest office in his kingdom to a man named Haman. All the king's servants bowed before Haman and "*did him reverence.*" However, Mordecai, who was a Jew, refused to bow before him. He bowed and gave reverence only to God.

The servants reported Mordecai to Haman. They told him that Mordecai was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai refused to bow or give reverence to him, he was "*full of wrath.*" He wanted all the Jews to be destroyed.

Haman told the king that there was a certain people scattered in his kingdom, whose laws were different from all others, and who did not keep his laws. Those people should not be allowed to live. The king said that Haman could do with them as he pleased. Haman wrote letters that on a certain day, all Jews would be killed; "*both young and old, little children and women.*"

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was given the highest office in the kingdom?
2. What did Mordecai refuse to do? (3 words)
3. What would happen on a certain day? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Mordecai.
2. Esther.
3. Grace and favour.

Contributed

*“Haman
sought to
destroy all
the Jews”*

Esther 3.6

BIBLE LESSONS**DEBORAH AND BARAK DELIVER ISRAEL**

The Book of Judges is a continual repetition of the history of grievous offences, great oppressions, and gracious mercies. After Ehud had slain the king of Moab and defeated their army, the children of Israel enjoyed eighty years of peace. After the death of Ehud, Israel soon departed from the Lord. They followed the example of the nations around them and bowed down to their idols.

The Lord gave His people Israel into the hand of Jabin, one of the kings of Canaan, to afflict them. Jabin sent his army, led by his captain Sisera, to subdue Israel. Sisera's army had nine hundred chariots of iron drawn by great horses. For twenty years, he mightily oppressed the people of Israel.

Although there was no prophet at this time, God did not leave His people without a witness. He raised up a woman whose name was Deborah. She dwelt under a palm tree in Mount Ephraim. God gave her great wisdom to handle matters wisely. Thus, the children of Israel came to her with matters that needed judgment. Deborah was called a prophetess, as she was helped of God to foretell things to come.

As the oppression of Jabin and Sisera raged on, Deborah was directed of God to send a message to a man of Naphtali, named Barak, telling him to gather an army of ten thousand men and go toward Mount Tabor. God declared that He would draw Sisera, with all his chariots, to the river Kishon and deliver them into Barak's hand.

Although Barak was a brave man, he hesitated to go. Perhaps, it was the thought of Sisera's great chariots of iron, or that many of his fellow Israelites were not as brave as he was. He sent word to Deborah, *"If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go."* He knew that his soldiers would be much more inclined to fight if Deborah were with them.

Deborah sent word to Barak, *"I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for*

thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

Barak called for men from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and they went up to Mount Tabor.

The spies of Sisera, who had watched Barak and his army go up the mount, sent word to Sisera. He gathered his nine hundred chariots of iron, along with his army, unto the river Kishon, which flowed at the base of Mount Tabor. From the top of the mount, Barak and his army watched as the Canaanites marched along the banks of the river.

Deborah called out to Barak and his army, "*Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee?*" Barak and his army came down from the mount with great haste. The Lord Himself fought against Sisera and his army. From the song that Deborah sang in the next chapter, we may conclude that there was great thunder and heavy rain: "*The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.*" Sisera's army turned to flee, forsaking their chariots. They were smitten before Barak and the army of Israel.

Sisera forsook his own chariot and fled away on foot. As he ran away, he came to the home of Heber the Kenite. The Kenites were descendants of the father-in-law of Moses, and they had remained at peace with Jabin, the king of Hazor.

Heber's wife, Jael, saw Sisera fleeing, and she invited him into her tent to hide from the pursuing Israelites. Sisera gladly turned in to rest himself, thinking they would not expect him to enter the tent of a stranger. When he asked for water to drink, Jael gave him a bottle of milk and covered him with a rug. Exhausted from the battle and from running, Sisera lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

As Sisera slept, Jael quietly entered with a nail from the tent and a hammer. Bravely, she put the nail to his head and drove the nail into the ground. The great captain of Jabin lay dead at the foot of a woman, just as Deborah had prophesied.

As Barak pursued Sisera, he came to the tent of Jael, and she called to him, "Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest."

You can read about this in Judges chapter 4 and 5

QUESTIONS:

1. Which woman was called a prophetess?
2. Who was called to lead Israel's army?
3. How many chariots did Sisera have? What were they made of?
4. Barak and his army were commanded to gather to what mount?
5. To what woman did God give the victory over Sisera?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Benjamin.
2. A dagger.
3. Death.
4. Ten thousand.
5. An ox goad.

FOUR LITTLE WORDS

"When I was a boy, four little words had a greater effect upon me than almost anything else," said a gentleman. "They were among the first words my mother taught me." He then related the following story.

"My father grafted a pear tree. It was a very choice graft, and he watched it with great care. The tree was supposed to produce an especially nice kind of pear, and my father was quite anxious to see if it came up to his expectations. The second year, the tree blossomed, but it bore only one pear. This single pear was an object of concern to my father. He wanted it to become fully ripe, and he gave a warning to all the children that

they were not to touch it. The graft was low, and easily reached by us. It grew beautifully. 'I think the graft will meet my expectations,' said my father many times to my mother. 'I hope there is a prospect of having very good pears.'

"Father took everyone who came into the garden to see the graft, and everyone said, 'It will prove to be a most excellent pear.' The pear began to look very beautiful; it was full and round, and a rich, red glow was gradually appearing.

"Is the pear almost ripe? I long for a bite!' I cried as I followed my father to the pear tree one day.

"Wait patiently, my child; it will not be fully ripe for a week,' said my father.

"I thought I loved pears better than anything else! Often, I stopped and looked longingly up at this one pear. 'Oh, how good it looks,' I used to think, smacking my lips; 'I wish it was all mine.'

"The early apples did not taste as good as usual, nor the currants. Nothing was so appealing as that one pear. The longer I stood alone under the pear tree, the greater my longing for it became. 'Oh, I wish I had it!' was the selfish thought that gradually got uppermost in my mind.

"One night, after we were in bed, my brothers fell asleep long before I did. I tossed about and could not get to sleep. I crept to the window. It was a warm, still, summer night. There was no moon; no noise except the hum of numberless insects. My father and mother were gone away. I put my head out the window and peeped into the garden. I traced the dark outlines of the trees. I glanced in the direction of the pear tree, then at the pear! My mouth was parched; I was tempted.

"A few moments found me creeping down the back stairs, with neither shoes nor stockings on. The slightest creaking frightened me. I stopped on every step to listen. At last, I felt my way to the garden door. It was fastened. It seemed to take ages to unlock it, so fearful was I of making a noise, and the bolt grated. I got it open, went out and closed the door after me.

"It was good to get out into the cool, night air. I ran down the path. The patting of my feet made no noise on the moist

earth. I stopped a moment and looked all around, then turned in the direction of the pear tree. Soon I was beneath its branches.

“‘Father will think the wind has knocked it off,’ but there was not a breath of air stirring. ‘Father will think somebody has stolen it; some boys came in the night and robbed the garden. He will never know.’ I trembled at the thought of what I was about to do.

“I leaned against the trunk of the tree and raised my hand to find the pear and snatch it. On tiptoe, with my hand uplifted and my head turned upward, I beheld a star looking down upon me through the leaves. *‘Thou God seest me!’* (Genesis 16.13) escaped from my lips. The star seemed like the eye of God spying me out under the pear tree. I was so frightened that I did not know what to do. *‘Thou God seest me!’* I could not help saying over and over again. God seemed on every side. He was looking me through and through. I was afraid and hid my face. It seemed as if father and mother, all the boys, and everybody in town would take me for a thief. It seemed as though all my conduct had been seen as by the light of day. It was some time before I dared to move. So vivid was the impression made upon me by the awful truth in those four words, *‘Thou God seest me.’* I knew He saw me; I felt that He saw me.

“I hastened from the pear tree. Nothing on earth would, at that moment, have tempted me to touch the pear. With very different feelings, I crept back to my bed. I lay down beside my brother, feeling more like a condemned criminal than anything else. No one in the house had seen me; but oh, it seemed as if everybody knew it, and I should never dare meet my father’s face again. It was a great while before I went to sleep. I heard my parents come home, and I hid my face under the sheet. But I could not hide myself from a sense of God’s presence. His eyes seemed everywhere, searching into the depths of my heart. That was the beginning of a series of influences which I never got over. If I was tempted to any secret sin, *‘Thou God seest me’* stared me in the face, and I stood back, restrained and awed.”

The gentleman finished. I think his story will interest many children. I hope it will do more than interest them; I hope it will do them much good.

"Thou God seest me." These four little words are from the Bible. Hagar uttered them. She fled in anger from her mistress, Sarah, and went into the wilderness. An angel met her by a fountain of water. The angel bade her return to her mistress, and told her some things in her life which Hagar thought nobody knew but herself. *"Thou God seest me!"* she exclaimed. Then she knew it was the angel of God, for nobody but He could look into the most secret things of her heart.

Children, learn these four small words. Impress them upon your heart. Think of them when you lie down, when you get up, and wherever you go; when alone or with your companions, both at home and away. Remember, *"Thou God seest me."*

Adapted from *The Christian Treasury*

HONESTY THE BEST POLICY

Many years ago, the Duke of Buccleuch, a Scotch nobleman, bought a cow in the neighbourhood where he lived. The cow was to be sent to his home the next day. Early in the morning, the Duke was taking a walk, dressed in common working clothes. He saw a boy trying in vain to drive the cow to his residence. The cow was very unruly, and the poor boy could not manage her at all. Not knowing the Duke, the boy called out to him in a broad Scotch accent, "Hey, man, come here and give me a hand with this beast!"

The Duke walked slowly on, not seeming to notice the boy, who continued calling for his help. At last, finding that he could not control the cow, the boy cried out in distress, "Come here, man, and help me! As sure as anything, I will give you half of what I get." At this urgent plea, the Duke went and lent a helping hand.

"And now," said the Duke as they charged along after the cow, "how much do you think you will get for the job?"

"I don't know," replied the boy, "but I'm sure of something,

for the folks at the big house are good to everybody.”

As they came to the lane near the house, the Duke slipped away from the boy and entered by a different way. Calling his butler, he put a sovereign in his hand, saying, “Give that to the boy who has brought the cow.” He then returned to the end of the lane where he had parted from the boy, so as to meet him on his way back after receiving payment.

“Well, how much did you get?” asked the Duke.

“A shilling,” replied the boy, “and here is the half of it for you.”

“But surely you received more than a shilling!” said the Duke.

“No,” said the boy. “Sure, that’s all I got; and do you not think it is plenty?”

“I do not,” said the Duke. “There must be some mistake. As I am acquainted with the Duke, if you return, I think I will get you more.” They went back, and the Duke rang the bell. He ordered all the servants to be assembled. “Now,” said the Duke to the boy, “point me out the person who gave you the shilling.”

“It was that chap there with the apron,” said he, pointing to the butler.

The butler fell on his knees, confessing his fault, and begged to be forgiven; but the Duke indignantly ordered him to give the boy the sovereign and leave his service immediately. “You have lost,” said he, “your money, your situation, and your character by your deceitfulness. Learn for the future that honesty is the best policy.”

The boy now found out who it was that helped him to drive the cow. The Duke was so pleased with the manliness and honesty of the boy that he sent him to school and provided for him at his own expense.

Children, dread a lie or dishonesty. No one can tell what misery in this life a lie or a dishonest action may bring upon you. Certainly, if not washed away in the blood of Jesus, a lie will bring down upon you the everlasting displeasure of God in the next life.

Adapted from *The Little Gleaner* 1877

EYES OF THE LORD

“The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (2 Chronicles 16.9).

In order to help us understand God’s great knowledge, He is said in Scripture to have eyes. He does not have feeble eyes like ours, but He has a knowledge which is more than all the eyes of the world put together could possibly give. His eyes *“run to and fro throughout the whole earth.”* We see things only a very little way off, but God sees all things. His knowledge extends to all the people of the world, and He knows all thoughts and what is passing in all hearts. Our eyes need sleep, but God’s notice of us never wearies. Those who trust in Him never need to fear, for He will watch over them, and they shall be preserved from all real evil.

His eyes are looking into your hearts at this moment. What are your thoughts about Him? Can you say: *“Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee”*? (John 21.16) Wherever you are, and whatever you do, remember what Hagar said: *“Thou God seest me”* (Genesis 16.13).

Almighty God, Thy piercing eye
Strikes through the shades of night;
And our most secret actions lie
All open to Thy sight.

Adapted from *Friendly Companion 1953*

A WORD IN SEASON

A retired naval officer was once travelling by rail in Lancashire. When the train stopped at a station, many cattle dealers and drovers entered the carriage. They were all excited, and it was soon evident that one of them was being made a laughing-stock by the rest. At last, that man became irritated and uttered some oaths.

The officer put his hand on the man's shoulder and said, "Sir, you must not swear." The Bible says, "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain*" (Exodus 20.7).

The man looked at him and said, "And who made you a conductor over this carriage?"

"No one," replied the officer; "but I am your friend, and you will say so before night."

"Indeed, I will not," retorted the angry man. "There are many bad people that go to religious meetings."

