

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JANUARY 2006

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5. 6).

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1. 9).

“The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11. 7).

“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” – “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” – “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8. 37, 38; Matthew 28. 19).

NEW YEAR ADDRESS

We have always made a point of looking back over the year just ended, and often this has been a cause of sadness. Year by year we have wondered if there has been anything like it before. But has there ever been a year recently like the year 2005 when the Lord’s judgments have been abroad in the earth? We think of the effects of the Tsunami, which at the close of 2004 swept away so many in a wave of destruction. We think more recently of Hurricane Katrina and the devastation caused in New Orleans and the surrounding districts. In our own country there has been the dreadful terrorist attack in London. We think also of the continuing confusion in Iraq and then also of the death of the Pope, with all that accompanied it.

So we might go on. The dishonesty in politics; the evil laws which are passed or threatened; the increased breakdown of marriage; drug abuse; homosexuality; leanings to euthanasia; with many other things – and the awful silence of the established Church in our land.

But above all these things, “The Lord reigneth.” What a mercy He does! And what a blessed word is that: “He bindeth the floods from overflowing”! The Lord is never taken by surprise. He is still in control. That is an amazing word: “The wrath of man shall praise the Lord, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain.” This is faith’s resting place.

“No strange commotions on the earth,
No wars have taken place,
But what were ever in Thy view,
Almighty God of grace.”

So the people of God can still say EBENEZER. Even the worst of times is “a time to gather stones together.” When God’s ancient people first rejoiced in the word EBENEZER, it was:

1. *A time of great trial.* The Philistines were gathered together, seeking Israel's destruction. The children of Israel seemed weak and helpless, as lambs for the slaughter.

2. *Samuel prayed.* What a blessing are praying men and women! The Lord is still almighty to hear and answer prayer, and greater than any army of Philistines. Notice that he took a lamb and offered a burnt offering, and whenever prayer is heard and answered, it is always through the merit of the Lamb's atoning blood, not for our sakes.

3. *A wonderful deliverance was granted.* God did it all – a terrible thunderstorm. "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." The Lord still kindly says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." The experience of God's people is one of trials and deliverances.

4. *A thankful heart was given.* "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

So may we, amidst all the darkness and confusion as we pass from year to year, "our glad Ebenezer set up, and own He has helped us till now." And may we venture forward in hope:

"He who has helped us hitherto,
Will help us all our journey through."

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Perhaps it may seem strange for an annual address but our thoughts have been led to the beautiful little Epistle to Philemon, especially the riches of sovereign grace displayed there. What grace in Paul! What grace in Onesimus! What grace in Philemon! It would be a wonderful thing if that grace were sovereignly displayed in our congregations today – both in the calling out of sinners and in the life and behaviour of the people of God. But,

"His grace sufficed the saints of old,
It made them strong and made them bold,
And it suffices still."

It will be remembered that Philemon, a man of means and also a servant of the Lord, had a slave, Onesimus, who robbed him and fled. Coming in contact with Paul in Rome, he was wrought upon by God's grace, and Paul, though he would gladly have kept him with him, sent him back to his master with the accompanying letter pleading for mercy and forgiveness.

1. We cannot but admire the grace of God in the salvation of Onesimus. Who would have thought that the name of this runaway slave was in the book of life? No doubt Philemon was sad at the way he had

been treated, doubting if he would ever see Onesimus again. But (as John Kent says):

“This object of eternal love,
Ordained to fill a throne above,
Shall in the gospel annals shine,
To prove election all divine.”

God’s unerring care followed Onesimus’ wanderings, and in God’s providence he reached Rome, where the apostle’s ministry was blessed to him. We wonder if Philemon ever thought his problems would be dealt with in this way.

2. We admire the grace of God in Paul’s description of himself, “a prisoner of Jesus Christ” – not the Roman emperor, not Satan. In all God’s dealings with Paul he was blessed with grace to see that “all things work together for good” – even his captivity in Rome. So he could write to the Philippians (1. 12): “I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me [his imprisonment at Rome] have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” The things which happen to God’s people, however painful, do not *just* happen; they “fall out” of the lap of divine providence, out of the hand of a gracious God.

Paul says, “I would ye should understand.” Unbelief never did; but grace in the heart will. And this brings a humble submission to the will of God.

3. In his opening greeting Paul wishes Philemon “grace ... and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 3). This is Paul’s usual greeting, and it is more than formality.

It will be noticed that the usual greeting of the Lord Himself was, “Peace be unto you.” He did not need to mention grace. He Himself was “full of truth and grace.”

But Paul valued the grace of God, and he well knew that true, spiritual peace (and prosperity) could only flow from that grace.

4. We admire the grace in the beautiful spirit of the letter which Paul wrote. It is a model of Christian courtesy. Peter later could write: “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Pet. 3. 8). There is never any excuse for rudeness in a child of God. Paul himself was always exceedingly courteous, even when badly treated (Acts 23. 5; 26. 29).

It seems as if Paul’s pen was swallowed up with the love of Christ as he wrote. Would that there were more such dealings between brethren in the church of Christ!

5. Paul’s plea is “for love’s sake” (verse 9). With the authority of an apostle, Paul knew he had the right “to enjoin thee” (verse 8) – “yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee.” This is the spirit of the gospel.

We cannot but think of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the whole work of redemption.

“And why, dear Saviour, tell me why,
Thou thus wouldst suffer, bleed and die;
What mighty motive could Thee move?
The motive’s plain: ’twas *all for love*.”

6. Especially does Paul seem to have the spirit of Christ when he writes: “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it” (verses 18, 19).

We see a greater than Paul:

“What mighty sum paid all my debt,
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.”

7. Above all we admire the grace in Paul when he writes: “Without thy mind would I do nothing.” What humility in the eminent apostle, “Paul the aged,” not exalting himself over a younger brother! It would be a wonderful thing if there were more of this spirit in the church of God, “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5. 21).

But we think of this word as spoken to the Lord Himself: “Without Thy mind would I do nothing.” May we know more of the mind of Christ. We have it revealed in Philippians 2. 5-8:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

We also have the mind of Christ revealed in the Word of God. But in all our actions, ways, decisions, may we have grace to submit all to the Lord in prayer: “Without Thy mind would I do nothing.” And then there will be many things we will not do, for Jesus’ sake.

8. The epistle ends with grace as it began with grace. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (verse 25). Paul’s usual farewell is to wish his readers grace. But here he says, “with thy spirit.”

Let us be clear. “Grace once received can ne’er be lost.” Where the Holy Spirit has begun a good work of grace, He will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. But grace is not always “with our spirit.” Sometimes it is a wrong spirit, a bad spirit, a hard spirit, a disobedient spirit, a sinful

spirit, our own spirit. We do need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to put us in a right spirit, a spirit softened by the love and blood of Christ, for the honour and glory of His name.

So we see grace throughout the Epistle of Philemon. But this is grace in the fruit, not in the root – the sanctifying effect of grace.

From whence does this grace spring? From that wonderful fulness in the covenant of grace – grace reigning, grace abounding. And what is the channel through which this grace flows? The atonement. May our pulpits resound with the glorious truths of “sovereign grace o’er sin abounding,” and may the spirit of the Epistle to Philemon be seen in our hearts and in our congregations – the sanctifying effect of grace.

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As we look forward to the unknown way, we wonder what the future holds for our nation and churches. Truly what Ralph Erskine describes as the marks of approaching night are with us: the shadows lengthen; the labourers go home to their rest; the beasts of the forest creep forth.

We trust there may be some good days in store for Zion. The psalmist wrote: “When [not *if*] the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory” (Psa. 102. 16). This appearing in glory is not what the world or professors of religion may expect: “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (verse 17). For the encouragement of His people He adds: “This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord” (verse 18).

We have been encouraged that, during the past year, the Lord has been at work in the hearts of a few young people here and there. Our great desire for our young people and children is that they might be found sheltering under the shadow of the Almighty. We have thought of Joseph (Gen. 48) – a great man, his sons having every imaginable earthly blessing in Egypt; but above all he longed that they might know the covenant blessing of the God of Jacob, his father. It was his delight to hear the old patriarch say: “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” (verses 15, 16).

So, looking forward, we pray that we might experience the blessedness of the Saviour’s last words before His ascension into heaven (Matt. 28. 18-20). In a special way these words belong to gospel ministers. We seek week by week to pray for every true herald of the cross throughout the world, and we pray for our own ministers. Especially do we think of those who have been afflicted (Mr. Wood in his old age, and Mr. Jabez Rutt in his long-drawn-out affliction, and

others). We would “pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” May Satan be kept from us.

But these words in Matthew 28 are also blessedly true of all the Lord’s people.

“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” – the exalted Saviour, on the throne, almighty.

“Go ye *therefore*” – because the Saviour lives and reigns, forward into the unknown way.

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” – the sweet assurance of the Saviour’s abiding presence with His people.

“Amen.” There is no more to be said. “Amen.” So may it be. “Amen.” So shall it be.

We send our greetings to all our friends at home and overseas – in the United Kingdom, Holland, the U.S.A., Australia and Africa. The Lord Himself be with you.

Wishing you every blessing.

Your servant for Jesus’ sake,

The Editor

B.A. Ramsbottom

THE SURE FOUNDATION

Sermon preached by Joseph Lamancoo (a native of Africa, once a slave in the West Indies) at Bedworth on March 12th, 1843

Text: “His foundation is in the holy mountains” (Psa. 87. 1).

I have to say that my feelings quite overpower me, not being accustomed to address such a concourse as are here assembled this evening – at least not English people; but when in my feeble manner I have endeavoured amongst my own country people to point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, multitudes have flocked around me to hear, and I am persuaded not moved by a spirit of excitement or curiosity. They seemed to be in a prepared state, as though the Spirit was crying within them, preparing them for the reception of gospel truths. Such hungering, thirsting and earnest desires after something of which they felt they stood in need, according to their actual state and condition before God, led them to travel miles and crowd around the gospel standard when it has been raised, where Christ has been preached in all His fulness, freeness and saving benefits, to hear what God had to say concerning them.

Knowing you are blessed with very able ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, bring out of the treasury things new and old and set them in complete order before you – these things applied by the Spirit make you wise to salvation – seeing such an extraordinary number present, I can hardly persuade myself but much of it arises from a spirit of curiosity among you tonight. That which presses on my spirit and lies heavily enough to sink me is a sense of the greatness of the work, and having just entered upon it has a great tendency to depress my spirit; though we all know, who are rightly taught, God is able to give strength equal to the work, and He uses some of the weakest instruments to accomplish His great purpose; but I cannot help my feelings.

Knowing we are commanded to declare the whole counsel of God, to take forth the precious from the vile, yet seeing so many different descriptions of persons before us, as it respects their state and condition, as there always must be in a mixed multitude, and feeling my incapability of bringing out that which will satisfy every soul, so that I may give a word in season, makes me almost ready to sink under the burden. But may the good Lord keep me from playing the coward and enable me to attempt, in my simple strain, to set something before you that shall be to the glory of God and your good.