"Too true," replied the officer, "**but there is never a swearer that goes to heaven.**"

This caused deep thought, and little more was said. However, when the train stopped, the man, much softened, took the officer by the hand. With real feeling, he said, "I do not like ye the less for what ye said to me."

Adapted from *The Little Gleaner 1889*

HASTY CONCLUSIONS

The deacon at a little village chapel was apt to be critical. In the congregation was a man named George. He had a very powerful singing voice, and the deacon sometimes hinted that George thought more of the music than the words he was singing. One afternoon, these two men, who were older now, went for a walk together. George told the deacon of his spiritual feelings. After he returned home, the deacon said to his wife, "George can **talk** religion too." He implied that he did not have confidence in the reality of what George had told him.

That same night, the deacon had a vivid dream. He thought he was in heaven, and he heard George's voice distinctly among the rest. When he awoke, the deacon told his wife about the dream. He commented that perhaps he had come to a wrong and hasty conclusion about George. Very soon after, they received news that George had passed away that very night.

Adapted from *Cheering Words 1991*

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (9)*“Howbeit”*

When Boaz kindly told Ruth not to fear, saying that he would take care of her, he then added another sentence that may have put her once more into great fear! There was a potential problem. *“And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I”* (Ruth 3.12). Another kinsman! That may have been a great shock to Ruth. Did not Naomi know about this nearer kinsman? How would Ruth react if this nearer kinsman decided to marry her? Was he a kind, good, honest, trustworthy man? All these thoughts may have rushed into Ruth’s mind.

Under the Levitical law, a young widow could be married to her late husband’s brother (or possibly cousin or even uncle), who would be the nearest relative, to raise up seed on behalf of the deceased man. This person was not obliged to marry the widow, but he was expected to do so. He would be known as the kinsman. The word “kinsman” is very closely associated with the word “redeemer.” To redeem is to buy back or re-purchase. The Lord Jesus is the great Redeemer of the people of God. He has redeemed His people with the purchase price of His own heart’s blood, by laying down His life. So, with the widow, she would be “bought back” into the family, along with all the inheritance. It does appear, certainly in the case of Ruth, that the nearest relative had the right to redeem. It may well have been that Naomi was unaware of this nearer kinsman-redeemer, and assumed that Boaz was the nearest.

How often we may be left to assume things without knowing the full facts! An awful lot of mistakes have been made by assuming. Joshua and the officers of the children of Israel assumed that the Gibeonites were telling the truth, when they said they were from a far country and had travelled all those miles to make a league with them (Joshua 9). Everything appeared so genuine and true. But really, the Gibeonites were lying and being deceitful. How were Joshua and the officers to know the truth? How could they see through what was

presented before them? *“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD”* (Joshua 9.14). Had they asked the Lord, He would have shown them. May we never, ever assume that we are real Christians, without knowing from the mouth of the Lord, that we are His.

“Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman’s part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth” (Ruth 3.13). Again, with the culture so very different from ours, we may struggle to understand these things. But in Old Testament times, these things would have been considered normal, although not that common. One thing appeared certain to Ruth: by the same time on the next day, she would be married again! But, to whom? She knew nothing about this nearer kinsman, but she knew Boaz to be a kind, loving man, with her best interests at heart.

How often in our lives, unexpected things happen, and sometimes very suddenly. Things which are contrary to our hopes and expectations, which we wish had not come upon us. It would have been so much more straightforward for Ruth if there was not a nearer kinsman – but there was! It may be that all the examinations have been passed, pointing to a certain career, but then no employment opens up in that field. It is extremely painful for a young person to fall in love with another, only to discover in time that someone else has already befriended them.

“Howbeit!” Not an easy word to explain. The simplest explanation is to use the word “but.” After the death of their father, Jacob, the brothers of Joseph feared that he would now revenge them for the evil they did to him years before. Joseph replied to them, *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **but God** meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”* (Genesis 50.20).

Also, we have Nehemiah reminding those with him of the time Balak, king of Moab, tried to have the children of Israel

destroyed, but they *“bired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing”* (Nehemiah 13.2).

These “howbeits” in our lives can be very hard to understand. They may appear as insurmountable mountains, for which we know not what to do. The “howbeit” may even be the work of a troublemaker or Satan. May we be helped to remember that God is over all, and He can rule and overrule in all things.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

“IT IS ENOUGH”

“**It is enough.**” These are words which, in substance, if not exactly, we may use today. Yet they are found several times in the Bible – another example of the fact that the Word of God is never out of date. I was struck a few months ago by the great difference in the circumstances wherein these words were uttered: “**It is enough.**”

Seeking the Lord’s help, I will endeavour to go through these instances in the Bible, and for simplicity, will take them in the order in which we find them.

First, we come across Genesis 45.28: “*And Israel said, **It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.**”* In this instance, these three words refer to the evidence that his sons, under God, had brought to dear old Jacob. They marked the end of a period of great sadness in Jacob’s life, but now he was persuaded that “*Joseph my son is yet alive.*” Dear young friends – we all need to take notice of true evidences of the Lord’s work in our lives. Do notice that Jacob had not yet seen Joseph alive, but he was persuaded by the evidences. It is notable that it was particularly “*when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.*” The same all-wise God knows just what evidences His dear people need today to revive their spirits, and then He gives

them faith to believe what God has done. Then, they too, can say, “**It is enough.**”

The second circumstance surrounding these words is completely different, as recorded in Exodus 9.28: “*Intreat the LORD (for **it is enough**) that there be no more mighty thunders and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.*” The speaker is Pharaoh, the powerful, but ungodly, king of Egypt. The hail and thunder which God had sent on the land of Egypt must indeed have been terrifying – we read that “*the fire ran along upon the ground*” (verse 23).

Thus, the demonstration of the mighty power of God in the earth appeared to break Pharaoh’s hard, proud heart, so that he had to say, “**It is enough**” (by way of punishment). Alas, how solemnly Pharaoh changed his mind, for we read, “*And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*” How true are the hymnwriter’s lines:

Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone.

Gadsby’s 746

Dear young friends, how much better if our hearts are truly broken by the Lord’s dealings with us, so that we shall have to acknowledge: “**It is enough**” (as regards the Lord’s judgments upon us). This to be followed by real repentance toward God.

The next instance I mention is expressed in the opposite sense, where we have the words: “is **not** enough.” You will find them in Joshua 17.16: “*And the children of Joseph said, The hill **is not enough** for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron.*” It seems here that the children of Joseph were dissatisfied with the Lord’s provision for them, although not without some justification. Yet we see that the Lord did not condemn them, but in answer to that request, gave them a double lot and this promise: “*But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the*

Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong” (verse 18). Surely then, they would say: “**It is enough.**” The lesson here is that at first they failed to trust in the Lord, being overwhelmed by fear as they looked upon the chariots of iron belonging to the Canaanites. Yet God repeated His former promises that they would prevail – and then the land would be enough for them. In writing this, the line of the hymn comes to mind: “And ask Him still for more” (Gadsby’s 959). Also, “*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*” (Psalm 81.10).

We have seen in the case of Pharaoh that when a man says, “**It is enough,**” the actions do not always go with the words. This is not so with God, as we see in the twice-recorded account of King David under the judgment of God for numbering the people (2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21): “*And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, **It is enough,** stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite*” (1 Chronicles 21.15). At the threshingfloor of Ornan, David proved the abundant mercy of God: “**It is enough, stay now thine hand.**” The punishment sustained was enough, under God’s mercy. Further to this, there was presently to be the unfolding of God’s great goodness in directing David to the site of the temple that was to be built there by his own son, Solomon.

What a mercy that “*God is not a man, that He should lie*” (Numbers 23.19)! When He says, “**It is enough,**” He means what He says – if He did not, what hope would there be for sinners?

When Jesus hung upon the cross at Calvary and, almost with His last breath, cried out, “*It is finished*” (John 19.30), the substance of that cry was: “**It is enough.**” God the Father certainly approved that the one great Sacrifice of His only begotten Son was all-sufficient to atone for all the sins of every blood-bought sinner – “**It is enough.**”

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about GOOD THINGS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did Moses tell the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6.11 that they would be given "*full of all good things*"?
2. In Deuteronomy 26.11, what did the Lord tell the Israelites they were to do with every good thing God had given unto them?
3. What did Joshua say of every good thing which the Lord had spoken of? (Joshua 21.45)
4. Of whom was it written that "*in him was found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel*"? (1 Kings 14.1, 13)
5. Of whom is it written in Psalm 34.10, "*They shall not want any good thing*"?
6. In Psalm 84, we are told that God will withhold no good thing from whom?
7. Who is said to be a high priest of good things to come? (Hebrews 9)
8. In Psalm 103, what are we told that the Lord satisfieth with good things?
9. In Psalm 92, what good thing is to be given unto the Lord?
10. Who asked "*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth*"? Of whom was he speaking?

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. A table. (Psalm 23.5)
2. A great fish. (Jonah 1.17)
3. A gourd, a worm and a vehement east wind. (Jonah 4.6, 7, 8)
4. Jesus. (John 13.2)
5. "*The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*" (1 Corinthians 2.9)
6. A body. (Hebrews 10.5)
7. John. (Luke 1.17)
8. Amos. (Amos 4.12)
9. Noah. (Hebrews 11.7); (Genesis 6)
10. Mordecai. (Esther 5.14); Haman. (Esther 7.10)

EVERY WORK BROUGHT TO JUDGMENT

Should I rejoice in this my youth,
And shun the paths of peace and truth;
And should I let my heart embrace
The mirth of every carnal place;
For this and every such like thing,
God will my soul to judgment bring.

If I to sinful feelings yield,
Although from man it be concealed;
Or, if my eyes, so prone to rove,
Cause me forbidden things to love;
For this and every such like thing,
God will my soul to judgment bring.

If I should lie, or cheat, or swear;
If I neglect God's house of prayer,
If I my parents disobey;
If I in secret never pray;
For this and every such like thing,
God will my soul to judgment bring.

Oh, then, what need I have of grace,
To keep me through my youthful days;
This grace, if God vouchsafe to give,
Then I to Him shall truly live;
Then sin and death will lose their sting,
When God shall me to judgment bring.

Young People's Hymn 242

The

Friendly Companion



“Four things say not, It is enough. The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.”
(Proverbs 30.15,16)

October 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

In the last four months, we have considered prayers that were made for children. They were humble, fervent prayers. They were prayers of faith! They were the prayers for Manasseh and Ephraim, for Moses, for Manasseh the son of Hezekiah and for Samson. If you were asked to name a child in the Bible for whom prayer was made, no doubt many of you would have answered Samuel. What a remarkable prayer was made for Samuel, and what a wonderful answer it received!

I am sure that many of you are acquainted with the narrative of Samuel's birth and life. His mother's name was Hannah, and she feared and loved the God of Israel. Yet she was called to endure a great trial. Although she was married to a wonderful husband, Hannah remained barren or childless. What is more, her husband had a second wife who was given many sons and daughters.

Whenever her husband, Elkanah, and his second wife had a child, they rejoiced together. The new baby was welcomed into their home. At such times, Hannah was almost forgotten, or at least it must have seemed so to her. It made her barren state a bitter thing to endure.

The Bible calls Elkanah's second wife an "*adversary*," who provoked Hannah very sore, mocking her because the Lord had shut up her womb. Each year, when Elkanah and all his family went up to the house of the Lord for worship, the mocking increased. How it hurt! The Bible tells us that Hannah "*wept and did not eat*," although it was naturally a time of feasting for the Israelites.

On one of those yearly visits, Hannah withdrew from the others, and with great bitterness of soul, she went alone to the temple door, where the high priest Eli was sitting. Hannah "*prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore*." Eli observed her closely, and he noticed that her lips moved, but no words were spoken. The Bible tells us that "*she spake in her heart*."

The Holy Spirit, who prompted Hannah to pray, tells us what she prayed. *“She vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child”* – son – *“then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”* We wonder if she was aware of what God had told Samson’s parents.

Even God’s high priest Eli mistook Hannah’s actions, thinking she was under the influence of strong wine. Young friends, if you are helped to seek the Lord, you may find that God’s own people may not understand you and may misjudge your actions, just as Eli did with Hannah.

When Hannah told him that she had not drunk any wine but had poured out her soul to the Lord, Eli spoke by the Spirit of the Lord, *“Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him.”* **God did grant it!**

The son Hannah asked for was given to her. She called his name Samuel, which means “asked of God.” Nor was this the end of her prayers. The following years witnessed many prayers for her child, knowing that one day she would have to bring him to the house of the Lord and leave him there.

We do not know exactly how old Samuel was when he was brought to the temple. The Bible only tells us that he was young. Hannah told Eli that she was the woman who stood by him some years before, praying unto the Lord. *“For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD.”*

Although Hannah left Samuel behind to serve with Eli in the house of the Lord, her prayers continued to bear him up before the Lord. She was not alone in praying for him, for Eli the high priest would also have earnestly prayed for the young child who was under his care. We may conclude from the Scriptures that many of the godly in Israel were constrained to pray for the young child in the temple. When they came to the yearly sacrifices and saw the sinful behaviour of Eli’s sons, contrasted

with the gracious ways of young Samuel, they prayed that God would raise up Samuel to be a leader. The Bible tells us: *“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.”*

Samuel was asked of the Lord, given by the Lord, lent again to the Lord, and called by the Lord in his youth. Throughout his life, Samuel honoured the Lord and was honoured by the Lord.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Pictured on the front cover this month is the tallest known tree in the world, a giant coastal redwood tree named Hyperion. It is over 380 feet high. Stately coastal redwood trees and their near relatives, giant sequoias, are found in pockets along the northern coast of California, near the Pacific Ocean.