With regard to the doctrines I have great difficulty in delivering myself at times, as this is the third tongue I have attempted to learn; therefore, sometimes, through my not being so well versed in the English tongue as you, I find great difficulty in expressing that which the Holy Spirit has revealed to my soul; so that, should I be deficient in this respect, and for want of language make a mistake in this matter, you must take the substance and leave the refuse.

Now, to come to the text, I shall just, as the Lord shall help me, make a few observations on this Psalm: “His foundation is in the holy mountains.”

You are aware that the Scriptures frequently set spiritual things before us through the medium of things that are temporal, and using them as types, figures, shadows or signs, to convey to us what is the mind of God. You who are already spiritualised are aware that many times you have discovered such beauty, elegance and richness in divine things that you have not found language sufficiently powerful to express that which has been revealed to you; therefore words are but signs to set forth things that are. The psalmist, under the influence of the Eternal Spirit, contemplates the glory of the church of God through the medium of the temple that was to be built at Jerusalem, where the temple of the living God was to be built, where His presence was to be revealed.

In order to confirm you in the truth of this, you observe, in his description of Mount Zion in Psalm 48, he says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God," etc. So that, under the influence of the Spirit of God, in order to bring out those things that should be manifested hereafter, he breaks out in this glorious strain: "His foundation is in the holy mountains." He uses this as a figure. In the description which is given of Jerusalem – a city built on a hill – he calls it the holy city, or holy mountain. Why does he do this? Because God was known in her palaces for a refuge. We can look back upon the temple, and we know it was but a figure or a shadow of good things that were to come. We know the Lord was in the midst of this people, because they were His chosen, peculiar people. We know the Lord had a temple erected there for the worship and honour of His name, that His great name was there recorded. That was the body in which the truth was contained. To them, under God, we are indebted for the truths we possess.

"His foundation is in the holy mountains." Not confining ourselves to temporal things, we will look at the foundation of our salvation. This is of material consequence, of all-importance to us, to know the foundation of our soul's salvation. In speaking here of "His foundation," it reminds us that God is not only the Author of all temporal good but that He is the Author of our spiritual and eternal good; when there was no eye to pity us, nor arm to save us; when we were cast out into the field to the loathing of our person; when He passed by and looked upon us, and said, Live (Ezek. 16. 5, 6). It was His own arm brought salvation when there were none to be His counsellors, or to assist Him in this grand scheme of redemption.

This scheme was laid by the Father and the Son, agreed in this grand scheme of redemption: "The counsel of peace" was between Them both. So from eternity – yea, from eternity – the foundation of our salvation was laid. Where was this done? In heaven. The counsel was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of our souls. So it is not a scheme of human invention, not a cunningly-devised fable, not anything contrived by the ingenuity of man, but the alone contrivance of Jehovah, yea, the foundation of our soul's salvation is His foundation. Not of us, not of any creature's contrivance, but His divine plan. When we consider His divine character, that He is infinite in wisdom, boundless in power and unrivalled in goodness, we are encouraged to have confidence in this salvation. We need not be afraid of this foundation laid for our salvation giving way, because it is a sure salvation and sealed with the blood of the covenant. That which is contrived by the Lord is well contrived.

So this is His foundation; bear that in mind. In looking over the old translation which is preserved in the service of the Church of England,

it does not say *His* foundation; it says, "*Her* foundations are upon the holy hills"; that is the church of God, those who are passed from death unto life, renewed by the eternal Spirit, brought out of darkness into light, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. When this is applied by the Lord the Spirit, instead of saying "*her* foundation," we can say, under His blessed teaching, gracious operations and sweet refreshings, *My* foundation! Yea, *my* foundation is in the holy mountains. How is this? Because Christ procured everything for those whom He redeemed with His own precious blood; He has opened the gates and ascended up on high, and in due time will give His church that which He has laid up for her. Yea, the weakest and simplest believer in Christ has a right and title to say, "My foundation is in the holy mountains." He loves His church above everything. He loves His church collectively, He loves them individually, He loved them from eternity, He loved them in the beginning, loves them to the end, and will love them through the countless ages of eternity.

I have often thought on that striking circumstance when our Lord fasted and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, there to be tempted of the devil. It seemed to me as though His heart was entirely taken up in the grand work of redemption, that nothing could frustrate His purpose. He triumphed over the devil, that He might destroy the works of the devil. "Behold," said John, who writes on the love of God in the redemption of our souls – how often he speaks of the love of Christ – "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." As if he had said, Come, look at it. I cannot tell you the length, the breadth, the depth and height of the love of God in Jesus; it passes knowledge! However, this we know, if He had never loved us, we should never have loved Him. Thus love begets love. Nothing under heaven so interests the heart of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost as the salvation of His people. The Triune Jehovah is interested in the salvation of His elect. Thus what weight is contained in these words: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion" (verse 2)!

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (verse 3). Without going round about to illustrate this, we might justly say glorious things are spoken of the church of God from the fall of Adam, when the voice of the Eternal was heard in the garden, "Adam, where art thou?" We find, whilst the sentence of death was being pronounced on Adam, it was mingled with mercy; and, we might justly say, take up the whole of the promises of God, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, and you will find glorious things are spoken of the church of God.

The psalmist speaks of the glorious things belonging to the church – of her increase; this is connected with the glorious things. "Of the

increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” When the Child Jesus was born, angels burst through the clouds, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Not only the angels spoke of this, but John the Baptist points them to the Lamb of God. He points them to Jesus Christ, what kings and prophets desired to see, and had not seen. Thus it was said, “The people which sat in darkness saw great light.” The light shone on them. This was the case when the Lord Jesus entered on His ministry. He went round from village to village and from city to city, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, unstopping deaf ears, opening the mouth of the dumb and the eyes of the blind, casting out devils, triumphing over principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses, bringing the glad tidings of salvation to poor, perishing souls.

Therefore glorious things were spoken, exceeding, great and precious promises to the church. But our Lord did not stop here. When He had done the work here below, He ascended up on high, and then the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Lord’s people so miraculously, in such rich effusion, that we are told the people came together, such a multitude, they were astonished to see and hear what they did; there was no mistake in the matter. Thus the psalmist had a view of all these things, when he said, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!”

“And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her” (verse 5), to show her increase. Africa is my native place, and I have been in the West Indies, America; yea, I have been in the four quarters of the globe, and when I have carefully noticed the awful state and condition of the nations of the earth, so many millions, such an unaccountable number, destitute of the knowledge of the truth; when I have looked at all these things, and being acquainted with the corruptions of the heart, I have been ready to inquire, “How can these things be?” Seeing so many nations are at war with each other, the tribes of Africa and India; one nation ready to devour another; see them so deeply sunk in superstition, offering up their children to idols, sacrificing to the sun and moon, bowing down to stocks and stones; seeing so much depravity, so sunk in baseness, ignorance and blood-thirstiness, I have doubted and wondered how God was going to accomplish His purpose in the spread of the gospel.

Respecting my own case, being taken from Africa, and sold again and again, seeing the cruelties practised, when in my natural state it raised in me such a bitter spirit against both men and God that I thought my lot was cursed above all people. Such was the wretchedness of my condition that I desired death rather than life. But, my dear friends, since a ray of divine light has shone in my mind and the Lord has put His fear

in my heart, I have been very much blessed in being brought to see the Lord can accomplish His great purpose in a manner most unlikely to us. To see this slave trade carried on, nations using their bows, spears and darts, dipping them in poison, and shedding each other's blood; these things have been before my eyes, when they took me prisoner. The Lord has so overruled it that though bloodthirsty men have bartered for many slaves that they might enrich themselves, the Lord has overruled it for His glory and our good; because I have seen a glorious company of those who were once in darkness brought under the influence of the gospel; their hearts have been touched, their souls quickened, their eyes opened to behold wondrous things in the law of God, so that they have been brought to rejoice in the God of their salvation.

Then can we not say, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God"? The Lord is preparing one here and another there. I know some in Sierra Leone, who were once slaves, now brought under the influence of the gospel, and are ready to go and proclaim the gospel to the uttermost parts of Africa. I do not know how it is, but they seem better prepared than here. I tell you this, I have seen them seeking and searching after someone to lead them in the right way; having their consciences awakened, seeking to know the pardon of their sins and justification from all evil. Whenever the gospel is brought to bear upon them, they appear to have their ears laid open and ready to listen to truth their heart is prepared to receive. The Moravians were the first I heard who entered into the field proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation. Bear with me, my friends, when I speak of my own nation, for I was indeed stolen away. You know what the captives said, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem."

With reference to yourselves, though so great a number here, how many of you can say, "I was born there, or born in her"? In reference to this birth, I trust many of us can look back to the place, the time and circumstances connected with our spiritual birth, and can say, "We were born in her!" This is a great consolation to you, if you can; at least it is with me. When I have been buffeted, tempted, tried and almost ready to give up, especially at the outset, the enemy used to lead me to ask this question, whether I really was in possession of an immortal soul. Yea, he has so thrust at me, driven and tried me on that point, that sometimes I have been ready to doubt whether I was a rational being or not; if not, I could not have any share in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. O, I have been sometimes so tried on this point that I have placed an article before me and asked myself this question, "Am I a reasonable being? Can I think? Can I think on this subject, that circumstance, or the other? Can I act? Can I refuse or choose? Can I take up this book?" The snare has been broken, bless the Lord, and I have been brought to this

conclusion, that I am a reasonable being, that I possess an immortal soul. When the Holy Spirit has been pleased to shine on my heart, applying something that has given me an assurance of my interest in the blood of the Lamb, then it is I have recollected my past experience; I have gone back to the time when I was first impressed with divine truth; I have been led further back, to the time when in the world the Word of God was first applied, when I was first under conviction, the change that took place, the time and all the circumstances connected therewith; so that I have been enabled to answer the enemy.

While there are some of you who have very clear and satisfactory evidence of your conversion, I am well persuaded there are others who have not; but there is plenty of encouragement for you. Such has been the peculiar way of the Spirit working with others that I do not know how to describe it better than our Lord: "The wind bloweth where it listeth." The Holy Spirit gradually working in them, drawing them from time to time by His divine influence, step after step, that they have feared they have not been rightly brought, that they never had this change within. And because they could not speak so plainly of the time and circumstances, the enemy of souls has taken advantage of this and harassed them nearly all their life. The best way is to bring our experience to the test of the Word of God. Will not the Lord give us strength and assist us in this work, proving these things to our encouragement? He will. He has done it many times, though you cannot tell as some can. He has again and again lifted up the light of His countenance. After all your doubts and fears the Lord has again strengthened you; after all the darkness He has again shed the light of His countenance upon you; after all the fears, unbelief and doubts you have had, the Lord has again blessed you. So that He sends comfort and support to your soul; He knows all about them.