Redwoods need lots of water to grow. Rain provides water during the winter, but in summer, the trees rely on coastal fog for moisture. The fog condenses on the needles and forms into droplets, which are absorbed by the trees and shed to the ground, where the forest understory [an underlying layer of vegetation] is watered.

The roots of the giant redwoods are usually only six to twelve feet deep, but they branch out for up to one hundred feet from the tree trunk. Redwood roots intertwine with other tree roots, making them more stable. The pine cones are just an inch in length, each bearing a few dozen tiny seeds. The bark of redwood trees can be over a foot thick. Redwoods contain a compound called tannin that makes them resistant to insects, fungi and fire. Tannin also gives redwoods their reddish colour.

The oldest-known, living redwood is estimated to be about 2200 years old. That means some of these giant trees were alive during the Roman Empire. They remind us of the mighty God who created everything, from the smallest flower to the tallest tree. *“All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD”* (Psalm 145.10).

Adapted from Answers in Genesis and other sources

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ESTHER MUST GO TO THE KING**

When the law was signed to destroy the Jews, Mordecai tore his clothes and cried with a loud and bitter cry. There was great weeping among all the Jews in the land.

Esther was told that Mordecai was clothed in sackcloth and ashes. She sent one of her servants to ask him why. Mordecai asked him to show Esther a copy of the writing to destroy the Jews. Mordecai commanded Esther to go unto the king to plead for the life of her people, the Jews.

Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. She would be put to death if she came to the king without being called, and she had not been called for thirty days.

Mordecai still urged Esther to venture, saying, *“Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

Then Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Shushan to fast and pray for her for three days. She said, *“So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Mordecai command Esther to do? (4 words)
2. What would happen if she came without being called? (6 words)
3. What did she ask the Jews at Shushan to do? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Haman.
2. Bow before him.
3. All Jews would be killed.

*“And so will I
go in unto
the king ...
and if I perish,
I perish.”*

Esther 4.16

BIBLE LESSONS**THE SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK**

The victory that God gave to Israel over King Jabin and his mighty captain Sisera had a wonderful effect upon Israel. Deborah and Barak led them in songs of praise to the Lord for avenging them of their adversaries. Prior to this victory, the highways and roads were filled with thieves, so the Israelites had to walk in byways. They were defenceless, for not one in 40,000 men had a shield or a spear.

In this song of praise, Deborah and Barak brought to remembrance, for themselves and all Israel, that they had been in a hopeless state. The victory could never have been obtained by any strength of their own.

Deborah was especially stirred in her spirit when pondering over the events. She humbly acknowledged the mercy of God in raising her up to be *“a mother in Israel”* – a mother to instruct Israel, to guide Israel and to comfort Israel. She also marvelled at the constraining power of the Lord upon the governors and rulers of Israel so that they *“offered themselves willingly among the people.”* Their example caused the people also to offer themselves willingly. It was a great sacrifice for all of them.

The whole unfolding of the battle was so wonderful that Deborah felt she was falling short in praising the Lord. She spoke to herself, *“Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive.”* The Lord’s people often feel they come far short in praising and thanking the Lord for His great mercy in delivering them from all their sins, troubles and foes. David did the same in Psalm 103 when he called on his soul to bless the Lord and then added: *“and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”*

In her song, Deborah extolled certain tribes for their bravery, while others were exposed for weakness. The tribe of Ephraim, which was Deborah’s own tribe, was instrumental in the battle. The tribe of Issachar willingly offered themselves to go with Deborah. Likewise, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali

answered the call of Barak and *“jeoparded their lives unto death.”* They fought valiantly.

Sadly, there were tribes who behaved very cowardly. As Deborah faithfully named the tribes who behaved so nobly, she named those who failed to help their brethren. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had fought so bravely in conquering of the land of Canaan, stayed on the other side of Jordan tending their flocks.

Deborah asked a searching question of another tribe: *“Why did Dan remain in ships?”* They may well have thought their merchandise and trade were more important than defending their land. Asher was another tribe who remained on the shores of the sea, far from the fierce battles.

By the direction of *“the angel of the LORD,”* Deborah cursed the city of Meroz: *“Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.”* They helped the fleeing Canaanites. Theirs was the sin of omission. No doubt you have heard ministers or others speak of or confess in prayer, the sins of omission and commission. Sins of commission are wrong deeds or actions that we have done (committed). Sins of omission are things that we should have done but did not do. The inhabitants of Meroz were too afraid to help Israel. They tried to stay neutral, but instead, they helped the enemies of God and were unprofitable to their brethren, the Israelites. The Lord Jesus tells what will happen to unprofitable servants: *“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness”* (Matthew 25.30).

Jael was the very opposite of the people of Meroz. In her song, Deborah mentioned Jael, saying, *“Blessed above women shall Jael ... be ... She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen’s hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, ... at her feet he bowed, he fell, ... there he fell down dead.”*

Deborah concluded her song in prayer: *“So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”* Some years later, David

wrote: *“And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD”* (Psalm 40.3).

What a wonderful song! What a good and gracious leader Deborah was! For forty years, Israel enjoyed rest and peace.

You can read about this in Judges chapter 5.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God raise up Deborah to be?
2. What was the name of the tribe that Deborah came from and that was instrumental in the battle?
3. Which tribe was praised for willingly offering themselves?
4. Which two tribes had jeopardized their lives unto death?
5. Deborah prayed that those who love the Lord would be as what?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Deborah.
2. Barak.
3. Nine hundred. Iron.
4. Mount Tabor.
5. Jael.

Every blessing we enjoy is undeserved mercy.

Little Gleaner 1916

GOODNESS AND MERCY IN LITTLE THINGS

Mr. Ernest Saunders was a deacon at Carshalton chapel for over thirty-five years. He passed away in June 2022, but left some written accounts of the Lord's goodness and mercy experienced in his daily life.

"I would note one or two of the little things that have come to my mind which show how the Lord kindly regards our little things: "My life's minutest circumstance is subject to His eye" (Gadsby's 70).

"One morning, when the family was grown and going out to work, one of them lost his car keys. We searched for them, but they could not be found, and things looked very difficult for the one who lost them. I went into our lounge and fell upon my knees at one of the armchairs. As I went down, I went to grasp the two edges of the cushion. Remarkably, my right hand missed the cushion, and my arm plunged down into the upholstery, almost to my shoulder. My hand immediately touched the missing keys. Naturally speaking, they would have been impossible to find.

"Another instance I would mention of the Lord's tender care. I had to go to Plymouth to visit a building site. I caught an early morning train at St. Pancras and did what was necessary at Plymouth, returning to Plymouth station to catch the train back to London. In those days, the return railway ticket was a very small piece, about half-an-inch long, which was torn off the end of the main part of the ticket. This was to be handed in at the end of the return journey. I had this small piece of a ticket when I entered the Plymouth station for my homeward journey. I placed it in my pocket for safety and waited a short while on the platform until the train came in. Soon after the train left Plymouth, the ticket inspector came round, but when he came to me, I was unable to find the ticket, search as I might. The inspector said he would go through the train and come back to me. I felt like a criminal, with the eyes of fellow passengers upon me. Further search was fruitless, and when the inspector came back, I had to tell him that I did not have the ticket. He asked

me details of where and when I bought the ticket. Then, to my great relief, he produced the little piece that was lost! He said that someone had picked it up on the platform and given it to him, thinking it probably belonged to somebody on the train.

“How one sees the Lord’s mercy in these things! How encouraging to take all our needs to Him.”

A further instance occurred at a time when Dad used to travel about ten miles to work at Kingston upon Thames through very busy and congested Greater London roads on a moped. Often during this time, he did not seem to be in very good health.

“What a trial that moped was to me at times! On one occasion, I had such trouble getting home – the moped would not go properly. I started off the next morning full of anxiety. The moped started up when I tried it, and, verily, I believe I prayed all the way to Kingston. Everything went well, and as I parked it to go into the office, how sweetly the words came: ‘Thou still art His peculiar care’ (Gadsby’s 379).

“On another occasion, I do not quite know how it happened, but when I arrived home, I found several parts of the exhaust system had disappeared. I pleaded with the Lord that He would show me where they were. So, I got on the machine and returned towards Kingston. When almost half way there, probably about four miles, there the parts were in a busy road, much of which was a dual carriageway. I retrieved everything, right down to the smallest nut. Nothing is too small or too hard for the Lord!

“During this time, I had severe pain around my sides and could not bear to go over a bump in the road on my moped. I used to stand up on the pedals to relieve the pain. After a while, I went to the doctor, who eventually sent me for an x-ray. When I again visited him, he told me that I had had tuberculosis of the lung, but my body had healed itself – the scar was there on my lung. No, I thought, my body did not heal itself, but it was the Lord! This brought a little praise out of my heart to His dear name.”

Contributed

THE FORESTER AND THE ROBBER

Many years ago, there was a forester who lived in a lonely place in the thick woods of the Silesian mountains in Prussia. His family consisted of his wife, mother and little daughter, about seven years of age. His wife and mother were Christians, but the forester did not believe the Bible, and he often ridiculed his wife for her prayers and her "foolish trust in God."

One dark, stormy evening in autumn, as the wind whistled through the trees, the two women and little child sat around the fire inside. The forester had gone to a neighbouring town in the morning and had not yet returned. The family was beginning to feel very anxious about him, and they had good reason. A band of robbers had lately invaded that part of the forest and made it very unsafe. The forester was an officer of the king of Prussia, and his duty was to care for the forest. After long efforts, he had succeeded in capturing the whole band of robbers, except their leader, who was a very strong, cunning and wicked man. This leader had sworn revenge upon the forester and his family for breaking up his band. The women in that lonely house knew this. No wonder they felt anxious on that stormy evening. They could think of nothing else but the dangers that surrounded them and the absent head of their family.

At last, the grandmother said that it would do no good to give way to their fears. It would be much better to seek comfort from God's Word and ask protection from Him, without whose notice even a sparrow could not fall to the ground.

The wife brought out the family Bible and read aloud from Psalm 71: *"In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion ... Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort ... for Thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the band of the wicked, out of the band of the unrighteous and cruel man."*

Then they sang an evening hymn and knelt down together in prayer. They told God about their fears and asked Him to protect them, as well as the absent loved one. They prayed for the poor and the sick, and especially for the robber in their

neighbourhood, that the Lord would have mercy upon him, change his heart and turn him from his evil ways.

After this, their fears were gone, and they felt remarkably calm. They had just finished praying, when they heard the well-known footsteps of their loved one approaching. They were all very thankful that he was brought home safely. The forester also felt relieved and happy to find his family safe and well.

Before they went upstairs to bed, the forester's wife told him how anxious they had felt about him during the evening, and how they had prayed to God to take care of him and of themselves. He smiled and said that she was a foolish woman to think there was any use in praying. For his part, he preferred to trust his good weapons and his faithful dogs. He examined the doors and windows to see that they were fastened. Then he loaded his firearms and unchained the dogs. He thought he could lie down to sleep without any cause for fear.

An hour or so later, when the family was fast asleep, a wild-looking man crept out from under an old, wooden bench in the house. It was the robber, of whom they were so much afraid. He had managed to sneak into the house about sundown and hid under the bench. There he heard all that had been spoken. He had come to have his revenge by murdering the whole family in their sleep, and now there was nothing to prevent him. But there was something! He went softly and silently to the table. He laid down a large, sharp knife that he had brought with him and picked up the Bible, which lay open at Psalm 71. The words of the Psalm had had a wonderful effect upon him. He tried to read them over again in the feeble light of the moon, but it was too dark. Then, he stood by the table, hesitating. Two or three times, he picked up the knife, resolved to have his revenge upon the sleepers upstairs, but each time he laid it down again. He thought of the words of that wonderful Psalm, and he was afraid to do it. He left the knife on the table but took the Bible. Opening the window, he cautiously crept out, so even the watch-dogs did not hear him. He jumped over the hedge and disappeared into the dark woods.

The forester and his family came down the next morning and found the window open. A great, sharp knife lay on the table, and the Bible was gone. The open window showed that someone had been in the house. The great knife showed that his object had been murder, while the missing Bible seemed to show that somehow it had been a means of saving them. The whole house was searched, but nothing was missing except the Bible. It was a mystery that no one could explain. The wife thanked God for protecting them. Even her unbelieving husband could not help seeing that it was neither his dogs nor his guns that had saved him. He began to think that there must be something in religion after all. The robber was never seen or heard of in that forest after that night.

Some time after this, the French and the Prussians were fighting against each other. Among those who fell, was a brave captain, the forester. His men thought he was dead and left him out on the field. A fisherman rowed cautiously to a nearby shore to see if his little fishing hut had been destroyed by the army. Hearing the groans of the wounded man, he brought his boat to land and found the Prussian officer. He called his companions, and they carried the wounded man to the boat and took him to the opposite shore of the lake, about two miles distant. There were several cottages, and the wounded man was carried into one of them. The fisherman and his wife dressed the wounds of the officer and tenderly cared for him. The fisherman wrote to the captain's family, and his wife and daughter came to be with him. The fisherman and his wife gave them the use of their cottage, and they stayed there until the soldier had recovered.

As he lay on the sick bed, the officer thought of the wonderful way in which God had protected him and his family from the robber on that memorable night. He thought of the way he had been taken care of when left for dead on the battlefield. He saw God's hand in it all and was led to pray earnestly for salvation.

When well enough to go home, the officer warmly thanked the kind fisherman and wished to pay him, but the fisherman would take nothing. When pressed, he said that he was much more indebted to the forester and his wife than they were to

him. He had a great treasure of theirs, which he had once taken away, and now wished to restore. He went to a closet and brought out a Bible. As soon as the forester's wife saw it, she recognised it as their dear, old, family Bible, which had disappeared so strangely on that never-to-be-forgotten night. She held it eagerly to her heart. Then the fisherman told them the following story:

"I see that you do not recognise me," he said, looking at the forester, "but I am the robber that caused such trouble in your neighbourhood until you caught my companions and had them put in prison. I was very angry with you and swore to have revenge. I crept into your house about dark one evening, intending to murder you and all your family while you were asleep. All that evening, I lay under the bench in your sitting room, waiting for the hour when I should carry out my purpose. Against my will, I was obliged to hear the seventy-first Psalm read aloud by your wife. It had a wonderful effect on me. When I heard her prayer, I was even more affected. It seemed as if an unseen hand was laid upon me, to keep me from doing what I intended. I felt that I could not do it. My only desire was to get that wonderful Book and read it. For weeks, I kept it in the woods near your home. The Bible was my companion, and as I read it, I saw what a great sinner I was and what a great Saviour there is in Jesus. That same Saviour who pardoned the thief on the cross had mercy on me and received me into His kingdom. Then, I left that part of the country and found employment with a fisherman in this neighbourhood. I wished to begin a new life, and my excellent wife is helping me to serve God. We have all we want for this world and are blessed with a hope for the next. All this I owe to the Bible I found in your house that evening. You, forester, trusted to your guns and your dogs, but they could not have helped you at all. Nothing but God's Word saved you. It was only that which kept me from plunging my knife into your bosom. It was that which protected you then; it is that which saved you on the battlefield. Do not thank me. Thank the merciful God, who made use of His blessed Word to save both you and me."

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (10)

“Their strength is to sit still”

Ruth had requested Boaz to spread his skirt over her as a near kinsman, taking her to be his wife, and Boaz had informed her of a **nearer** kinsman. When Ruth returned to Naomi, she must have been very anxious to know *“how the matter will fall.”* Naomi would also have been anxious to know how Boaz had responded to Ruth’s request. No doubt Ruth told Naomi everything that had happened; what Boaz had said to her and about the nearer kinsman. The matter would be dealt with that very morning. So, once more, these two godly women were found committing their way unto the Lord, seeking to trust in Him. It must have been a time of great anxiety for both of them.

Ruth’s loving, kind and experienced mother-in-law, Naomi, gave her the very best advice: *“Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day”* (Ruth 3.18). What had been done, had been done; what had been said, had been said. She would have exhorted Ruth to take it all to God in prayer and leave everything with Him.

To *“sit still”* in this sense is most certainly not to do nothing, nor is it to be fatalistic, unconcerned or careless. To *“sit still”* in these circumstances is to have a prayerful exercise, committing everything into the hands of God and waiting only upon Him. It was not Ruth’s place to go where the men gathered for that important meeting in the morning and try to influence the outcome.

Sadly, a lot of trouble has come when people have tried to interfere with the working out of God’s providence. Abraham was very unwise to listen to Sarah, who suggested that he take Hagar, as this appeared to be the only way he could have a son. David was also unwise when he said in his heart, *“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more*

in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his band" (1 Samuel 27.1). God had anointed David to be the next king over Israel, so it was impossible for Saul (or anyone else) to slay him.

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

Gadsby's 320

The Lord sometimes brings His people into places where their God-given faith is greatly tried, with seeming impossibilities before them. Jesus questioned Philip when in a remote place, surrounded by a crowd of about five thousand people: "*Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*" (John 6.5) Philip tried working out how much bread would be required to feed so many people. Yet, Jesus did not ask him how much bread was needed, but where it could be bought! Even after Andrew noticed the lad with five barley loaves and two small fishes, he knew they would be completely inadequate to feed all the people. The answer is in what the Holy Ghost inspired the Apostle John to write in verse 6: "*And this He*" [Jesus] "*said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do.*" The Lord knew exactly what He was about to do, and He would instruct His disciples to look to Him alone and leave everything in His hands. He would make the provision; they were to "*sit still.*"

When we come into such times and places, it is so easy for us to be either full of unbelief or fatalistic – both of which will leave us quite prayerless! It has been said, "He who watches providence, will not fail to have a providence to watch." This is when we need that God-given strength to "*sit still.*"

The text at the heading is taken from Isaiah 30. It was a time when the children of Israel were being threatened by an

invading army. Rather than putting their trust in God, they were looking to Egypt for help against the enemy. Yet, God most solemnly warned them, *“Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion”* (Isaiah 30.1-3). They were looking to man to strengthen them in their time of need! No doubt, the Egyptians were a strong and formidable force with a mighty army, but they would not, indeed **could not**, be of any help to the children of Israel. So, the Lord speaks again to them: *“For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, **Their strength is to sit still**”* (verse 7). The Lord was saying, “Do not look to or depend upon man. Look to and trust in Me alone. I will help you!”

As a wonderful example of this, it is recorded three times in Scripture about the Assyrians invading Judah when Hezekiah was king. He was a good and godly king, who set an excellent example of trusting in God. When the case seemed impossible, he did not surrender. He did not give up, go out and attack them, or send to others to come and help him. What did Hezekiah do? *“And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven”* (2 Chronicles 32.20). They committed it all to the Lord their God in prayer and supplication, and the Lord delivered them that very night. They proved: *“**Their strength is to sit still.**”*

May we also be helped to prove in our times of need that our strength is not found in ourselves, nor in an army of men, but in the faithful, gracious, prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**“IT IS ENOUGH”**

This month, we turn to 1 Kings 19 to hear these same words from the lips of a man, the prophet Elijah. *“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, **It is enough**; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers”* (verse 4). Who would think that this is the same man who stood alone before God, the people and four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal a few days before? Is this the same man who had slain the four hundred and fifty prophets at the brook Kishon? (1 Kings 18.40)

It is worth considering how Elijah had spoken to the people on Mount Carmel: *“Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men”* (1 Kings 18.22). In chapter 19, Elijah twice speaks to the Lord in a similar vein: *“I, even I only, am left”* (verses 10, 14).

Dear young friends, one of the things which brought Elijah into this very despondent spirit was an incorrect understanding of the facts. Presently, the Lord told Elijah: *“Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him”* (verse 18).

So Elijah said, *“It is enough,”* but from every aspect of his understanding of matters, he was wrong. There is surely a lesson for us here: we come to incorrect conclusions so quickly at times. No doubt Elijah must have been extremely weary by the time he reached that juniper tree. His very weariness made him cry out, *“It is enough,”* and really, he was saying, in effect, “I cannot go on.”

Well, the Lord graciously gave Elijah the strength to go to Horeb, then corrected his misunderstandings and sent him on his way with three specific tasks to accomplish. There was yet to be that wonderful day when Elijah walked for the last time

with Elisha and was taken by a whirlwind into heaven. It could not be “*enough*” until his work was done.

Our next stop is Proverbs chapter 30, where in just two verses, four different circumstances are set before us. In each case, there is no satisfaction or complete fulfilment. “*There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: the grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough*” (verses 15, 16). In each case, little needs to be explained; the Word of God is clear, but I venture to mention four illustrative Scriptures.

First: “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9.27). Graves will be dug until the end of time – they will always be wanting.

Second: the barren womb cries out for a child to be conceived. This is especially so in the light of the Scripture: “*For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety*” (1 Timothy 2.13-15).

Third: consider the wonderful word in Revelation 12: “*And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth*” (verses 15, 16).

Fourth: my thoughts go very solemnly to hell itself: “*to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched*” (Mark 9.43 et seq.).

In Matthew 10 we have a very different setting of these three words: “*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord*” (verses 24, 25). This is valuable teaching given to us by the Saviour Himself. In the

immediate setting, there is also a warning to us, as verse 25 continues: *“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?”* Dear young friends, as you go forth into life, do try and find out who is “in charge” of whatever organisation you may have to deal with, be it large or small. The “master” will stamp his or her influence upon those beneath him or her.

Finally, there are two further occasions in the Bible where these three words appear. Both come from the sacred lips of the Redeemer and are connected with the time of our Lord’s betrayal into the hands of sinners – Mark 14.41: *“And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: **it is enough**, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”* What a moment! The time had come for the fulfilment of the great purpose for which the Saviour had come: *“**It is enough, the hour is come.**”*

Luke 22.38: *“And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, **It is enough.**”* It appears that the Lord Jesus was telling them: “It is enough (use of force) for now.” It reminds me of the Scripture: *“Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the LORD of hosts”* (Zechariah 4.6).

This is a good place to leave these three words: *“**It is enough**”* – Cease from all the power, wisdom and might of men. *“**It is enough**”* – *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12.9).

Brian Mercer

ONLY GOD CAN HELP THE SOUL

It is impossible for a child of God to obtain any soul help but from God, and he often permits His saints to come into situations to convince them of it.

H. Fowler

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THINGS THAT REIGN OR HAD REIGNED. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. The earth is said to be disquieted (troubled) for four things it cannot bear. What is the first of these four things in Proverbs 30.22?
2. Who asked the question in Genesis 37.8, "*Shalt thou indeed reign over us?*"
3. What did the children of Israel say to Samuel in 1 Samuel 12.12, when they saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against them?
4. What did the Lord say regarding kings in Proverbs 8.15?
5. Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 24.23 of a day when the moon would be confounded and the sun ashamed. What event would bring this to pass?
6. In Luke 1, the angel told Mary that her Son would reign over what and for how long?
7. In Romans 5, we are told that what reigned because of one man's offence?
8. In Romans 6, what did Paul tell the believers they should not let reign in their mortal bodies?
9. In 2 Timothy 2, Paul tells Timothy we must do what if we are to reign with Christ?
10. Who are we told in 1 Corinthians 15 must reign? Till He hath done what?

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Houses.
2. Rejoice in them.
3. All came to pass. (or, "There failed not ought.")
4. Abijah.
5. They that seek the Lord.
6. Them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84.11).
7. Christ (Hebrews 9.11).
8. Thy mouth (Psalm 103.5).
9. Thanks (Psalm 92.1).
10. Nathanael (John 1.46); Jesus of Nazareth (John 1.45).

“BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED”

'Tis by grace that we are saved,
Nothing left for us to do;
'Tis the finished work of Jesus,
That alone can bring us through;
On the cross the Saviour uttered
Words which plainly tell us so;
Then why turn to works and penance,
If to heaven you wish to go?

'Tis by grace, and not by working,
Lest we should of working boast;
And the soul that leans the hardest
Surely honours Jesus most;
By relying on the Saviour,
For the grace He freely gives;
Day by day still going to Him,
This is how the sinner lives.

We are not to sit down idly,
Being careless day by day;
But we hear the Master saying,
“Ask ye for the good old way;
Come to Me, and I will show you,
Search the Scriptures through and through;
For in them you find Me speaking,
'Tis My letter unto you.”

Friendly Companion 1994

The

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"And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."
Luke 7.48

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

In Psalm 127, we read, "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.*" There are times when the dealings of God with His people seem to contradict His Word. Such was His way with Zacharias and Elisabeth in Luke 1. Zacharias was one of the priests who served very faithfully in the temple, and his wife was also of the priestly line of Aaron. The Bible tells us: "*They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*" Surely such a couple would be blessed with children! God had promised Israel, "*Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you*" (Deuteronomy 7.14). Yet they were childless, because "*Elisabeth was barren.*"

For years, Zacharias and Elisabeth had prayed that God would bless them with a child, but they were now old and past the time of having children. One day, while Zacharias was performing the duties of the priest in the temple, an angel of the Lord stood by the altar. When Zacharias saw him, he was overcome with fear. The angel said, "*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*" Their prayers for a son had likely ceased many years before, when all hope, naturally speaking, for a child was gone. God had heard their prayers from the beginning, although He granted their request so late.

The angel told Zacharias that his son would be very great in God's sight. He would be a Nazarite, like Samson and Samuel, not drinking any strong drink. Further, the angel said that his son would "*be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*" This was clearly manifested when Mary the mother of Jesus visited Elisabeth. At her words of greeting, Elisabeth felt the babe leap in her womb.

Because Zacharias doubted the words of the angel, he was struck dumb and was unable to speak until the day his son was

born. His wife Elisabeth was filled with praise and thanksgiving for the Lord's goodness in taking away her reproach and shame.

What rejoicing filled the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth when their son was born! Neighbours and relatives came to rejoice with them. They thought the name of the child should be Zacharias, after his father. When Elisabeth answered that he would be called John, they reminded her that none of their relatives was called by that name.