This puts me in mind of a faithful shepherd, who has a flock of sheep; he knows the number of them, and every one of them. In foreign countries we cannot put sheep into folds or enclosed grounds and there leave them; this would be impossible, and their certain destruction, because of the lions, tigers, the black snake, the rattlesnake, and a variety of other enemies; so that the shepherd is generally found with his flock, to watch over his sheep. No doubt many times he counts them over, so that he knows them pretty well; and, living and spending his life with them, they know him. As is here expressed, "The Lord shall count."

Never mind what other people count, or your own counting; that is very bad calculation. I have often thought of what the apostle said: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For I reckon." I dare say Paul could reckon very correctly; but how sure the Lord

reckons. It says, "The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people." After all your fears, temptations and doubts, the Lord knows your heart, your state and condition, the place and the circumstances connected with the divine change wrought in you. Though you may not be able to answer all questions on that with which you would be better satisfied, being subject to doubts and fears, yet "the Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there" (verse 6). See how progressively it goes on.

"The Highest himself shall establish her" (verse 5). Here is the foundation, the glorious things spoken of, the increase of the church promised; then particular notice taken of every one of them. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He will carry it on even to the end. The Lord does not do His work by halves or quarters, but when He puts His hand to the work, He is able to complete it. He knows all the names of His sheep. Though the kings of the earth assemble themselves together and come against her, they shall pass with shame and confusion of face. The princes of the world shall arise and be justly put to silence. Nations may arise, and from every quarter opposition may be made, persecution against the work of the Lord; they may persecute His church, they may go hither and thither to shed the blood of the saints; yet, notwithstanding this, "the Highest Himself shall establish her." Why, fearful saints, so discouraged and afraid? Whence do your doubts and fears arise? From the corruption of your heart. May the Lord shower down upon you more of His fear and love in your mind, enlighten you so that you may see more clearly the exceeding great and precious promises contained in this divine Book: not only be led to see, but to lay hold even to the end.

At the birth of Christ the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." So the service of God in the church is generally opened with singing. It does not all consist in offering supplication; praise forms an important part of the service. It is not all preaching. For my part I have felt so at times that I could praise when I could not pray. I could express my gratitude in no other way so well as praising and blessing Him when He set my soul at liberty. When a poor soul has been in such darkness and bondage, he has cried to the Lord to be delivered. He has sighed, struggled and groaned for his salvation, till he and his friends have been ready to give all up, when the Lord has broken in on that soul and set the captive free. Would not the prayers of such a one be turned to praise? He and the friends who had prayed with him would all praise God for his deliverance.

May the Lord grant you a knowledge of something of this foundation, these blessings connected with it, and if it be His blessed

will, you may be a recipient in the kingdom of glory, for His name and mercy's sake. Amen.

Many of the sermons that appeared in the old *Gospel Standards* were preached at Bedworth, a small town between Attleborough and Coventry. It appears there was an able reporter there. The well-known G.T. Congreve, discoverer of "Congreve's Elixir," and author of a beautiful book of letters and poems, was deacon there.

A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

Sermon preached by Thomas Watson in 1662

Text: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Psa. 46. 5).

Solomon saith, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." In which regard I have made choice of this Scripture, which may be a word in season, to revive the desponding hearts of God's people: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved."

This Psalm is a triumphal exultation, wherein the church with joy commemorates former deliverances, and by faith depends on God for future mercies. "God is our refuge and strength" (verse 1). The saints in all their dangers have an asylum or garrison to retreat to. They know where to put in for harbour. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower"; this is their refuge and Port Royal.

"A very present help." God is a help at a pinch. An army may be worsted ere their auxiliary forces come; but God never comes too late. His help is at hand, His forces are in the field; He is a *present* help, a help *in* trouble. The Ethiopic Version renders it: "in vehement trouble."

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." What is meant by this, "in the midst of her"? This looks back to the former verse, where there is mention made of the city of God: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." By this city of God is meant Jerusalem, which is called the city of the Lord, and the holy city (Isa. 60. 14; 52. 1). This city of Jerusalem is put for the church of God upon earth, and of this the text speaks: "God is in the midst of her." The words consist of two general parts: 1. The church's privilege: "God is in the midst of her." 2. The church's safety: "She shall not be moved"; that is, so as to be removed.

Doctrine. When the church of God is beleagured and environed with enemies, God is in the midst of her. "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee." "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst

of us.” The church of God hath not only enemies *without* her to conflict with, but *within* her, such as are hypocrites and apostates. She complains that her own sons vexed her (Song 1. 6), that is, those who had been bred up in her bosom and pretended religion, these false friends vexed her. The church’s enemies are of her own house; but be they what they will, foreign or intestine, the church hath One that will take her part. When she is most assaulted, she is more assisted: “God is in the midst of her.”

Question. But what prerogative is this, to have God in the midst of His church? Where is He not? He is an immense, infinite Being, and His circumference is everywhere: “Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me.” What privilege is it to have God in the midst of His church, seeing He is in the midst of His enemies too?

Answer. There is a twofold presence of God:

1. There is His *universal presence*, whereby He is in all places: “Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” This is no privilege at all; for this universal presence is with the damned, they have the presence of His power and justice.

2. There is a *peculiar presence* of God, and this is confined to His people. This presence of God is either in heaven, which is nothing else but His glorious presence: “The Lord’s throne is in heaven”; or on earth, and that is either:

(1) His *favourable presence*, whereby He manifests the pledges of His grace and goodness towards His people; and so He is present in the assemblies of His saints, breathing forth the sweet perfume of His Spirit: “In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” This is that presence the saints desire in the ordinances – God’s quickening, sanctifying, comforting presence; the smiles of His face, the kisses of His lips. Nothing is so delightful as to “hold the King in the galleries,” and have the “banner of love” sweetly displayed. Or,

(2) His *providential presence*, wherein the Lord appears admirably for His people in His providential actings, showing Himself to be a wonder-working God; and this is chiefly meant in the text: “God is in the midst of her,” to defend, to deliver, to bless. Thus He was with His people Israel by the pillar of fire and a cloud; and thus will He be present with His church to the end of the world.

The *reasons* why God is in the midst of His church to defend and bless it are:

1. The *dear interest* He hath in it. The people of God are called “a peculiar people.” The world lies in common, and is as so much waste

ground; but the church is God's vineyard and enclosure, therefore He will hedge it in with protection: "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." The saints are God's jewels; therefore He will not let them be lost. For their sins He may sometimes lay these jewels to pawn, as He did when Israel was in Babylon, but He will recover the pawn. The church is Christ's mystical body, the least bone whereof He will as surely preserve as He did every bone of His natural body: "A bone of it shall not be broken."

2. God is in the midst of His church because of the *entire love* He bears to it: "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." God loves His people with the choicest of His love; they have the spirits of His love distilled; and to show this, He calls them by those titles which denote love: "The apple of His eye"; "The dearly beloved of His soul"; "His treasure"; "His turtle dove"; "His spouse"; "His orchard of pomegranates"; "His glory." God loves the world with a more common love; His church hath the cream of His love. It is one love wherewith a man loves his bird, and another wherewith he loves his child; and God cannot but love His people, because He sees His own image shining in them. They are adorned with the graces of His Spirit, as a chain of pearls; and as they have the beauty of inherent holiness [planted in regeneration], so they have an interest in the unspotted holiness of Christ. God's love to His church is vehement, like the coals of juniper, or the sunbeams contracted in a burning glass, which are more intense and ardent; and because He loves Zion, therefore He is in the midst of it, to defend and bless it: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

3. God will be in the midst of His people, because *they are engaged in His quarrel*: "Know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke." All the oppositions the godly meet with are for standing up in the defence of truth. If they would desist from religion, and throw off Christ's colours, they would have none to oppose them; but because they espouse Christ's quarrels, and fight under the banner of His gospel, therefore Gebal and Ammon and all powers of hell unite and muster their forces against them. The princes of Persia had no other article against Daniel but the law of his God (Dan. 6. 5). Now, because the church of God appears in His cause, and loseth blood in His quarrel, therefore God is in the midst of her; He counts Himself concerned in point of honour to stand by His people.

Question. But wherein doth it appear that God is in the midst of His church?

Answer. It appears:

1. By His strange *preserving and delivering* His church.

(1) By *unthought-of* means. When Israel were hemmed in, the Red Sea before, Pharaoh and his host pursuing behind, God preserved them by *unthought-of* means. They never thought of the parting of the waters. Who would have imagined that God should have made a causeway in the sea? So when flesh failed in the wilderness, the people of Israel could not devise how God would spread them a table there. There was no ploughing or sowing; nothing to be seen but wild beasts and serpents. The Lord made the heavens a granary, and rained down bread upon them. Here He was in the midst of His people.

(2) By *contemptible* means. The blowing of trumpets and blazing of lamps made the Midianites flee (Judg. 7. 20). Jeremiah was drawn out of the dungeon by rotten rags (Jer. 38. 11). God often saves His church by despicable instruments. He makes use of rotten rags. God raised up Luther in Germany against the pope. The enemy looked upon him with a contemptible eye. One of them said he was fitter to pray in a cloister than to do any great exploits abroad. But God made him a rare instrument in His church. He did so shake the pope's chair that never to this day hath he sat safe in it.

(3) By *contrary* means, as that the rock should be set abroach [letting the water run out], or that Jonah should be saved by being swallowed up. God made the fish a ship in which he sailed safe to shore. That the raven, who is so unnatural she will hardly feed her young, should bring meat to the prophet Elijah. This shows God is in the midst of His people. How often is it seen that God makes use of a contrary wind; the enemies of His church shall do His work. He will play His game by their hand.

(a) Either He will make His enemies friendly to His people: "The children of Israel ... borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold ... and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians." God can make wolves to suckle His lambs. Or,

(b) He will work divisions among His enemies, and turn their own weapons against themselves: "The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir," and after that, "every one helped to destroy another." Thus God makes the seed of the serpent a means to break the serpent's head. We read in ecclesiastical history, in the time of good Emperor Theodosius, when the Persians did shoot their arrows against the Christians, by a sudden and violent wind their arrows were driven back, and did fly in their own faces.

2. It is evident that God is in the midst of His church, by His *seasonable appearing* for His people. When the church of God hath been brought very low, nothing in view but desperation, their power hath

been gone and their hopes gone, then God hath stepped in for their relief, and given the victory on the church's side: "The Lord ... shall repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." When Peter was sinking, then Christ put forth His hand and took him into the ship. When the church of God hath been, like Isaac on the altar, going to be sacrificed to the rage and fury of men, then hath the providence of God stepped in as the angel, and said: "Lay not thy hand upon the child." God may let the enemy nibble at the heel of His church, but still He defends the head. When malice is boiled up to revenge, and the designs of men carry destruction in front, now appears the church's morning star of deliverance. This shows God is in the midst of Zion, because when things have seemed to be in the forlorn hope, and all given for lost, now God hath come riding in the chariots of salvation.

(To be continued)

RIGHT THOUGHTS OF GOD

A paper read by Mr. J.A. Watts, in the pastor's absence, at a prayer meeting at Bethel Chapel, Luton, in August 2005 (adapted from a sermon on Isaiah 6. 5 preached by Mr. John Raven at Shaw's Corner, Redhill, on May 14th, 1946)

Readings: Isaiah 6. 1-8
Revelation 1. 9-18.

It is very important that we should have right thoughts of God. Our religion will be solid and weighty, or it will be flimsy and of little value, according as we have right views or superficial views of the Most High God. You will find in the Scriptures, and in the writings and experiences of true people of God, that there was given to them a deep and solemn sense of the majesty and holiness of God such as to bow down their souls, sink them into the dust and make them realise their own guilt, sin and nothingness. When the Lord thus deals with a man or woman, there will be no mood for trifling in religion. O the things of God and of eternity will be of weighty import then! They will be the principal business of our life. O how we do lack in these days people whose religion is the first thing in their lives!

We read here, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and His train filled the temple." King Uzziah had passed away. He had not been altogether a bad king; his reign had been beneficial in many ways but he must go the way of all the earth. Kings must die as well as common folk, and King

Uzziah had died. But the Lord showed the prophet something for his comfort in those dark days of bereavement, when there was a great sense of national loss. He showed him a vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. He saw that His train filled the temple, and he also saw the cherubims who cried one unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

See the effect upon the prophet! "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone." And see the effect on the Apostle John, of whom we have been reading: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." And this is the effect when the Lord displays His power and glory to a sinner. The man feels his sinnership and becomes bowed down with a sense of his unworthiness. He sees sin to be so exceedingly sinful and himself so defiled by sin that he has to drop his head with shame. A holy light shines into the heart, and that light reveals the hidden things of darkness. When the light of the glory of God thus shines into the heart, then sin, hitherto unseen, or only superficially seen, becomes exceedingly sinful. The poor soul sees sin everywhere, sin in every thought, sin in every act, sin in every prayer, sin in every word; wherever he looks there is sin. He sees his repentance comes short – and O the death this brings upon all his legal hopes and carnal expectations! The more he looks upon himself, the worse the picture appears.

What we do need in these days is more of this solemn and gracious teaching manifest among us. There are too many people who come by their religion lightly; they have a sort of notion or idea that they are sinners. They acknowledge that; and they have a notion that Jesus is a Saviour and that if they receive or accept Him, then all will be well and they will be saved: but if you have a proper conception of God, of what and who He is, then a superficial salvation will not meet your case. You will want a salvation as real as your ruin, you will want a forgiveness that puts away – blots out – all your sins. You will want a remedy that is effectual in the healing of the diseases of your soul. Salvation becomes a great thing!

Now the Lord not only discovers, as He did to Isaiah, his sinful and ruined state. There was also shown to him the altar of burnt offering. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." So the Lord first discovers the need, and then reveals and applies the cleansing sacrifice, and that is just what we need Him to do for us. He alone can reveal the remedy, and He alone can apply it. Those who are made to feel their need of this remedy are also made to feel their need of the application of it. They are not content to have these things just set before them, they are not satisfied with just

hearing about Christ and hearing about the gospel – they want application. And these people can get no relief, look where they will, until they get the application; application is what they are after and it will be the burden of their petitions: “O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.” Deliverance comes by the application of the atonement and these poor people have to wait for it. They are taught to wait upon God under the pressure of their necessity; but “the Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.”

“Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.” What a wonderful sound that was to his ears and in his heart! What an amazing word of grace it was to him! Can you feel in your hearts this evening that such a word spoken to your heart would be an amazing word of grace, would fill you with wonder, with sweet surprise that *you* should get it? The Lord help you to wait upon Him for it, remembering this, that your good deeds will not bring it to you, no good tempers or good frames of yours will bring it. What is it that keeps convicted sinners in bondage? Why, it is because we are so given to looking into self to find comfort and deliverance. But what the Holy Ghost does, is to lead *out of self* to Jesus Christ. It is the free gift of Christ’s grace, and it will come through the atoning sacrifice of the dear Redeemer. And then you will say:

’Twas Jesus, my Friend, when He hung on the tree,
Who opened the channel of mercy for me.

Then finally in verse 8 of the chapter, “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.” His heart was enlarged, his tongue set at liberty, and now he could run in the way of the Lord’s commandments. In the prophet’s case, it was the ministry, but what a wonder it is that the Lord is able to take a poor, guilty sinner and deal with him thus graciously and make him a vessel meet for His use.



The Lord has His own way of dealing with us. None can lay down lines for Him, and though His dealings with each seem to differ widely, and few at the time can read His purposes, for He brings the blind by a way which they knew not, yet in the end all His ways are found to be ways of mercy, truth and peace – all stamped with the impress of infinite wisdom, and tender mercy and love.

J.C. Philpot

The only thing which does us any real good is what the Lord is pleased to do for us, and in us, by the blessed Spirit; and nothing will abide the fire, which is to try every man’s work of what sort it is, but His own grace in the soul.

J.C. Philpot

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

By David Smith (1819-1892), pastor at Siddal, Halifax

It is the work of God to begin, to carry on and to complete the good work, and, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." Then the saints' perseverance to eternal glory is sure. God says, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." Now, they could not show forth His praise if the good work was never begun in them. This people must show forth God's praise in heaven as well as on earth. God has formed them for that purpose and to that end; therefore, with God's help, they will be enabled to persevere to the end, to bless and praise God for all that He has done for them.

God says, He will give grace and He will give glory (Psa. 84. 11). He will give persevering grace and finally eternal glory. None of the redeemed family shall be left behind for want of price or power, nor for want of care and kindness on the part of their Good Shepherd, for He says, "Where I am, there ye shall be also."

I will now show you a few scriptural reasons why none of those in whom this "good work" has been begun shall fail of a safe arrival in heaven, their destined place, and why none of them shall be left out when Christ shall make up His people in His "holy mountain."

1. There shall not one of them be left out or perish, because they are heirs to a mansion of eternal bliss and blessedness. They are heirs of an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and one that fades not away like earthly inheritances; it is one that is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The saints are all kept by the power of God; for nothing less could keep them. They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13. 43); but they could not if they were left behind, or could perish by the way.

2. Because Christ, their Shepherd and Keeper, says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." As it is the Father's good pleasure to do this, who can hinder it? None; therefore not one shall be left out or perish. The Word of the Lord declares that they shall be made kings and priests unto God, and unto the Lamb for ever; but they could not be made to be such if they were left behind to perish.

It appears that, although they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, and heirs to a kingdom, yet they are not exempt from fears and doubts here on earth. I will just point out one or two of the fears of some of this little flock. One of the fears of this little flock is that they are not worthy of such an inheritance, because they feel to be so poor, and so far from any real satisfaction in their own minds that they are of the number of the redeemed. One may be saying, I fear I have never been really

called by grace, that I have never come in at the strait gate and the narrow way which leads to such a kingdom. Another may be saying, I never had such marks and evidences as others have, whom I believe to be real Christians. Another may be saying, I feel so bad in myself, and so dark and bewildered, so full of confusion and wretchedness, that I fear I am not one of God's people. Another is saying, I cannot be a child of God; for if I were, I should not have the trouble I have, arising from myself and others with whom I have to do. Sorrow upon sorrow, and grief upon grief, attend me all the way through life, and I am borne down with care and anxiety, and I fear God will have nothing to do with me. Another is saying, I have gone to the chapel or church so long, like a door hanging upon its hinges, and get but little or no comfort and satisfaction from the word preached, that I fear I am altogether out of the secret. Another is saying, I fear I was never regenerated and renewed by the Spirit, that I was never born again, and so I shall never "enter into the kingdom of heaven." Another is saying, I fear I shall never hold out to the end, but shall bring a reproach on the cause of God and truth, and shame upon myself. Another is saying, I fear I am not in the right track that leads to life and immortality; for I am so tempted with sin and Satan, and so ready to be drawn aside.

These are some of the fears that God's people are the subject of after the "good work" has been begun, and while it is being carried on, too; but I cannot now dwell upon those fears, as I should like to do, but allow me to say that all these fears combined cannot deprive those in whom the "good work" has been begun of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. The little flock has been, more or less, the subject of many fears in all ages of the world, and will be to the end. But if only one of these should be left behind by Christ, He could not say of His people, I am here, and the children Thou hast given Me (Isa. 8. 18). All God's chosen, Christ's sheep, are said to be registered in the Lamb's book of life, and can never be erased; no never, no never, no never.

"If but one soul who has to Jesus fled
Be missing there, the vacant seat, the harp
Unstrung, the useless crown, would grieve all heaven,
And there proclaim a disappointed God!
No! He has sworn by two immutables,
That Christ shall see the travail of His soul.
The Father's covenant love, the Spirit's grace,
The Son's redeeming blood, all join in this
Sweet truth – the righteous shall hold on their way."

The saints are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the foundation stone. He is their Rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; no, not so as to batter one hoof from it to be left behind, not one heir of bliss, not one vessel of mercy, nor one

heir of heaven; for they shall all be made more than conquerors through Him that has loved them. These are some of the reasons why the saints shall not perish.

3. But, thirdly, they must persevere to the end, and not be allowed to perish, that Christ may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied in heaven. Now, Christ could not, would not be satisfied, if one of those for whom He travailed in soul, and for whom He died on the cross, if such a one should be left behind to perish when He numbers up His sheep. "I give unto them eternal life," He says, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Inasmuch, then, as Christ died for them, gives them eternal life, and will see to it that none shall pluck them either out of His hands or out of the hands of His Father, they will most surely get safely home, though the way may be rough and thorny that leads to it; for in God's own time every hindrance shall be removed out of the way. It has always been a rough and thorny way to heaven, and as one of our poets says, so it is now, and ever will be:

"No wider is the gate,
No broader is the way,
No smother is the ancient path
That leads to endless day.

"No sweeter is the cup,
No less our draught of ill;
'Twas tribulation ages since,
'Tis tribulation still."

But blessed be God that tribulation with all its consequences shall not be able to prevent Christ's sheep from entering into the heavenly fold.

The apostle asks this important question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And he also answers this question by saying, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, if these things cannot separate us from the love of Christ, surely nothing else can. But there is nothing else that either can or will; therefore none will be left out or perish when Christ makes up His jewels, the purchase of His blood, the travail of His soul, those for whom He died. I will give you a few short scriptural reasons why the saints shall persevere to the end, and not be allowed to perish.

4. They shall persevere to the end because the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger (Job 17. 9), and because God will keep the feet of His saints (1 Sam. 2. 9); because they shall walk in the light of God's countenance, in His name shall they rejoice all the day, and in His righteousness shall they be exalted (Psa. 89. 16); because the Lord will not cast off His people, nor forsake His inheritance (Psa. 94. 14); because the Lord will preserve their going out and their coming in, from this time forth and for evermore (Psa. 121. 8). This being so, the saints can never finally fall away so as to be lost, but must be saved and appear in glory. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me," says Christ, "and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

The saints shall persevere to the end on account of the love of God towards them, which is both an unchanging and an everlasting love, and abides sure. This love is made manifest in the "good work" begun and carried on; and this love will complete the work, "Crying, grace, grace, unto it." This love is all sovereign, rich and free, and leads the object of it up to eternal glory. This love confirms the saints to the end, that they shall be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; for God is faithful, by whom they were called into the fellowship of the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1. 8, 9). The saints are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. 1. 13). This seal shall not be broken, but is indelibly fixed upon the saints until the day of redemption.