They asked Zacharias how he would have his son named, and he wrote on a writing tablet, "*His name is John,*" just as the angel had told him. Immediately, the tongue of Zacharias was loosed, and he praised God. The news of this birth, and of the father's tongue being loosed, spread through the hill country of Judaea. People asked, "*What manner of child shall this be?*"

To be given a son in their old age was wonderful beyond words. To be given a son such as the angel told them he would be, made all the years of bitter disappointment to be completely forgotten.

Being filled with the Holy Ghost, Zacharias began to prophesy of his son, saying, "*Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins.*"

The son of Zacharias and Elisabeth grew "*strong in spirit*" and became "*a burning and shining light*" (John 5.25). The Lord Jesus said of John: "*Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist*" (Matthew 11.11).

May each of you know that grace and favour shown to John the Baptist, that you also may bear witness of the grace of God in your heart and life.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

Patient waiting is often the highest way of doing God's will.

Little Gleaner 1889

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The pictures on our front cover this month show school children at a mission in Malawi, Africa. They are colouring texts from *The Faithful Footsteps* series, produced by Gospel Standard Trust Publications. A parcel of these books was sent to Malawi in recent months. Jesus said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*" (Mark 10.14).

Malawi is a country with much poverty. However, the Word of God is being fulfilled: "*The poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Matthew 11.5). There is a hunger and thirst for the Word of God in Malawi and many other African countries, quite unlike what we see in most of Europe and North America. The Holy Spirit is working in many hearts and lives.

In Malawi there is a great need for a faithful version of the Bible in Chichewa, which is the national language and is understood well by most Malawians. Regrettably, the first missionaries to distribute and translate the Bible into Chichewa used corrupted modern English versions, and even these corrupted English versions were not accurately translated into Chichewa! This has caused many difficulties and sown confusion in the Malawian churches.

However, by the grace of God, faithful pastors have been raised up with a desire for the Word of God to be faithfully translated into Chichewa. The Trinitarian Bible Society in partnership with Free Grace Evangelistic Association published the Chichewa New Testament in 2020, and it is hoped (God willing) that the whole Bible in Chichewa will be published next year in a faithful and Christ-honouring version.

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68.11).

I. A. Sadler

Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves.

William Gurnall

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE KING HOLDS OUT THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE**

Esther put on her royal garments and stood in the inner court of the king's house. The king, who was sitting on his throne, saw Esther standing there. *"She obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out ... the golden sceptre that was in his hand."* Then Esther came near and touched the top of the sceptre.

The king asked Esther, *"What is thy request?"* She asked the king and Haman to come to a banquet that she had prepared. At the banquet, the king said that her request would be given, even to the half of the kingdom. Esther asked the king and Haman to come to another banquet on the next day. Then she would tell her request.

Haman was very happy and proud to be invited to Esther's banquet for the king. However, Haman was filled with anger when Mordecai, who was sitting in the king's gate, refused to honour him. Haman would ask the king to have Mordecai put to death on the next day.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Esther put on? (3 words)
2. What did the king hold out to her? (3 words)
3. What did the king ask Esther? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Go to the king.
2. She would be put to death.
3. Fast and pray.

Contributed

*“What is thy
petition?
and it shall
be granted
thee”*

Esther 5.6

BIBLE LESSONS**THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARS TO GIDEON**

The blessing of a godly leader was manifested in the days of the judges. While Deborah and Barak were alive, the people of Israel were instructed in the ways of God, and they enjoyed peace in the land for forty years. After these leaders died, the people soon fell into idolatry and forgot the Lord.

This time, the Lord used the Midianites to afflict His people. For seven years, they oppressed Israel. When the Israelites were ready to harvest their crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites came up with much people, along with their cattle. They devoured the grain, leaving nothing for Israel and their flocks. The Bible tells us: *“They came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number.”*

Year after year, they impoverished the Israelites and forced them to flee to the mountains round about, where they made dens and caves in which to hide. When Israel was reduced to poverty, they remembered God and cried unto Him. God heard their cry. He always hears the cry of poor sinners when they turn with all their hearts unto Him.

God first sent a prophet who reminded them of the great things He had done for them. He brought them up out of Egypt, the house of bondage; He delivered them from many oppressors and brought them into the land promised to them. He declared, *“I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.”*

One day, a young man named Gideon was threshing wheat by a winepress, where he could hide it from the Midianites. As he worked, an angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree nearby and watched him. Then the angel made his presence known. He said to Gideon, *“The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”* Gideon could hardly believe what he heard.

Gideon asked the angel, *“Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us*

up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hand of the Midianites.” Gideon was so discouraged because of the poverty of the Israelites that he could hardly believe the word of the angel, saying that the Lord was with them.

The angel, who was none other than the Lord Himself, *“looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”*

Gideon, like Moses, felt himself so unsuitable for such a work. He reasoned with the Lord: *“Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”* Little did Gideon realise that such language showed that he was just the one that God would use. The Lord chooses the foolish things, the weak things, the base things and things which are despised. Gideon felt to be all of these.

God knew how to strengthen Gideon. He said, *“Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.”* You might think that such a word would be all Gideon needed. Yet he asked for a sign that God talked with him. He asked the Lord to stay while he prepared an offering to set before Him.

Do you remember how Abraham did the same thing when the angel visited him? Soon Gideon had prepared a kid of the goats and some unleavened bread. He brought it to the angel as he sat under the oak. The angel commanded Gideon to lay the meat and the cakes upon a rock. When Gideon had done this, the angel put forth the end of his staff and touched the flesh and the cakes; *“And there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.”* Then the angel departed out of Gideon’s sight.

Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord and said, *“Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.”* The Lord said unto him, *“Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.”*

Gideon quickly built an altar in the place where God met him, and he called it “*Jehovah-shalom*.” Its meaning is, “The Lord send peace.”

You can read about this in Judges chapter 6 verses 1 to 24.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who came while Gideon was threshing wheat? (5 words)
2. What did Gideon say of his family? (4 words) What was he in his father's house? (2 words)
3. How did God strengthen Gideon? (15 words)
4. What did Gideon call the altar he made?
5. What does it mean?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. A mother in Israel.
2. Ephraim.
3. Issachar.
4. Zebulun and Naphtali.
5. The sun when he goeth forth in his might.

“A TIME TO BE BORN AND A TIME TO DIE”

Once an elderly tailor lived alone in the basement beneath his little shop in Forest Hill, London. On Sundays and for the week night services, he travelled by train to a little chapel some miles away. He was a member there and, being musical, led the singing. He had two daughters who did not want anything to do with the chapel or the people there.

The tailor was rather lonely now, and when a young stranger began to attend the little chapel, he had a smile and some kind words for him. This young man had just left his own home and chapel to work in London, and he was also rather lonely. Finding that his train passed through Forest Hill, he would

sometimes break his return journey to visit the elderly man. Seldom seeing visitors, the dear old man was so pleased to see him. He would put his best pillow case on the table (for he had no table cloth) and lay a meal. He would talk a little about his rather sad life and of the Lord's dealings with him, tears rolling down his cheeks. The old man had never known exactly what his age was. When he eventually obtained a copy of his birth certificate, he found that he was older than he thought! For a very long time, there had not been anyone to remember his birthday.

In his boyhood, he had been brought up in an orphanage at Southampton. His father had died when he was young, and his mother, having a large family, could not manage them all. The deacon at Forest Hill Chapel was a tailor, and he wanted a boy to help him. Somehow, he picked out this lad, who was taken from the orphanage and apprenticed to the deacon – hence coming amongst the Strict Baptists.

The old tailor used to speak of his wife. He had been widowed for many years, and she was buried in a certain cemetery. He believed that he would one day be buried by her, for it was a double grave.

Sadly, the old man died alone. His young friend was away for a time, and the daughters did not want a funeral for him. They wanted the money that he had put aside for it. They never told his chapel friends that he had died. When he did not turn up for a service, they tried to find out about him. There were very few telephones then. They found that the shop and basement were closed. When eventually they found that the old tailor had passed away, he had also already been buried in a pauper's grave. This was very sad! The young man and the chapel people would willingly have paid for his funeral. However, they had this comfort, a belief that he was "*with Christ; which is far better*" (Philippians 1.23).

Although no one could remember when he was born, and no one knew when the old tailor died, the Lord knew and appointed both times. The Lord Himself also decreed that this

poor lad should have a second birth, and when the work of grace was done, took him to be with Himself for ever.

His decree who formed the earth
Fixed my first and second birth;
Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by Him.

The old tailor, named Mr. Caton, was one of the first members at Carshalton Chapel. The young man whom he befriended was Mr. Ernest Saunders, who was later a deacon at Carshalton Chapel.

Contributed

“BEFORE THEY CALL, I WILL ANSWER”

I had just started my student apprenticeship in engineering. All of us students were given accommodation in a large manor house in the countryside about four miles from our place of work and study. This was over thirty miles from my home. It was agreed that I could return home on the weekends, and the journey was by public transport.

On Sunday evening, at the end of the first weekend, I had to return, because our work began early at 7:30 a.m. the next day. The journey involved two buses, the second one to take me past the manor house. As I journeyed on the second bus, the sun set, and it became dark. I could not see outside the windows of the bus as we passed through the dark countryside. I realised that I did not know where to get off the bus. I was very fearful and prayed that the Lord would show me where to get off. The bus entered a village and stopped for people to get on. Two young men came upstairs on the bus and sat near to me. The bus continued its journey. I thought I had seen those men before during my first week of apprenticeship. I kept my eye on them, and when they got up to request the bus to stop, I got up also. We alighted from the bus at the side of the dark road, and there, through the hedge, I could see the lights of the manor

house. How thankful I was when I walked up the driveway to the house!

I realised that before I had prayed, those two young men were already making their way to the bus stop in the village to catch the same bus. They became the means of the answer to my prayer. The Lord knew what I had need of before I asked! I travelled on the same bus for one year, and I never saw those same men on that bus again.

How good and gracious is our God who hears and answers His people's cry in the time of their need and to deliver them from all their fears. *"And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me"* (Psalm 50.15).

G.E. Hadley

GOD'S RESOURCES – A TRUE STORY

Many years ago, on a cold November day, a poor, small, aged woman was looking for a hardware store in Brooklyn, New York. She had gone there often in the past, but now she could not find the store, having become feeble through age. She became more and more confused. Finally, she entered another store to ask for directions and then continued on her way.

A young boy was standing at the counter when the woman asked for directions. He was touched by her kind face and manner. He thought she appeared to be very poor and felt a special desire to help her. He asked the proprietor if he knew who the lady was, for he wanted to send her a gift for Thanksgiving day. In the providence of God, her name and address were on the books of the establishment, for she had once supplied them with little hand-made articles to sell.

The boy told a few schoolmates and his teacher about the old woman. As a result, they filled a barrel with provisions for her. They included tea, sugar, potatoes, cabbage, apples and other wholesome food, enough to last her nearly all winter. The barrel was topped off with a large home-made mince pie.

When the barrel arrived at the run-down tenement where the woman lived, she refused to accept it at first, feeling sure there had been a mistake. However, the delivery man insisted that it was intended for her. Then the old lady was filled with joy and astonishment, saying, "Why, I never had such a thing happen to me in all my life before!" She kept repeating, "Great are Thy tender mercies, O Lord! *'Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing'*" (Psalm 145.16).

The Lord moved the hearts of strangers to provide for the needs of the old woman. Who can tell whether you or I might be constrained to help one of His little ones. "*And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only ... he shall in no wise lose his reward*" (Matthew 10.42).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1889

"I CANNOT GET AWAY FROM GOD"

Many years ago, a coachman was working for a gentleman near London. He had good wages, a good master, and a comfortable place. But there was one thing which greatly annoyed him. He received frequent visits from his old mother who lived in a nearby village. You may wonder why this was such a trouble to him. The reason was because his mother always spoke to him about Christ and the salvation of his soul.

"Mother," he said at last, "unless you drop this subject entirely, I shall give up my place and move where I shall hear no more about it."

"My son," said the mother, "as long as I have a tongue, I will never cease to speak to you about the Lord, and to the Lord about you."

The young coachman followed through with his intention. He asked a friend in the Highlands of Scotland to find work for him in that place. He knew that his mother could not write or follow him there. Although he was sorry to lose his good place of employment, he believed it was worth it to have a quiet life.

His friend soon got him a place in another gentleman's stable. The young man did not hide from his mother the fact that he was glad to get away from her. You may think it was a pity that she caused him to leave because of her talk. Would it not have been better to say less? However, his mother believed that she was to keep the directions given in the Word of God: "*Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort ...*" (2 Timothy 4.2).

The first day after his arrival in Scotland, the young coachman was ordered to take the carriage out for a drive. His master did not get inside with the rest of the family. Instead, he said that he would ride up on the box with the new coachman.

"He wishes to see how I drive," thought the coachman, who was quite prepared to give satisfaction. Scarcely had they driven from the door, when the master spoke to him for the first time.

He said, "Tell me if you are saved."

The coachman was struck with great dismay. In fact, he felt simply terrified by the question. "God has followed me to Scotland," he said to himself; "I could get away from my mother, but I cannot get away from God."