One of our poets has said, and truly said, concerning this love to the saints (and with this quotation I will finish this part of my subject):

"E'en down to old age all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.

"That soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

David Smith was a well-known minister in Lancashire and Yorkshire. He often visited Blunsdon Hill, and on June 2nd, 1867, baptized twenty persons in the River Thames, and on August 8th, 1869, eleven persons.

AN INTERESTING BAPTISMAL SERVICE

At Blunsdon, near Highworth, Wiltshire, on Sunday, June 2nd, 1867, in that part of the River Thames which runs through Cricklade,

twenty persons (nine men and eleven women) were baptized by David Smith of Halifax, Yorkshire. At 9 o'clock in the morning a prayer meeting was held in a large shed belonging to Mr. Gantlett, a member of the church at Blunsdon, where a large company was assembled; so many in fact that the shed would not hold them all. To many of the people who had come together from east, west, north and south, the prayer meeting was a solemn and refreshing time, and some said it was good to be there.

After the prayer meeting Mr. Smith preached from an open wagon in a large field on the banks of the river, to an audience comprising from two to three thousand persons, who upon the whole were both quiet and attentive. The text was: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8. 12).

The sermon being concluded, Mr. Smith went down into the water, and each candidate for baptism was conducted to him by two of the friends, and in about twenty minutes the whole of them were baptized, after which the people sang the doxology and departed.

In the afternoon Mr. Smith administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper to the church at Blunsdon Hill, after appropriately addressing the newly-baptized persons and receiving them into the church. In the evening Mr. Smith again preached to a crowded congregation who had flocked together like doves to their windows, and the chapel on this occasion was far too small to contain all the people that came to hear.

From an account published by Alfred Gadsby, 1867

JOHN BERRIDGE

By John Gadsby (1808-1893)

The following account is taken from Memoirs of Hymnwriters and Compilers, written by William Gadsby's son John. We feel this work has been undervalued; it contains a wealth of information.

Berridge, under God's blessing, was one of the leading ministers of the Evangelical Revival. In our congregations he is best known for his quaint hymns, William Gadsby accounting him and Joseph Hart "the sweetest and greatest experimental writers that have left any hymns on record."

John Berridge was born at Kingston, in Nottinghamshire, March 1st, 1716. His father was a wealthy farmer at Kingston, and intended to bring John up to agriculture, and for that purpose took him to markets and fairs, that he might become acquainted with the price of cattle and other things connected with farming. But, whenever his father asked him what

he conceived was the value of such and such a thing, he was invariably so far out in his judgment that his father despaired of his ever being a competent agriculturist, and so ceased from endeavouring to instruct him in that line. The truth is, God had designed him to occupy a more exalted station.

The circumstance to which he ascribed his first serious impressions was singular. Once, as he was returning from school, a neighbouring youth invited him into his house, and asked if he should read a chapter to him out of the Bible. He consented. This being repeated several times, he began to feel a secret aversion to it, and would gladly have declined accepting these friendly invitations. But having obtained the reputation of being a pious child, he was afraid to risk it by a refusal. On his return from a fair, where he had been to enjoy a holiday, he hesitated to pass the door of his young neighbour, lest he should be accosted as before. The youth, however, was waiting for him; and when he approached, renewed his invitation and, in addition to his former request, asked if they should *pray* together. In this exercise it was that he began to perceive he was not right, or the amusements of a fair would not have been preferred to the pleasures of devotion. And such was the effect of this interview, that not a great while after, he *himself* adopted a similar practice with his school companions.

At the age of fourteen, God was pleased to convince him that he was a sinner, and must be born again. About this time he left school, and returned to his father, with an intention to apply himself to business. A tailor who was occasionally employed in the family, being a man of strict sobriety and struck with the uncommon appearances of religion in one so young, conversed with him on serious subjects whenever he came to the house on business. As opportunities of this nature seldom occurred, John's love for religion induced him to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with this man, by going frequently to his house for the purpose of serious conversation. His relations at length suspected he had too much religion, and fearing to what it would grow, discovered some inclination to discourage it. They insinuated that, since his attachment was so strong to his new companion, he should be bound to him in articles of apprenticeship. This threat had not the designed effect, for so prevalent was his bias to reading, prayer and serious discourse, that he frequently repeated his visits.

Finding this their scheme unsuccessful, and conceiving that his predilection for reading and religion would entirely unfit him for business, they resolved, though reluctantly, to send him to the university. In this determination, which was perfectly congenial with his own inclinations, he most readily concurred, and after previous preparation, entered Clare Hall, Cambridge, October 28th, 1734, in the nineteenth

year of his age. A neighbour soon after meeting his father, and inquiring for his son, he jocosely replied, "He is gone to be a light to lighten the Gentiles." This testimony was true. Being now in his element, he pursued his studies with uncommon avidity, and made such progress in every branch of literature as rendered him in no respect inferior to any of his contemporaries. Favoured with a good understanding, improved by literature, and possessing a natural vein of humour which was extremely fascinating, he rose in respect; and his acquaintance was courted at the university by ecclesiastics of superior rank, though of wider principles and less rigid morals.

"So insatiable was his thirst for knowledge, that from his entrance at Clare Hall to his acceptance of the vicarage of Everton, he regularly studied fifteen hours a day. A clergyman, with whom he had been in habits of friendship about fifty years, said of him that he was as familiar with the learned languages as he was with his mother tongue, and that he could be under no temptation to court respect by itinerant preaching, for he merited and enjoyed that in a high degree among all ranks of literary professions at the University."

Being of a witty turn of mind, he read with avidity various works of wit, which, together with his natural humour, made him such excellent company at the college that whenever it was known he was to be present at any public dinner, the table was sure to be crowded. Socinian principles [denying the Godhead of Christ] were then widely prevalent, and as evil communications corrupt good manners, he caught the contagion and drank into the Socinian scheme to such a degree as to lose all serious impressions, and discontinue private prayer for the space of ten years, a few intervals excepted. In these intervals he would weep bitterly, reflecting on the sad state of his mind compared with what it was when he came to the university, and would frequently say to a fellow-student, who became an eminent minister in the Establishment, "O that it were with me as in years past!"

Conscience, however, at length resuming her authority, he was compelled to relinquish sentiments so derogatory to God, and so subversive of every good principle and practice. He now discovered that they not only lessened God the Son in his esteem, but God the Father also, and tended to promote no higher a morality than what comported with all the maxims and pleasures of the present world. With the renunciation of his former errors, he returned to the regular exercise of devotional religion, although it was but a small remove, if any, from pharisaical.

Soon after this, he began to feel strong inclinations to exercise his ministry; and accordingly, in the year 1749, accepted the curacy of Stapleford, near Cambridge, which he regularly served six years from

college. His parishioners were extremely ignorant and dissolute, and he was much concerned to do them good. He took extraordinary pains, and pressed very earnestly upon them the necessity of sanctification, but had the mortification to find that they continued as unsanctified as before. But let the good man speak for himself. I extract the following from *The Works of Mr. Berridge*, by Mr. Whittingham, Vicar of Potton:

“When I was about the age of fourteen, God was pleased to show me that I was a sinner, and that I must be born again before I could enter into His kingdom. Accordingly, I betook myself to reading, praying and watching, and was enabled hereby to make some progress in sanctification. In this manner I went on, though not always with the same diligence, till about a year ago. I thought myself in the right way to heaven, though as yet I was wholly out of the way; and imagining I was travelling towards Zion, though I had never yet set my face thitherwards. Indeed, God would have shown me that I was wrong, by not owning my ministry; but I paid no regard to this for a long time, imputing my want of success to the naughty hearts of my hearers, and not to my own naughty doctrine.

“You may ask, perhaps, what was my doctrine? Why, dear Sir, it was the doctrine that every man will naturally hold whilst he continues in an unregenerate state, viz., that we are to be justified partly by our faith and partly by our works. This doctrine I preached for six years, at a curacy which I served from college; and though I took some extraordinary pains, and pressed sanctification upon them very earnestly, yet they continued as unsanctified as before, and not one soul was brought to Christ. There was, indeed, a little more of the form of religion in the parish, but not a whit more of the power.

“At length I removed to Everton, where I have lived altogether. Here again I pressed sanctification and regeneration as vigorously as I could; but finding no success, after two years’ preaching in this manner, I began to be discouraged, and now some secret misgiving arose in my mind, that I was not right myself. (This happened about Christmas last.) Those misgivings grew stronger, and at last very painful. Being then under great doubts, I cried unto the Lord very earnestly, ‘Lord, if I am right, keep me so; if I am not right, make me so. Lead me to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.’

“After about ten days’ crying unto the Lord, He was pleased to return an answer to my prayers, and in the following wonderful manner. As I was sitting in my house one morning, and musing upon a text of Scripture, the following words were darted into my mind with wonderful power, and seemed indeed like a voice from heaven, viz., ‘Cease from thine own works.’ Before I heard these words, my mind was in a very unusual calm; but as soon as I heard them, my soul was in a tempest

directly, and tears flowed from my eyes like a torrent. The scales fell from my eyes immediately, and I now clearly saw the rock I had been splitting on for near thirty years. Do you ask what this rock was? Why, it was some secret reliance on my own works for salvation. I had hoped to be saved partly in my own name and partly in Christ's name; though I am told there is salvation in no other name, except in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4. 12). I had hoped to be saved partly through my own works, and partly through Christ's mercies, though I am told we are saved by grace through faith, and not of works (Eph. 2. 8, 9). I had hoped to make myself acceptable to God partly through my own good works, though we are told that we are accepted through the Beloved (Eph. 1. 6). I had hoped to make my peace with God partly through my own obedience to the law, though I am told that peace is only to be had by faith (Rom. 5. 1). I had hoped to make myself a child of God by sanctification, though we are told that we are made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3. 26). I had thought that regeneration, the new birth, or new creature, consisted in sanctification, but now I know it consists in faith (1 John 5. 1). Compare also these two passages together, Gal. 6. 15 and Gal. 5. 6, where you will find that the new creature is faith working by love. The apostle adds these words, *working by love*, in order to distinguish a living faith from a dead one.

"When we are justified, it is done freely, that is, graciously, without any the least merit of ours, and solely by the grace of God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3. 24-28). All that is previously needful to justification is this, that we are convinced, by the Spirit of God, of our own utter sinfulness (Isa. 64. 6); convinced that we are the children of wrath by nature, on account of our birth-sin (Eph. 2. 3); and that we are under the curse of God, on account of actual sin (Gal. 3. 10), and under these convictions come to the Lord Jesus Christ, renouncing all righteousness of our own, and relying solely on Him, who is appointed to be the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23. 6).

"Again, Christ says, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,' (with the burden of sin) 'and I will give you rest'; that is, I will take the burden away; I will release you from the guilt of sin. Where you may observe that the only thing required of us when we come to Christ is to come burdened and sensible that none can remove this burden but Christ. Again, Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. See also Luke 5. 32. Hear how He cries out in Isa. 55. 1: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ... come, buy wine and milk' – that is, the blessings of the gospel – 'without money and without price.' Where we are ordered to bring no money, that is, no merits of our own; we must not think to make a purchase of these

blessings by any deserts of ours. They are given freely, that is, graciously, and must be received freely. Nothing more is required from us, but to thirst after them.

“Why was the Pharisee rejected? (Luke 18. 10, etc.) Because he came pleading his own works before God. He was devout, just, chaste and abstemious; and thanked God for enabling him to be so. Very well; so far all was right. But then he had some reliance on these works, and therefore pleads the merits of them before God, which showed that he did not know what a sinner he was, and that he could only be saved by grace, through faith. He opens his mouth before God and pleads his own cause, though God declares that every mouth shall be stopped before Him, and the whole world brought in guilty before God (Rom. 3. 19). And why was the publican justified? Not on account of his own works, but because he was sensible of his evil ones; and accordingly came self-accused, self-condemned, and crying out only for mercy.

“And now, dear Sir, hear what is the rise and progress of true religion in the soul of man. When the Spirit of God has convinced any person that he is a child of wrath and under the curse of God (in which state every one continues to be till he has received Jesus Christ into his heart by faith,) then the heart of such a one becomes broken for sin; then, too, he feels what he never knew before, that he has no faith, and accordingly laments his evil heart of unbelief. In this state men continue, some a longer, some a less time, till God is pleased to work faith in them.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW

The Decades of Henry Bullinger; hardback; four volumes in two; over 2,000 pages altogether; price \$110 (special \$65) plus postage; published by Reformation Heritage Books, 965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525, U.S.A., and obtainable from the publishers. (No doubt available through booksellers in the United Kingdom.)

Henry Bullinger (1504-1575), Swiss preacher and theologian, was under God one of the leading figures of the Reformation. Sadly, in recent years he has been little known, though in his day he was extremely influential, not only on the continent but in England.

Hundreds of treatises were written by Bullinger, but *The Decades* is his greatest work, a work something similar to Calvin's *Institutes*. *The Decades* first appeared in Latin in 1549-1551, the first English translation appearing in 1577.

The reason for this work being entitled “The Decades” is because it consists of five groups of ten sermons.

Decade I deals with the Word of God; Faith; Justification by Faith; the Apostles' Creed; and the Commandments of Jesus.

Decades II and III deal with The Ten Commandments; The Ceremonial Law; Judicial Law and the Two Testaments; The Use, Fulfilment and Abrogation of the Law; Christian Liberty; and Sin.

Decade IV deals with Grace and Repentance; God, Providence and Predestination; The Son of God; The Holy Ghost; and Good and Evil Spirits and the Soul.

Decade V deals with The Holy Catholic Church; The Ministry; and the Means of Grace: Prayer, The Sacraments, The Church's Institutions.

So this is a mammoth work, a compendium of divinity. Bullinger himself said of it: "I trust that in these fifty sermons I have, as shortly and conveniently as might be, comprehended the whole matter of faith, godliness or true religion, and also the church."

Bullinger's works were extremely popular in England and had a great influence, even years before *The Decades* appeared. *The Decades*, in the sixteenth century, were much more popular in England than Calvin's *Institutes*. In 1586, Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, prescribed them as necessary reading for ministers. On the continent the Heidelberg Catechism was much influenced by *The Decades*.

Apart from the great influence Bullinger had on the English Reformation, it is interesting to note that he corresponded with both King Edward VI and Lady Jane Gray (the nine days Queen), and also, when exiled, John Hooper the Marian martyr made his home with him in Zurich.

It is said that Bullinger was one of the greatest minds of his age but one of the simplest preachers, and it is clear he was blessed with much grace.

It is rather difficult to say why he was so renowned in a former day but has become little known in recent times. Since the 500th anniversary of Bullinger's birth in 2004, there have been a number of books and articles written about him. This beautifully-produced book is the first English edition of *The Decades* since 1850.

A very long introduction of 128 pages, written by Dr. Ella and Dr. Beeke, gives an excellent and interesting account of Bullinger's life and an assessment of the value of his work as a Reformer.

Some reviews are unavoidably held over.

SONG IN THE DAY OF THE EAST WIND

Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise;
 When I call on Christ my Saviour, the host of evil flies.
 My Friend, the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God;
 What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood?
 I know it – I believe it – I say it fearlessly,
 That God, the Highest, Mightiest, for ever loveth me.
 At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side;
 He rules the battle fury, the tempest and the tide.

A Rock that stands for ever is Christ my Righteousness,
 And there I stand unfearing in everlasting bliss;

No earthly thing is needful to this my life from heaven,
 And nought of love is worthy, save that which Christ has given –
 Christ, all my praise and glory, my light most sweet and fair;
 The ship in which He saileth is scatheless everywhere;
 In Him I dare be joyful as a hero in the war,
 The judgment of the sinner affrighteth me no more.

There is no condemnation – there is no hell for me;
 The torment and the fire my eyes shall never see;
 For me there is no sentence – for me death has no sting,
 Because the Lord who loves me shall shield me with His wing.
 Above my soul's dark waters His Spirit hovers still;
 He guards me from all sorrows, from terror and from ill.
 In me He works, and blesses the life-seed He has sown;
 From Him I learn the ABBA, that prayer of faith alone.

And if in lonely places, a fearful child, I shrink,
 He prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think;
 The deep unspoken language, known only to that love
 Who fathoms the heart's mystery from the throne of light above.
 His Spirit to my spirit sweet words of comfort saith,
 How God the weak one strengthens, who leans on Him in faith;
 How He hath built a city of love, and light and song,
 Where the eye at last beholdeth what the heart had loved so long.

And there is mine inheritance – my kingly palace-home;
 The leaf may fall and perish – not less the spring will come;
 Like wind and rain of winter, our earthly sighs and tears,
 Till the golden summer dawneth of the endless year of years.
 The world may pass and perish – Thou, God, wilt not remove,
 No hatred of all devils can part me from Thy love;
 No hungering nor thirsting, no poverty nor care,
 No wrath of mighty princes can reach my shelter there.

No angel and no devil, no throne, nor power, nor might;
 No love – no tribulation – no danger, fear, nor fight;
 No height – no depth – no creature that has been, or can be,
 Can drive me from Thy bosom – can sever me from Thee.
 My heart in joy upleapeth, grief cannot linger there,
 She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair;
 The Sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His love;
 The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above.

Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676)

I wish I could be more spiritually minded, which is life and peace, walk more in the enjoyment of the love and favour of God, feel more of the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have a stronger faith in Him.

J. C. Philpot

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2006

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

SALVATION BY GRACE

Sermon preached by John E. Hazelton on February 8th, 1914

Text: "By grace ye are saved" (Eph. 2. 5).

The whole verse reads, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

What does the word "grace" mean? It is eminently desirable that in reading the Word of God, or in attempting to preach His gospel, we should have an exceedingly clear understanding of the meaning of some of the commonest words which we use. There is no word upon our lips more frequently in the New Testament, next to the divine name of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the word "grace." What does it mean? Let us not go away this morning with a dim idea concerning the meaning of the word. It signifies in our text, and it signifies wherever it occurs, the pure favour of God. That is grace – God's pure favour; God's pure favour bestowed without any regard to human merit. It is no more hindered by sin than it is conditional upon works. God's grace is the gospel. Grace is God's great salvation.

Our text this morning is in parenthesis, or to use a plainer word, in brackets: "(by grace ye are saved)." The literal significance is, "Ye are in a saved state." The Ephesians, to whom this letter is written, and likewise the children of God down all the ages, feel much of the evils of their own hearts: they feel intensely again and again how cold and hard and deathlike they become. They are powerfully influenced by that which is within and by the things that are without. Hence the apostle says, Forever bear in mind that by grace you are now in a saved state notwithstanding all your doubts and fears; notwithstanding all the castings down from the evils of your own heart; notwithstanding all the chill that unbelief brings into your souls. In brackets he sets forth the shining truth, by grace you are now in a saved state. The fluctuations of your feelings make no difference to your state and standing before the Lord God, nor to your fellowship in the quickening with Christ. When we were dead in sins He hath quickened us together with Christ.

But why am I thus? you reply. And the apostle remarks, "By grace you are in a saved state." And so we come to the word "grace" as setting forth the strong and sure foundation stone on which every sinner is

brought to rest for full and free salvation. Here is the foundation which God has laid in Zion, and which God will never allow to be removed. No word more frequently flowed from the apostle's pen than this word "grace," and it occurs so frequently because it gushes out of his heart with holy admiration. When he is narrating the history of his first spiritual experience, he traces everything up to the fountain head: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. i. 15, 16). You began then with grace, Paul! Yes, and what is the ministry committed to you? The dispensation of grace! And what is the gospel you preach? The gospel of the grace of God! Now dear friends, if salvation were of works or merit, you would have been quickened because of your obedience, or because of what you deserved, or because of something that you had done. But the apostle says, Remember this, that this quickening and every good, and great, and gracious blessing is of God's pure favour to a hell-deserving sinner such as you.

What is the great distinction between works and faith? There is a limit to works, but none to grace. Let me illustrate it like this. There is a husband who dearly loves his wife and who at the same time has a servant. He pays wages to the servant for the work that servant does for him. There is a limit to the wages and to the work, but what limit is there to the love which he bears his wife? None, if she be a true wife and he a husband in the true sense of the term.

But let us come in relation to our text, to speak of grace from two aspects.

I. First of all, to say something about its nature, "By grace ye are saved."

II. Secondly, something upon its fruits.

I. The nature of grace

We have said that grace truly means the pure favour of God. But now we want to dig down deeper than that, so far as God shall give us grace and ability. What is that grace by which you are saved? It is the everlasting love of Jehovah. Why is God called Jehovah? He is called Jehovah with reference to His Trinity of Persons and with reference to His covenant love and the covenant of grace into which He has entered on behalf of His dear people; and when we speak of the everlasting love of Jehovah, we mean the everlasting love of Jehovah – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – one in essence, one in Godhead, but three in Person. And when we regard the everlasting love of our Triune Jehovah as blended with, and acting upon, all His glorious attributes on behalf of His church and people, we get that which is of the very essence of grace. The grace of God – His everlasting love blended with His wisdom on your behalf; His everlasting love, blended with His power on your behalf; His

everlasting love blended with His omniscience and His omnipresence on your behalf. O when we are thus enabled to regard the grace of God, we see it in some of its infinite majesty! If you and I have had one drop of the grace of God bestowed upon us, we have a golden treasure, and if we have one drop of this pure golden treasure we have the earnest of the inheritance. Hence the apostle says in the fourteenth verse of the preceding chapter, concerning the Spirit of the living God, that if we have the Holy Ghost in our hearts, He is the earnest of our inheritance unto the praise of His glory.