At that moment, he knew what Adam must have felt when he hid himself from the presence of God behind the trees in the garden. He could make no answer to his master, and he could scarcely drive the horses, for he trembled from head to foot.

His master went on to speak of Christ, and again he heard the old, old story so often told him by his mother. But this time, it sounded new. It had become a real thing to him. It did not seem to be good tidings of great joy, but it was a message of terror and condemnation to his soul. He felt that he had rejected and despised Christ, the Son of God. He felt for the first time that he was a lost sinner.

By the time the drive was over, the young coachman felt so ill from the terrible fear that had come upon him, that he was completely unable to work. For some days, he could not leave his bed, but they were blessed days to him. His master came to speak to him, to read the Word of God and to pray. Soon, the

love and grace of the Saviour he had rejected became a reality to him, just as the terror of the Lord had been at first.

He saw there was mercy for the scoffer and despiser, and he saw that the blood of Christ is the answer before God, even for such a sinner as he had been. Now he felt in his soul the sweetness of those blessed words, *"We love Him, because He first loved us"* (1 John 4.19). He saw that Christ had borne his punishment. He had tried to harden his heart against God and against his own mother, but now he was without spot or stain in the sight of God.

The first letter the young man wrote was to his mother, and it contained the joyful tidings, "God has followed me to Scotland and has saved my soul!"

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 138.7-10).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1916

LONGING AFTER CHRIST

O how I long and thirst for the waters of salvation! I feel as if I could not wait any longer. O the distress, anxiety and unceasing wrestlings of my heart, to be blessed with a satisfactory sense of the pardon of my sins and a full assurance of the salvation of my soul. O! This is what I want, and I cannot rest without it; yet I cannot get it. I feel so far from having it that my heart desponds when I think of it.

I feel no faith; I cannot believe. I pray for it, but the Lord gives me no answer. I feel a secret spirit of rebellion and peevishness, because the Lord will not hear and answer me; also a hard heart, carnally minded, and sin working up, which causes distress. I know not what to do. O! I am totally helpless to every spiritual thing, or even to keep from sin; and yet surely I feel,

and have felt, the very character whom God has promised to bless and deliver. Yes, I know the feelings of my heart and the description of God's Word are one.

Will the Lord never come? O that I had faith and patience; but I feel I cannot produce them. But at times I terribly fear I am a Judas, given up to the hardness of my heart; or an Esau, or like one left to pine away in my iniquities.

When I think of the sweet blessings with which my soul has been blessed out of God's Word, how small they now appear! How little they seem, as if they were almost nothing but water.

M'Kenzie's Fragments

THE SNAKE IN CHURCH

A Scottish preacher was once speaking in a church in Africa about the vital necessity of fleeing for safety to Christ.

Toward the end of the service, he heard a lot of noise and confusion. The native people came running towards him, and benches were flying about. As he tried to bring back order, he saw a large snake, a green mamba, slithering along the floor in the church. After a while, it coiled under a bench at the back.

The minister was then able to use the incident as an illustration of the necessity of fleeing from sin to find refuge and safety in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Children's Story Hour

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (11)

"My times are in Thy hand"

Ruth, who was back home with her mother-in-law Naomi, must now wait to hear if the nearer kinsman would redeem her, or if it would be Boaz. It must have been a very anxious time for Ruth. Although it involved her personally, she would have no say in the matter at all. If she was given grace to leave the outcome in the hands of God, she rested quietly without agitating thoughts. However, if she looked to man, she was

probably very anxious and troubled, impatiently waiting for the message to arrive.

Boaz was a man who feared God, and as such, he was a man of prayer. He knew very well how important this matter was to Ruth, and that it had to be dealt with that very day. We feel sure that when Ruth left him early that morning, he committed the whole of it to the Lord, knowing that the hearts of all men are in the Lord's hands and all events at His command. Being very well acquainted with the Scriptures, he would have known the prayer of Moses when he was in a time of great need concerning the future: *"If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence"* (Exodus 33.15). Moses could not bear the thought of going on in his pathway without the Lord God to be there with him all the way and all the time.

That is a very good prayer for all of us concerning any step that is to be taken. It may be in further education, employment, a change in employment, or perhaps an offered promotion. It is especially needful in seeking a wife or husband. If you are really helped by the Holy Spirit to pray this prayer, you will also need to understand that it might be His will to prevent us from going in the way we particularly wanted. Many years ago, there was a godly man with a young family, and their financial needs were very pressing. He was offered a promotion that meant moving to a different place. His salary would have trebled (tripled), along with further opportunities for advancement within the company. He made it a matter of prayer and sought guidance from the Lord. However, the Lord gave him to feel that the answer was "no," so he turned down the offer. He was called a fool by an ungodly person for doing so. But he had the peace of a clear conscience before the Lord.

The time came for the meeting. After calling the nearer kinsman, Boaz gathered the elders of the city together as witnesses to certify the decision that would be made. Boaz explained that Naomi was selling a parcel of land that belonged to her late husband Elimelech. The nearer kinsman was the first person who had the right to purchase it. At first, the nearer

kinsman appeared eager to purchase the land, as it would increase the amount of land that he would own. However, Boaz went on to state that as a condition of buying the land, Ruth the Moabitess, being Naomi's daughter-in-law, was part of the inheritance. Thus, the new owner must perform the part of the kinsman and marry Ruth. We read: "*And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it*" (Ruth 4.6). We are not told what he meant by marring his own inheritance. It seemed that he was unwilling to take the part of the kinsman if it meant he must marry Ruth. Although he had his own reasons, we know that God was over it all.

"*My times are in Thy hand*" (Psalm 31.15). These are words of great comfort when we are helped to leave all things in the hands of God.

Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise;
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.

In this instance, Ruth and Naomi would have been so very thankful, believing their prayers had been heard and answered, with the outcome as they had hoped. The Word of God is very clear: "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Philippians 4.6). May we be given that true spirit of prayer as we come before the Lord with our various requests. It may be in examinations, our request being that we may pass; or in a work interview, that we might succeed; or in seeking a partner in life, that one may be provided; and so on. We must remember that they are requests which must be according to **the will of God**. Only the Lord knows what is best for us. Like Ruth, it may be the Lord's will that our requests are granted, but there will be times when the Lord sees fit to deny our requests. That is when we need to learn to bow to the will of God. The Apostle Paul requested urgently that the thorn in

the flesh, which must have been so painful, might be taken away. He knew that God was **able** to take it away, but it was not the **will** of God at that time to take it away. The Lord did answer Paul with the promise, “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” (2 Corinthians 12.9). When the Lord gives sufficient grace, we will be enabled to leave everything with Him.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE COVENANTS OF THE BIBLE

My fifty-year-old *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* gives the following definition of the word **covenant**: “a mutual agreement: the writing containing the agreement; an engagement entered into between God and a person or a people – a dispensation, testament.”

There is not much wrong with that definition, and it is amazing that it so refers to God! At the tail end of the dictionary entry, this is added: “**covenant of grace, redemption**, in Christian theology, that by which life is freely offered to sinners on condition of faith in Christ; **covenant of works**, that made with Adam as federal representative of the human race on condition of obedience.” More amazement; although perhaps we would not entirely go along with this definition.

Covenant is apparently a word with origins in Old French, containing “con” (meaning together) and “venire” (to come). So we have “to come together” as a simple meaning of “covenant.”

I have begun this essay in this unusual way since sometimes controversy is generated regarding the Word of God because of faulty (or a lack of) understanding over the natural meaning of a word. This is then cleverly used by the great enemy of truth to foment confusion at a spiritual level.

I feel that the above entries in my old dictionary are quite helpful concerning the subject of the **covenants** of the Bible. For instance, the footnote about the origins of the word does illuminate the truth that many of the covenants in the Word of

God are the result of God bringing His covenant blessings to unworthy sinners. I will venture to approach the subject simply by looking at what God's Word has to say.

First, the covenant of day and night

This covenant, at the beginning of time and the creation of the world, was made by God relative to mankind. We read: "*And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day*" (Genesis 1.5). It is very humbling to consider that all our lives are regulated by this first covenant. God promises that this will continue: "*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*" (Genesis 8.22).

In all the covenants which God has entered into with man, He is faithful. The faithfulness of God and the certainty of this covenant are confirmed in Jeremiah 33.20: "*Thus saith the LORD; if ye can break My **covenant** of the day, and My **covenant** of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season ...*" What a challenge God sets before His people here! The verse leads into another most blessed covenant which I hope to come to later on.

Second, the covenant made concerning the flood

This covenant is witnessed until the end of time by the rainbow. Alas, how greatly this emblem is misused today by the LGBT lobby. A greater distortion and abuse of God's truth can hardly be imagined.

In truth, the covenant spoken of by God in Genesis 9 is threefold – building upon the foundation laid in Genesis 6. What did God say to Noah? "*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish My **covenant**; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee*" (Genesis 6.17, 18).

Firstly, here is the promise to, or covenant with, Noah and his family of deliverance from the flood, but there is much more in it than this.

Secondly, here is the covenant of God with Noah that the whole future race of man descending from him would never again be completely destroyed.

Thirdly, here also, by the type of the ark, is a setting forth of the covenant of grace (see opening paragraph above) by Jesus Christ, who was to be born in the fulness of time: *“And thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall **save** His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1.21). All the Lord’s people will be safe in Christ, the Ark of the Covenant. This is beautifully illustrated concerning the hour and article of death itself, when the children of Israel crossed the river Jordan into the promised land: *“Behold, the ark of the **covenant** of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan”* (Joshua 3.11).

However, the special point of the rainbow is that it is a **token**. *“And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth”* (Genesis 9.12, 13). Do not forget that this token was for God: *“And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth”* (Genesis 9.16).

What a “coming together” there is in the rainbow! God sees it and remembers His covenant. Man sees it, and his hope in God is renewed and refreshed by the sight!

In closing this first essay, I want to make this point: not all the covenants of the Bible are mutually exclusive. That is to say, not all the covenants should be viewed in isolation from the others. Also, spiritual truths in the Old Testament are shown by types and shadows. We have seen this in the type of Noah’s ark, which sets forth the eternal safety of the Lord’s people in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about FORGIVENESS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. In Luke 23.34, Jesus asked His Father to do what and for what reason?
2. In Psalm 86.5, David said the Lord was good and ready to do what?
3. In Acts 13.38, what does Paul say was preached to the people in the name of Jesus?
4. In Mark 2.7, the enemies of Jesus asked, "Who can forgive sins ...?" What were the last three words?
5. In Ephesians 4.32, Paul exhorted the believers: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another ..." Write out the rest of the verse.
6. How is the man described in Psalm 32, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"?
7. In Psalm 25, David asked the Lord to look upon his affliction and pain, and to do what?
8. In Psalm 130, we read that there is forgiveness with God that He may be what?
9. In 1 John 1, we read that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins if we do what?
10. In 1 John 2, whose sins were forgiven for His [Christ's] name's sake?

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. For a servant when he reigneth.
2. Joseph's brethren.
3. "Nay; but a king shall reign over us."
4. "By Me kings reign."
5. "When the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion."
6. The house of Jacob. For ever (Luke 1.33).
7. Death (Romans 5.17).
8. Sin (Romans 6.12).
9. Suffer (2 Timothy 2.12).
10. Christ. "Till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15.25).

“THOU ART THE GUIDE OF MY YOUTH”

Jeremiah 3.4

How truly blest are they,
Whom Jesus deigns to guide;
He guards them night and day,
No ill can them betide;
He leads their souls unto all truth,
Be then the Guide, Lord, of our youth.

Our hearts to sin are prone,
We hourly need Thy grace,
If therefore left alone,
Dreadful will be our case;
Lead then our steps in peace and truth,
Become the Guide, Lord, of our youth.

Guide us to Jesus' blood,
For pardoning grace and love;
Guide us in the straight road,
Which leads to heaven above;
Thus may we say in strictest truth,
Thou art the Guide, Lord, of our youth.

Particular Baptist Sunday School Hymn Book, Manchester

The Friendly Companion



“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Malachi 3.1

December 2023

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

J.R. Rutt

Dear Children and Young People,

This month, we hope to write to you about **the incarnation of the Son of God** – that is, the taking on of a human body and nature by the Lord Jesus. This subject is the foundation to truly understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Firstly, Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God; He always has been in existence. The following Scripture is spoken by Christ Himself: *“The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was”* (Proverbs 8.22, 23). We also read: *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”* (Hebrews 13.8). That is yesterday eternal.

The incarnation was a supernatural act of God. *“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7.14). *“Immanuel”* means “God with us.” This is exactly what Jesus Christ is. It is recorded in Luke 1.26-27, *“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”* The angel Gabriel spoke to the virgin Mary, *“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke 1.31-33). Mary answered him, *“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (verse 34-35). It is added, *“For with God nothing shall be impossible”* (verse 37). This is the only virgin birth that has ever happened on earth.

You may ask why it was necessary that it should be a virgin birth. Every boy or girl born into this world is the natural descendant, son or daughter, of Adam. Every person was born after Adam sinned. Therefore, we are born in sin by natural generation from our parents. Listen to the Word of God: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5.12). Another Scripture says, *“Behold, I was sbapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51.5).

Jesus Christ was not born by natural generation, but by a supernatural generation by the divine power and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. So, Jesus was without sin, pure and holy; and in His life He did no sin. He fulfilled the holy law of God in His holy life. He lived in perfect obedience to God’s holy law for His people. This perfect obedience of Christ is called the righteousness of Christ. He clothes His people with this glorious robe of righteousness.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this precious truth, that when the Son of God took on human nature [our nature], He voluntarily came under the holy law of God and lived under it. He fulfilled the holy law that we have broken. He then offered that holy, sacred, human nature as a sacrifice on the cross of Calvary to redeem His people from sin and Satan’s power. *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Galatians 4.4-6).

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Jerusalem & Galilee – An Introduction

In 2022, I had a short visit to Jerusalem and parts of Galilee. During this trip, I took many photos, and these stayed on my computer until 2023, when I was forced to rest with a broken rib and found myself sorting and researching my photos – What did

they show? What happened there? Did we know this factually, or was it only “supposition” and/or an “attractive tourist bait”?

I made two albums and, knowing that these would be viewed by my grandchildren and others, I prayerfully sought to “separate fact from fiction” so as not to sow any error. I found the exercise profitable and have now been asked to share some photographs and meditations as monthly articles. God willing, in the year ahead, an article will be included each month, with the desire that the photographs and comments may help some better to picture the setting of the biblical events. My desire is also that the meditations may be found profitable to others – to the Lord’s honour and glory.

R. Saunders

“HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL”

Among all classes and sections of people, Christ created a feeling of wonder.

The doctors in the temple were “*astonished at His understanding and answers*” (Luke 2.47). The multitudes “*marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel*” (Matthew 9.33); “*the disciples began to rejoice and praise God ... for all the mighty works that they had seen*” (Luke 19.37); the Nazarenes “*wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth*” (Luke 4.22); “*the devils also believe and tremble*” (James 2.19).

Jesus everywhere impressed men with His uniqueness. Men could not, on ordinary lines, explain Him. “*Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*” (Matthew 13.54). Jesus was a puzzle, an enigma to men. Peter could account for Jesus only by confessing that He was “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16.16).

Adapted from Cyclopedia of Bible Illustrations

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**MORDECAI IS HONOURED**

The king could not sleep on the night before the second banquet, when Esther would tell her request. He asked his servants to read to him from the book of records. They read that Mordecai had warned the king about two of his servants who were planning to kill him. The king asked what honour or reward had been given to Mordecai. They said that nothing had been done for him.

Haman came to the outer court of the palace early in the morning to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged. The king asked Haman, "*What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?*" Haman thought the king wanted to honour him, not Mordecai. He said they should put the king's royal clothing and crown on the man and bring him through the street of the city on the king's horse.

The king told Haman to honour Mordecai as he had advised, and to proclaim, "*Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.*" After doing as the king commanded, Haman hurried back to his house with sorrow. Mordecai went back to the king's gate.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the king ask his servants to do? (3 words)
2. Whom did Haman think the king wanted to honour?
3. Whom did the king tell Haman to honour?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Her royal garments.
2. The golden sceptre.
3. What is thy request?

*“On that
night could
not the king
sleep.”*

Esther 6.1

BIBLE LESSONS**GIDEON BREAKS DOWN THE ALTAR OF BAAL**

Before the Lord would deliver Israel from the oppression of Midian, He commanded Gideon to deal with the sin of worshipping Baal. Even in his father's house, there was an altar for Baal, the idol god of the Canaanites. Gideon's father had a beautiful grove of trees where he had placed this altar.

God was so exact in the instructions He gave about how the people were to worship Him and how they were to destroy the idols. He told Gideon which bullock he was to take for an offering. *"Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal ... and cut down the grove that is by it. And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."*

What a test it was for Gideon! He knew that if the people saw him tearing down their idol, they would rise in anger against him. He waited until it was dark, and he did it by night. He took ten of his servants and cut down the trees of the grove and broke in pieces the altar of Baal. Then they built an altar on top of the rock *"in the ordered place,"* and offered a burnt sacrifice unto the Lord.

When the people of Ophrah came to offer sacrifices to Baal the next morning, they were filled with rage. They asked who had done this. It was soon reported that Gideon the son of Joash was responsible.

Like an angry mob, they came to the house of Joash and demanded that he bring out his son so they could put him to death. Although Joash had often joined with them in the worship of Baal, his understanding was opened to see the truth. He asked the men, *"Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."*

Joash even gave his son Gideon the name Jerubbaal, which means, *“Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.”* The words of Joash must have been a sharp rebuke to the people. What folly and sin it was to worship a god who could not defend himself! How then could he help them?

While they were preoccupied with the destruction of the altar of Baal, the Midianites and the Amalekites gathered to fight with Israel. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet to call the people of Israel to war. He sent messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. Soon a great army of soldiers was following Gideon.

Gideon was still afraid. He prayed to the Lord, *“If Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand.”* What great faith to ask such a thing! He had already asked for a sign that God had talked with him, and now he asked for a sign that God would save Israel by his hand.

Mount Gilead, where Gideon lived, like Mount Hermon and Gilboa, was renowned for the dew that fell upon it in the night. What an impossible thing that there should be no dew except on a comparatively small piece of wool! The Bible tells us, *“And it was so.”* God gave Gideon his request. In the morning, Gideon went to the threshing floor where he had placed the wool. All along the way, the grass and fields were dry, but when he picked up the fleece, it was saturated with dew. When he wrung it out, he had a bowl full of water.

You can read about this in Judges chapter 6 verses 25 to 38.

QUESTIONS:

1. What sin was Gideon commanded to deal with? (2 words)
2. When did Gideon go to tear down the altar? (2 words)
3. Where did Gideon build the altar of God? (9 words)
4. Where did Gideon ask that the dew might be found? (4 words)
5. How much water did Gideon wring out? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. An angel of the Lord.
2. My family is poor; the least.
3. *“Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.”*
4. *“Jehovah-sbalom.”*
5. The Lord send peace.

“FEED MY LAMBS”

Grandad and Grandma used to come to our home on Friday mornings. Often Mum and Grandma would talk together in the dining room or do things together in the kitchen, and Grandad would go and sit on the sofa in the lounge and read his paper. I was the youngest child in our family and, as far as I can recall, not yet at school.

On one of these occasions, Grandad was in the lounge, and I went in and sat on a pouffe (a cushioned footstool) near him. After a while, I plucked up courage to speak to him – Grandad was a minister (eventually becoming pastor at Carshalton in January 1972). The conversation is still clear in my mind and went like this:

“Grandad?”

Grandad (moving his paper to one side), “Yes, my boy?”

“When you preach, do you have to use such big words? Because not all of us can understand them.”

Grandad responded with a groan, “Oh dear.”

Is there not a lesson here? I recount this with love to poor Grandad and feel for him. It can be difficult to preach with simplicity and to remember the little ones. No one spoke with more simplicity than the Lord Jesus Himself, who also said, *“Feed My lambs”* (John 21.15).

R. Saunders

THE LORD'S HAND IN SMALL MATTERS

A minister in Wiltshire, named Robert Woodroff, was also a poor labourer. He was sent by his employer to bring a letter to a gentleman. Upon arriving at the house, however, he found that he had lost the letter. The gentleman told him that the letter was very important, as there was money in it. This filled the minister with grief as he hastened back home. To make matters worse, it was night, and the ground was covered with snow.

During the night, the poor man dreamed that he had searched for and found the lost letter at a particular spot. He went very early the next morning to the place where he saw the letter in his dream. There the letter lay, in that exact spot, untouched on the snow.

Many sighs and prayers had gone up from the heart of the minister, and now they were turned to praise. God knew how to deliver His dear servant from his trouble, for it was a great trouble indeed! He later related it as one of the evidences of God's tender love to his soul. "*Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD*" (Psalm 107.43).

Adapted from The Friendly Companion 1889

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS DAY

After nearly twenty years of mission work in China, Gladys Aylward had returned to England for her first furlough. Many thousands were fleeing from China to escape the terrors of communist rule. Her own life had been in great danger. She came back to a country that seemed very different from when she had left many years before. It was 1949, and England had been ravaged by World War II. There were many churches and preachers; but among the people, she noticed a lack of interest in God's Word and the eternal salvation of never-dying souls.

In China, there were many who had worshipped idols only a few years before. However, after believing in Jesus, their entire lives changed. Even when they had to endure terrible sufferings

or were threatened with torture and death, they stood firm. Here, many seemed more interested in the latest fashions and the improvement of society than in church services and prayer meetings for the conversion of lost souls. The spreading of the gospel message did not seem to be a priority for them.

Gladys was fully occupied with giving lectures about the mission work in China and in collecting used clothing and supplies for the refugees who were flooding into Hong Kong.

As Christmas approached, Gladys was exhausted. She hoped to spend a quiet day at her apartment with her friend Rosemary. They would prepare a chicken and invite a lonely Chinese friend, Wong Kwai, to stay with them.

The next morning, Rosemary hesitantly suggested that they invite another woman, named Mrs. Cheng, to stay with them. "We could share the chicken with the four of us, couldn't we?"

That night, a shy, Chinese, young man, named Peter, dropped by. When Gladys asked where he was going for Christmas, he sadly answered, "Nowhere." Gladys and Rosemary looked at each other. They could share the chicken with five people. So, they invited Peter to come for Christmas. He was filled with joy at the invitation.

Later that evening, another young man, named Alan, came to visit Gladys. He had no family and attended a small Chinese congregation in London. Knowing that Alan was very lonely, they soon invited him to join with them on Christmas day.

The next morning, they received a telegram from Jane, a Chinese girl from Ireland, with whom they were acquainted. She asked if she could spend the holidays with Gladys, for she was feeling very lonely. "Oh, my chicken!" Rosemary groaned. "It is getting smaller all the time!" They must now share their meal with eight persons.

"Ah," the Chinese woman, Wong Kwai, exclaimed with emotion, "what a wonderful favour of the Lord that so many of our own people may be here together to celebrate the birth of the Saviour!"

Rosemary felt ashamed when she realised that Wong Kwai thought more about the meaning of Christmas than she had. She had only been thinking of a nice, quiet Christmas dinner.

It was now Christmas day. Jane (the girl from Ireland) had arrived to stay for a few days. Mrs. Cheng stepped in the door to enjoy dinner with her hosts. Peter and Alan were also there. The small home was buzzing with voices and activity. Wong Kwai would prepare the meal. She had worked as a cook for many years in China.

Early in the afternoon, they heard the doorbell. "No more visitors, I hope!" Rosemary sighed anxiously. Wong Kwai went to open the door, and her voice echoed through the house, "Oh ... boys ... boys!" She hurried into the living room, crying excitedly, "There are boys here from Hong Kong!"

Gladys saw three Chinese young men standing at the door. They bowed politely, and one of them said, "We are here with a group of sixteen boys and girls. We are all students who came by boat from Hong Kong. When we arrived here, we discovered that all the stores and student homes are closed! We cannot find shelter anywhere."

"But why do you come here?" Gladys asked in astonishment.

"Because there is no room for us anywhere." The young man showed her a piece of paper with her name and London address in Chinese characters. "A Chinese Christian from Hong Kong, who knew that we had to flee, gave us this address. He told us that if we encountered difficulties, we should go here, for this woman is a Christian and sends away no one in need of assistance."

Gladys had to think hard for a moment. What should she do in this situation?

"There is no room for us anywhere," the boy repeated, looking at her with pleading eyes.

Gladys felt moved with compassion for these lonely young people. She would like to help them all, but could she? Rosemary, however, invited the students in and asked where the other members of their group were.

“Oh,” the leader explained, “they are waiting somewhere with our luggage. We do not know where to go. There is no room for us anywhere!”

Gladys and Rosemary could not possibly fit them all into their own little apartment. However, Gladys knew of a simple guesthouse nearby, where the young people could spend the night in safety. Thankfully, that woman was willing to put the group of sixteen young people up for the night, but she did not have food for them. The students left for the guesthouse with their scanty belongings and empty stomachs.

Gladys said, “We cannot let these poor fellows go hungry!”

Rosemary replied, “We cannot share that chicken with more than twenty people! We were going to have a quiet Christmas, and now all these strangers keep coming!”

Gladys recognised the reality of Christmas for the visitors. They were strangers indeed, strangers in a strange country; refugees, driven from their homeland; Christians, persecuted by the communist reign of terror. Was it not the Lord’s special guidance that she, Gladys Aylward, who had once arrived in China as a stranger and knew what it meant to be lonely in a foreign country, could now welcome these lonely young people from China into her own apartment? Did ever a more remarkable and wonderful event take place on this earth than when the eternal Son of God came into this hostile world to live, suffer and die to rescue sinners and prepare a place for them in His Father’s house? Was there ever One on this earth more a stranger than God’s eternal Son at His birth in Bethlehem? Was not His whole stay on earth a time of suffering, when He lived as a stranger in a hostile, fallen world among a people who did not believe on Him? And was not all this that He might reconcile enemies to God by His birth, suffering and death? In humility, Gladys shared her thoughts with her friends and guests.

Wong Kwai answered, “This is celebrating Christmas! What does it matter if we have a little less to eat, if we may but speak together about Christ who only can satisfy the hunger of our souls?”