How can you know that you have grace? If you have a living, breathing desire after God, and if you are a seeker at the feet of Christ Jesus for those blessings that you are conscious He alone can bestow, you have the earnest of the inheritance for:

“Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
’Tis Jesus inspires and bids you still seek.”

If you have one grain of this pure, heavenly treasure, the grand sum total of all that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ is your very own – your very own by the pure favour of the Lord God. It seems too good to be true but nevertheless it *is* true, for we have tasted the joy and the energy, the sweetness and the power, which come from a realisation of this. I know that by nature, there is “nothing in me to merit esteem or give the Creator delight.” Once there was a time when I never prayed to God nor sought after Him; there was no heart-breathing after the God of salvation. His Book was sealed, the public means of His grace meant nothing to me, and sin was not a burden. But now I want to be right for heaven, now I come confessing my sinnership and my lost and ruined condition. Why is all this? Because the Holy Spirit who is the earnest of our inheritance has been given to us, as I have attempted to describe.

Who are the fitting objects of grace? The poor and the needy. Let me quote you a wonderful word from the fourth verse of the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, where God says to His prophet, “Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof,” that is, in the midst of Jerusalem; and when the destroyer goes forth he shall not come near any upon whom is that mark. Now I would use these words, as undoubtedly the Word of God justifies me in doing, to describe not only those who are troubled and distressed by the iniquity around them, but also those who are troubled and distressed and mourning over the evil within them. Those whom the prophet was bidden to set a mark upon were the men who in Jerusalem, or as we may say in the spiritual Jerusalem, sighed and cried for the abominations that were done in the midst thereof. When I look into my heart, I read “something so very different there” to what I hear

others experience and I am brought to sigh and to cry because of the abominations that are done in the midst of this heart of mine. O it is no small mercy to know something of the traitors and the evils of our own souls. Are you content? Is there nothing in your own hearts that makes you sigh and cry because of the abominations that are done therein? O you say, there is indwelling sin; darkness, corruption, unbelief and evil of all kinds I find therein. Set a mark upon the foreheads of those that sigh and cry on account of sin. And what is that mark? The mark of free grace. "By grace are ye saved."

Here then is the message to those who are brought day by day to feel contrition of spirit – hence we sometimes sing:

"The needy know and only they
How precious is the Saviour."

So the grace of God is to the poor and the needy. It is provision for the needy in Zion, procured by the covenant of grace. Let me ask someone here this morning a question or two.

How is it with you at this time? Perhaps you reply, "I fear that my religion consists of nothing but natural convictions, and that it is not of a spiritual character." But I have heard you say something very different to that sometimes when you have spoken of some enjoyment and peace in the things of God. "Yes, often when I come to God's house and listen to the preacher, as long as he pipes, my soul dances, but when I leave the house of God, things become flat and unprofitable again." But notwithstanding your fear that your religion is unreal, that you only dance as the preacher pipes, how is it with regard to you? "Well, still I want to be right. Still I am longing, still I am coming, praying that God would deal powerfully and graciously with my soul, but after all I fear that I am self-deceived, that I am a hypocrite." Hypocrites do not think and feel as you do.

I ask another, how is it with him or her? The reply is, "I feel dark, bewildered. The growing cares of this life, the multitude of things I have to attend to, completely crowd out of my heart thoughts of Christ and things divine." But is this a trouble to you? "Indeed it is, but I do feel intensely my wretchedness in this respect." But do you get any help from the house of God from time to time? "Yes, but I soon forget, and if you were to ask me on Sunday night what the text was in the morning, the exposition of which I enjoyed so much, I often could not tell you." But the dinner of yesterday will not suffice for your needs today. Hypocrites do not feel the burden of sin or confess unbelief.

You are mourning over your deadness and unbelief, but I venture to think that there is a good deal of spiritual health about you, notwithstanding all. Why? You have an excellent appetite for one thing,

and where that is so naturally, there is health; and so with regard to the things of God, where there is a good appetite, there must be a good deal of spiritual health. Where are you this morning? You reply, "I am after Him, I hunger and thirst after righteousness. I want this confusion to be put right. I want God to speak to my soul with power; I want that which the Lord Jesus contains; I want His grace to touch upon my soul and conscience." Then you have a great big spiritual appetite and you hunger for that which the Lord Jesus Christ can bestow. "By grace ye are saved" – not, you are on the way to being saved – "By grace ye are in a saved state." By grace ye have the earnest of the inheritance, and that appetite, those hungry desires, shall be satisfied in and by Christ Jesus the Lord. Here then is grace, the everlasting love of God, blending with all His attributes, on behalf of poor and empty, needy sinners. Here are those who sigh and who cry, and God says to such, "Put a mark upon their foreheads," for there shall no destroyer come near them to overthrow and work destruction.

Let us go a step further with regard to the grace by which we are saved. I have said it is the grace of Jehovah. There is but one God, but this one God exists in a Trinity of Persons, Father, Word and Holy Ghost. The Word of truth which we have before us attributes to each of the Persons in the blessed Trinity grace or pure favour; hence we read of the grace of God the Father, the grace of God the Son, and the Spirit of Grace who is freely given unto us. Now these three Persons in the undivided Trinity are equal to one another in Godhead, in power and in glory; hence this follows, that the grace which one exercises is equally and unitedly exercised by them all.

Now is not this grace of our triune God exactly what you feel you need as a living soul? What is the language of your heart? "I need, O I need the grace of God the Father, to realise the pure electing love, the pure predestinating favour of God the Father." And what else do you feel you need? "I need the grace of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to know and to feel the grace of Him who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). And what else do you want? "O I feel I need the Spirit of Grace moving, brooding, renewing, refreshing and uplifting in this poor, earth-cleaving, dust-cleaving soul of mine."

Now where you have the grace of One you have the grace of all, for this grace is equal in Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Just as Father, Son and Holy Ghost are of one mind and heart and soul in the salvation of the people of God, so if God the Holy Ghost dwelling within has begun to deal with your soul, you have the grace of Christ, and Jesus has died for you. This is the proof that you have the grace of God the Father, that He

loved you with an everlasting love and that therefore with lovingkindness He has drawn you.

O I delight more and more in the grace and in the salvation of our triune God. Sometimes we say, "Jesus only." This is not absolutely right and scriptural, as the sinner's title to the inheritance of the saints in light. In the full-orbed grace of God, I want the grace of the Father in showing me my election and predestination, the grace of the Son in shedding abroad His love in my heart, and the grace of the Spirit in giving me the spirit of grace and supplication. Hence let us never divide the ever-blessed Trinity. If I have had one touch of grace in my heart, God in the Trinity of His Persons is my Father and my Friend.

The gospel is the dispensation of grace. The place where God the Father sits is the throne of grace, and the agreement into which the Three divine Persons entered on behalf of the church of God is the covenant of grace. This blessed covenant of grace we have gloriously set forth in the eighth chapter of Romans, where we read, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (verses 29, 30). All fulness is stored up in Christ, and the first drop of the fulness of Christ which a poor sinner receives is the drop of regenerating grace.

Now how is it with you and with me? Have we by the grace of God, by the grace of faith, been enabled to lay hold of the lowest link of this divine and heavenly chain of the everlasting covenant? And what is that? Calling. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1. 10). The Lord has called me, I know He has. You can say the same, can you not, you who know the plague of your heart? I know you can. He has called you from the power and the love of sin, and He has called you to know that in Him all fulness dwells. You cannot deny this. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called," and He has called you because you are a justified sinner, and because you are a justified sinner, you will also be a glorified one in the day when He makes up His jewels.

Now how is this chain to be seen? Here is the lowest link – calling. Here is the highest link wound round the throne of heaven – grace. There shall be no separation between me and my Lord. There is no power in earth or in hell that can pluck the free grace refugee from the Lord Jesus Christ. If, as a poor sinner, I have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before me, no power can pluck me thence. Why? Because of my hold? No, but because when I hold Christ by faith, it is a sign and an infallible token that He holds me, and that there shall be no separation between me and my Lord.

But you say, "My faith is so often weak and wavering." So was Peter's, but there was no separation. His faith one moment was strong when he walked upon the stormy waters. The next moment it was weak and wavering when he cried, "Lord, save or I perish." Why was this? Because where there is grace there is union, and because there was grace and vital union, Peter could not go under to rise no more. Where He has brought us to trust His great name, there is that grace in the heart, which is the outflow of union – of eternal, vital union between Christ and His people.

There is a fulness of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fourth chapter of James, verse 6, we have this averred concerning our Lord: "But He giveth more grace," and in the second chapter of Colossians, verse 9, we have this: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He giveth grace for grace. Where is this grace kept? We have a drop of it in our own hearts and yet, as we have said, there are seasons when we wonder if we have any. But there is more to come from that boundless reservoir whence the first drop came. I read in a paper yesterday or the day before of the death of an aged woman who lived by herself, and when her room was searched, several thousands of pounds were found in gold and bank notes, and some of her neighbours had heard her say she could not trust any banks. Now if there were many as foolish as that who, instead of trusting a bank, had all their money in their possession, when the thief broke in every fraction of their possessions would disappear.

But may we not use this in relation to the grace that is laid up for us? Our Lord gives more grace. He gives grace for grace, grace upon the top of grace. He our Banker, our bank. Our boundless resources are in an infinitely and divinely-secured place. God gives to us – if I may so speak – loose cash. We have loose cash about us in divine things and day by day we use it. Sometimes we get it stolen from us – our comforts and our joys – but then the fulness of grace is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and again and again we go unto Him who giveth us grace. The throne of grace! The Lord is ever upon it – our Father and our God, never is He absent.

The fountain too is always open and a willing and gracious Saviour is always at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hence it comes to pass that no sinner shall ever be sent back empty who comes seeking pardon for Jesus' sake. And so when guilt returns again and again, we are enabled by God's grace to go to the pardon office which is always open, and from which is dispensed again and again the sealing of that pardon, and the kiss of that divine forgiveness for which our souls hunger and thirst.

What is the measure of the grace of God? His pure favour to undeserving ones. We sometimes sing,

“God only knows the love of God,
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor heart of mine.”

Can you measure the grace of God? View our Lord Jesus Christ in the gloomy garden. There we have one of the divine measures of grace; the grace of Him who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. That grace sent Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. View Him on the cross. O the depth of grace! View Him in the sepulchre. O the depth of His grace! View Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. O the height of grace! View yourselves at an infinite distance naturally and spiritually from God, and then think of the breadth and the strength of that grace which reached even unto you. Here in the gospel are the words of His grace. There is nothing in the Lord Jesus Christ – nothing in our faithful, gracious covenant-keeping God – but pure favour for a poor and needy sinner who comes by the Way.