The sixteen Chinese students were invited for the meal. A little later, even more unexpected visitors arrived. On Christmas night, twenty-seven people were gathered in Gladys' apartment! Wong Kwai cooked big pans of rice and mixed the finely chopped, boiled chicken into it. With some added spices, it became a simple, but very good meal.

By God's grace, Wong Kwai told how the Lord had sought and converted her as an ignorant heathen. Gladys told about the change that had taken place in her as an eighteen-year-old girl. In His great mercy, God had stopped her in a worldly lifestyle of sin, when she visited a church service where the minister preached from the words, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 5.10). She had been privileged to bring that message to China; to Yang Cheng, to the Mandarin, to the farmers of the mountain villages, to the children in the mission home, to the refugees in the camps of southern China, and to the people of Tibet. For the young students who had just arrived from Hong Kong, she had no other message than that of the necessity of personal conversion to God. The visitors in Gladys' room listened attentively. They sang together, prayed together, and read from God's Word. That Christmas day in London would be long remembered by all.

Adapted from The Woman with the Book, M.A. Mijnders

"THE LOVE OF GOD SHED ABROAD IN THE HEART"

Last month we included the longing desire and prayer of John M'Kenzie, a beloved minister of the gospel, and Editor of *The Gospel Standard* from 1836 to 1849. This was taken from his notes for October 1840. Mr. M'Kenzie's exercise in prayer continued until March 1842, when the Lord appeared for him with a wonderful blessing for his soul. A few fragments of this visit follow. A fuller account is given in *Life and Sermons of John M'Kenzie* by M.J. Hyde and in *The Gospel Standard*, May 1942.

“O what a blessed morning has this been to me! Ever memorable morning! The dear Lord has answered my request; He has experimentally saved my soul, which I have so long prayed for; He has shed abroad His love in my heart, and given me the spirit of adoption. Bless His holy name for evermore! He is faithful and true.

“My heart was filled with such glowing love to God that I could scarcely refrain from kissing the Book. I felt as if heaven were let down into my soul, and as if the Holy Ghost had filled my heart, as I knew He had. I felt the mercy and goodness of Christ overwhelm my soul, and such ardent love that I thought my poor heart would break. I felt the love of God shed abroad in my heart; and O how strongly did I feel that the Lord loved me! I felt no sin or guilt. He had put it all away, laid nothing to my charge, and I was at peace with Him. O how sweet was His goodness and mercy! I felt my heart filled with the Holy Ghost, and knew it was He, because I felt so heavenly. The feeling was supernatural; and while in this state, I could do nothing but sob and weep with a heart full of love, and cry so loud that I thought the neighbours would hear me. All I could say was, ‘O what is this! What is this! ... O bless Thy name for evermore. Thou hast saved me! Thou hast saved me! ... My God! My Father! My dear Father! Bless Thee! Thee! Thee, dear Lord, for ever!’ and many such expressions bursting from my heart and lips. All the time I was weeping, as if my heart would break, talking to God, and weeping with a broken heart of love.

“I cannot convey the peculiar feeling of soul under this blessed manifestation of love and grace. I now know what the spirit of adoption is; what the love of God shed abroad in the heart is; what it is for my soul to be filled with the Holy Ghost; what it is to have my heart broken and my eyes weeping with the love and mercy of God. It came so unexpectedly; I am astonished, amazed, and wonder and adore Father, Son and Holy Ghost, our glorious, gracious and ever-blessed Jehovah, world without end. Amen! Blessed day to my poor soul!”

Adapted from M'Kenzie's Fragments

LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH (12)

“My Beloved is mine, and I am His”

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife” (Ruth 4.13). This was a levirate marriage (according to the civil laws of Israel), with Boaz purchasing the inheritance that had belonged to Elimelech and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Boaz performed the part of the kinsman, redeeming Ruth and being married to her. Yet, we have every reason to believe that Boaz loved Ruth, and Ruth loved Boaz!

The Scriptures clearly set forth the great importance of love in marriage. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”* (Ephesians 5.25-28); *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine ... The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children”* (Titus 2.1, 3, 4).

It is unknown if any “marriage vows” were recited by Boaz and Ruth. However, we can be sure that Boaz would have replied, “I will,” if he had been asked the same question that is put to the bridegroom at our marriage ceremonies: “Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both do live?”

Marriage is a most beautiful institution ordained by God, for a man and a woman to be joined together as helpmeets one for another. It has wisely been said that love and sacrifice make a marriage.

One thing is very clear with Boaz and Ruth – the Lord brought them together. Genesis 24 is a wonderful chapter about a couple being brought together by the Lord. Isaac needed a wife – but only of the Lord’s choosing! Although the culture was very different from ours, and we do not have a servant to go and seek a wife or husband, the teaching is that the Lord was over it all. He made clear who the wife for Isaac was to be. The faithful servant made it a matter of prayer and watched the Lord’s hand throughout. The servant declared his errand to Rebekah’s parents and brother, and told them the clear answer to prayer that he had received from the Lord, in choosing Rebekah as the one appointed for Isaac. The response from them was, *“The thing proceedeth from the LORD.”* Not until the servant heard Rebekah say, *“I will go,”* could he feel relieved of his heavy responsibility. It is a great comfort when a couple, seeking to be joined together in marriage, both believe that the Lord has brought them together.

The Book of Song of Solomon is a very figurative and, at times, intense book, with the main two characters speaking of their deep love one to another. By “figurative,” we mean, a use of words that imply a powerful illustration or resemblance to an actual thing. *“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine”* (Song of Solomon 1.2). When a couple are attracted to each other, their love, over time, becomes more apparent or visible. A loving kiss is such an expression, by which their love is clearly shown. In the Song of Solomon, the two characters spiritually (by figurative types) are Christ and His church – each individual member. There can be no doubt whatsoever of the love that Christ has towards His people: *“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end”* (John 13.1); *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15.13); *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us”* (1 John 3.16). But, as clearly set forth in the Song of Solomon, it is not a one-way love. There have been too many sad and disastrous relationships where the love was only one way. *“We love Him, because He first loved us”* (1

John 4.19). The Lord, the Holy Spirit, working His grace in the hearts of His people, will produce a great love to the Lord Jesus. Even in seeking Him, there is a love, desire and attraction to Him. *“By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not.”* But she did not give up seeking! *“I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not.”* Because that love to Him was so great, she still continued seeking until she had found Him. *“The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go”* (Song of Solomon 3.1-4). So it is with all the Lord’s people: the Lord’s great love to them will be manifest as He draws them unto Himself. *“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee”* (Jeremiah 31.3).

It is the Holy Spirit who imparts that desire to the Lord Jesus, and will cause that person to see in Him all their desire and all their salvation. He or she will have such a desire in the heart to say of Him, *“He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend”* (Song of Solomon 5.16), and a real longing to know for sure: *“My Beloved is mine, and I am His”* (Song of Solomon 2.16).

A.T. Pickett

A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST

Christ may have an interest in us, though we may not, at the time, be able to see our interest in Him. The child of God may be cast down, but can never be cast off; for, though God may lay His hand upon him, He never removes His hand from beneath him. In the same fire whereby the dross is consumed, the precious gold is purified ... There is no room in hell for one who loves Christ; for, though it may seem but a desire to love Him, it shall be well, the desire itself being grace begun.

The Sower 1882

*BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES***THE COVENANTS OF THE BIBLE – PART TWO****Third, the covenant God made with Abraham**

This covenant began specifically with the gift from God to Abraham of the land of Israel. This is first indicated at the beginning of Genesis 12: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee”* (verse 1). When Abram arrived in the plain of Moreh, we read: *“And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (verse 7). This was again confirmed by a further promise in Genesis 13.14-17. However, it is not until Genesis chapter 15 that a **covenant** is mentioned, when we read: *“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”* (verse 18).

This fairly simple covenant was then amplified by the Lord when Abram reached the age of 99 (24 years after he had left his native Haran). You can read all that God told him in Genesis 17.1-8. Here are great blessings which God would confer on Abraham and his seed by *“an everlasting covenant”* (verse 7). Here also is the indication of Christ's coming, which was illuminated in a remarkable way to both Abraham and Isaac by the events which took place in chapter 22.

As the dictionary definition hints, there are two sides to a covenant – it is a mutual agreement. It was when God thus magnified His covenant with Abram at the age of 99 (including changing his name to Abraham), that the Lord sets out Abraham's obligations in the matter (Genesis 17.9-14). Here, the requirement for all the males to be circumcised began. It is a practice which the orthodox Jews continue to this day.

The purpose of God was to bring home to His chosen people the reality of this covenant, as the Word explains: *“And My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant”* (verse 13). A warning is given in the following verse: *“And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not*

circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant."

You may perhaps have read of the old preachers exercising a "stripping ministry," that which was painful to the flesh. The poet takes it up like this:

Stripped of all their fancied meetness
 To approach the dread I AM,
 They are led to see all fitness
 Centring in the worthy Lamb;
 And adoring,
 Sing His Godhead, blood, and name.

Gadsby's 918

The whole hymn is worth reading in connection with the present subject.

We should not forget that the Lord Jesus Himself was subject to this requirement: "*And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb*" (Luke 2.21). This was necessary as part of the dear Saviour's fulfilment of every jot and tittle of the law on His people's behalf.

Under the present gospel dispensation, as the ceremonial law was perfectly satisfied by the Lord Jesus in His sinless life here below, the physical necessity for circumcision is done away in Christ. Thus, the Apostle Paul writes to the Galatians: "*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love*" (Galatians 5.6). This is repeated with a different emphasis in the following chapter: "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*" (Galatians 6.15). In other words, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3.7).

We see then that the original (old or first) covenant with Abraham was made redundant through the coming of the promised One. Perhaps it is not quite correct to say "made redundant." If we go back for a moment to Genesis 17, we find

there how God reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham through his son Isaac: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him”* (verse 19). In those last few words is again the promise of Christ being born. Yet again, the Scripture says: *“for in Isaac shall thy seed be called”* (Genesis 21.12). This is recited twice in the New Testament, at Romans 9.7 and Hebrews 11.18.

The words of David in Psalm 105 also help to lead us on from the Old Testament to the New. I quote from 1 Chronicles 16 (which is the same as Psalm 105): *“Be ye mindful always of His covenant; the Word which He commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance”* (verses 15-18).

It is in and through the promised Seed that a **better covenant** was established. Let us now go forward to the Word of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it speaks of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest: *“But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault **with them**, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”* (Hebrews 8.6-8).

Brian Mercer

Blessed is he whose home is a Bethel, the house of God, and not a Bethaven, the house of vanity.

Sower 1910

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about the PROPHECIES AND BIRTH OF JESUS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did God say would bruise the head of the serpent (Satan)? (Genesis 3.15)
2. Who was told that in his seed (Christ) all nations of the earth would be blessed? (Genesis 22.18)
3. Of which son did Jacob prophesy that the sceptre would not depart from him until Shiloh (Christ) came? (Genesis 49.10)
4. In Deuteronomy 18.15, what did Moses say the Lord God would raise up to Israel from among their brethren, like unto him?
5. God promised David that one of his seed (Christ) would build Him an house (1 Chronicles 17.11, 12). What did God say He would do for him? (7 words)
6. In Isaiah 7, God said that He would give a sign to Israel. What was this sign?
7. In Isaiah 9, God said that a Son would be given. What was the name by which He would be called? List all five names.
8. What was the full name of the place where Christ would be born? (Micah 5)? What distinguishing thing did God say about this place?
9. Besides Joseph and Mary, who were the first visitors to see the newborn Baby? (Luke 2)
10. What did Simeon call the Baby in Luke 2?

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "Forgive them; for they know not what they do."
2. Forgive.
3. The forgiveness of sins.
4. "But God only."
5. "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
6. Blessed. (Psalm 32.1)
7. "Forgive all my sins." (Psalm 25.18)
8. Feared. (Psalm 130.4)
9. If we confess our sins. (1 John 1.9)
10. Little children. (1 John 2.12)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Lo! The Son of God assuming
Human nature, stoops to earth;
Heavenly hosts proclaim His coming
And a virgin gives Him birth.
Angels tell us,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Now the promise is fulfilling,
Jesus Christ, "the woman's Seed,"
To redeem our souls is willing
To perform what He decreed.
And the shepherds
Worship Christ in Bethlehem.

All the prophets to Him pointed;
Types and sacrifices said,
That on Christ, the Lord's Anointed,
Our offences should be laid;
To fulfil them,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Satan trembles, though he rages,
Bruised by Zion's mighty King;
Saints shall through eternal ages,
This triumphant anthem sing;
Hallelujah,
Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Joseph Irons

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OUR MAGAZINES

We read in Psalm 127, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." We feel the same as regards the magazine. Except the Lord help those who write the monthly articles, those who arrange the pieces, those who proofread each issue, those who print each copy, and then help those who read the magazine, all is in vain. Yet we are very thankful to hear that various articles have been reprinted in other periodicals, newsletters and bulletins. They have been used in Sunday School lessons and in family devotions. We desire the Lord's blessing may rest upon all these means.

We are thankful that our regular contributors have been helped through the year and have agreed to continue in the year ahead. When we conclude with the words, "Brethren pray for us," we include each of those who fill some part and take some responsibility for producing the magazine each month.

Brethren, pray for us.

G.L. TenBroeke