II. *The fruits of grace*

Then look for a moment or two at the fruits of grace. There must be fruits of grace in the soul. That which is so precious, pure and powerful must produce corresponding fruits. It is grace not offered but communicated. It is grace not offered but grace that is operative, the pure favour of God communicated to His people day by day. In heaviness and trouble, when the Spirit of God drops a drop of His love into your heart, it cheers you in the rough and thorny track. Don't you know when you have it? When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. I do, but I cannot describe exactly how it comes. Of course not. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3. 8).

When we are mourning over our deadness and lack of feeling, there is that dropped into our hearts of the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again it renews and refreshes us so that the lame take the prey. When our souls are dark, we have found again and again that “a single smile from Jesus given, can lift a drooping soul to heaven.” Nothing can make us happy in time, nothing can make us happy in eternity, but the pure favour of our covenant God, manifested to us in Christ Jesus the Lord and communicated by God the Holy Spirit.

Humility is a fruit of faith. O what a blessed fruit of grace this is! When the law comes, it distresses and alarms; it affrights and terrifies the

conscience, it cuts off from all hope of escape under its terrors, but it does not humble. What is it makes a sinner humble in the truest sense of the word? It is a blessed discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart and conscience of that sinner. Hence Joseph Hart sings:

“The garden is the place,
Where pride durst not intrude,
For should it dare to enter there,
’Twould soon be drowned in blood.”

Hence the apostle declares, “Ye were made sorry after a godly manner” (2 Cor. 7. 9), and the margin reads, “according to God.” If you have been made sorry for sin after a godly manner, it is according to the will of God, to make you one of those repenting sinners whom the Saviour owns, “who grieve for grieving Him.”

Separation is a fruit of faith. The fruit of this divine grace thus communicated separates us from the world. I have said again and again, and I am more deeply persuaded of it than ever, that although grace finds us in the world, when it is communicated to the soul, it effectually separates us therefrom. It separates us from the world, and joins us to the truth of God. If you possess a grain of this pure and heavenly treasure, you will be a separated man or woman. My heart is often grieved, and my spirit expresses no surprise at the low state of not a few who mingle among our churches. Look at the books they read. Look at the company they keep. Look at the amusements they frequent. When grace, mighty, rich and powerful, enters the heart, there is, as grace works, a separateness from these things.

O the mercy of having that grace that puts us on the road to heaven, that keeps us there, and will at last land us there! This I know, that where the grace of God is thus at work in the heart, there will be no more cavilling against the sovereignty of God, for God’s grace is sovereign, discriminating, rich and free. The grace of God is a solvent against such objections. I cannot be the friend of God on the one hand, and an enemy of His truth on the other.

Boldness and practical obedience are both fruits of faith. When the truth is made precious to my soul, there is a boldness in the things of God, and there is that walk of practical obedience which, as grace prevails, will enable me to adorn the doctrine of God in all things.

Here then is grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began, the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost by which we are saved, that grace which is sovereign and omnipotent, and which brings its possessors to the Saviour’s feet.

I close with this promise: “Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken” (Isa. 62. 12), and I can but sum up what God has done for me by these words:

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God,
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

O that the Lord would so cause His grace to work in our hearts that we might bear the living fruits thereof: holy separation from the world, and a love of His truth, in a heart knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal. God bless His word. Amen.

A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

Sermon preached by Thomas Watson in 1662

(Continued from page 18)

Use I. Here is good news for the church of God. God’s people are apt to despond when they see things move eccentric and go cross to their expectation. God is in the midst of Zion. He hath a special superintendency over the affairs of His church. God hath more care of His church than we can. We read in Ezekiel’s vision of a wheel within a wheel (Ezek. 1. 16). God’s decree is the inner wheel that turns all the outward wheels of providence. The church never wants enemies to assault and make inroads upon her, but God is in the midst of her. Here is a river of consolation, whose crystal streams may refresh the city of God. God’s eye is upon His people for good: “The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him”; and it is a watchful eye, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps. But what privilege is this, that God’s eye is upon His people? His eye is upon the wicked too. I answer, God’s eye which is upon Zion is not only an eye of inspection, but an eye of benediction. Zion hath not only His eye, but His heart: “For Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt Thou compass him as with a shield.”

If God be in the midst of Zion, then see (1) the church’s beauty: “God is in the midst of her.” This is her beauty and glory. “I ... will be the glory in the midst of her.” This is the best jewel of the church’s crown. As the diamond to the ring, as the sun to the world, which doth bespangle it with his beams, so is God’s presence to His church. The ark, which was the emblem and sign of God’s presence, was styled “the glory of Israel.” Why is the church called a royal diadem and a crown of glory but because God casts His resplendent lustre upon her?

(2) See here the church’s strength. God is with His church not only to behold her, but to uphold her. The church of God is like a castle walled in with rocks: “His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.” But a man may starve upon a rock. Therefore it follows: “Bread

shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” If God be in the midst of Zion, He will be both defensive and offensive. He is both a shield and a sword: “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!” God is a golden shield to His people and a flaming sword to His enemies. “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about.” A wall – that is defensive; a wall of fire – that is offensive. “In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” They that go to overthrow the church must do it in such a time when it is neither night nor day; for God hath promised to keep it night and day.

(3) See hence how vain are all the attempts and combination of wicked men against the church of God. “God is in the midst of her.” When we look upon things with the human eye, we may wonder the church of God is not overtopped. That the sea should be higher than the earth, yet not drown it, is strange. So that the power and force which seems to be so much above the church should not overflow it, is not a little to be wondered at. But God is in the midst of her, therefore she is impregnable. Men must first overcome God before they can overcome the church.

How simple is the wisdom of man when it sets itself against God! What do men do when they wage war against the church? They attempt impossibilities: God is in the midst of her. What an infinite disproportion is there between the enemies and God! As much as between finite and infinite. Will weak man go to measure arms with God? How can God check the pride and break the power and infatuate the counsels of the wicked! He can destroy His enemies with the turning of a hand (Psa. 81. 14); with a word (Psa. 2. 5); with a breath (Isa. 30. 28); with a look (Exod. 14. 24). It needs cost God no more to destroy all His adversaries than a cast of the eye.

For men to contend with a great God is as if a child should go to fight with a giant or an archangel; or as if the thorns should set themselves in battle array against the fire (Isa. 27. 4). O how vain and silly are all attempts against the church! “God is in the midst of her.” “In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.” The enemies are heaving at the church to remove it, but it is a burdensome stone that will fall upon them and grind them in pieces. “I will make the governors of Judah like ... a torch of fire in a sheaf.” The grand opposers of Zion shall be as combustible matter, and the church as a torch of fire to burn them up.

(4) If God be in the midst of Zion, then it follows that all providences towards the church shall be for the best. There is nothing

stirs in the world but shall carry on God's designs, as the cross wheels in a watch carry on the motion of it, and serve to make the alarm strike. That which the wicked intend for destruction shall turn to the deliverance of the church. As Luther wrote to the Elector of Saxony: "Let your Highness know that the affairs of the church are far otherwise ordered in heaven than by the Emperor and States of Nuremberg." While the adversaries go about to ruin the church, they shall only repair it. God is in the midst of His people, therefore the most violent storms of persecution are but as the beating of the wind against the sails, which makes the ship go faster, and brings it the sooner to its desired haven.

Use II. Let us labour that as God is in the midst of His church, so He may be in the midst of our hearts. It is little comfort to hear that God is in the midst of His church unless we find Him in the midst of our hearts. As he who, when he was drowning, saw a rainbow: "What am I the better," saith he, "that the world shall not be drowned, if I drown?" So what are we the better if God is in the midst of His church, if He be not in the midst of our hearts by His sanctifying presence? It should be our care not only to have Christ with us, but *in* us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This will be a cordial when we are dying. What though death be in our body, if Christ be in our soul! This should be our wisdom and ambition, not only to have the presence of God with us, but the Spirit of God in us: "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts."

If God be in the midst of His church to uphold and preserve it, then let not God's people give way to distrust and despondency. Let them not fear the enemies of the church: "God is our refuge and strength ... therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." If we should be in new straits and exigencies, let us not say that we shall be undone; God will set all His attributes on work for His people. His wisdom shall be to guide them, His power to defend them, His holiness to sanctify them, His mercy to save them.

To fear the creature is to undervalue God. When Antigonus overheard his soldiers saying how many their enemies were, he steps in suddenly with these words: "And how many do you reckon me for?" This word: "God is in the midst of her," should beat down all unbelief, and put to flight a whole army of fears that are apt to arise in the heart. It is high ingratitude either to murmur or distrust after so many signal mercies and preservations as we have received. But because the hearts of God's people are ready to be overpowered with a spirit of fear, I shall therefore prescribe five antidotes against fear:

(i) God will have a church upon earth. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Neither the serpent's subtlety nor the dragon's

fierceness shall overturn the church. The ship in the gospel was tossed because sin was in it, but not overwhelmed because Christ was in it. Be of good comfort, Christ is in the ship. "The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and ... the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." An emblem of the church militant: this bush burns, but is not consumed, for God is in the midst of her.

The church of God may be oppressed, but not suppressed. Cain put the knife to Abel's throat, and ever since the church's veins have bled; but she is not so weak but she can stand on her legs. The church universal is not extinguished. Not but that the church may suffer in several parts of it. For as by virtue of the covenant made with Noah, the whole earth shall never again be overflown with a deluge, yet there may and hath been such inundations since that several parts of the earth have been swallowed up with water. So the church universal cannot be extinct, yet it may suffer in some parts and branches of it, as the seven Asian churches had their golden candlesticks removed.

(ii) The suffering of any particular church is for their good. "Them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." God makes use of the wicked for the good of His church. He sometimes suffers His people to be cast out into the open field, and lets the wicked pour waters of affliction upon them; but He is all this while laying His people a whitening: "Many shall be made white, and tried." The wicked are flails to thresh off the husks of His people, files to brighten their graces, leeches to suck out their noxious blood. Tully makes mention of one Phereus, whom his enemy, running at with a sword, accidentally opened his imposthume [abscess], and so cured him. The enemies of the church only cure the imposthume of pride.

God's fire is in Zion. This fire is not consuming, but refining. The church is God's house. The enemies think to break down the walls of this house, but they shall only purge the floor. They think to crucify; they shall only clarify God's church, and take it off from its fulsome lees. Thus God turns all the sufferings of His people to their good. He stretcheth the strings of His viol to make the music better.

(iii) The more God's church is opposed, the more it increaseth. It receives the augmentation by its diminution: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Witness the ten persecutions in the time of Nero, Diocletian, Trojan, etc. Sanguine showers have always made the church grow the more. The more the torch is beaten, the more it flames. Julian therefore did forbear to persecute the Christians, not out of pity but envy, because they grew so fast. Religion is that Phoenix which hath always revived and flourished in the ashes of

holy men. The church of God is a palm tree; the more weight is laid upon it, the higher it riseth.

(iv) When the church of God is lowest, mercy is nearest. The sorer the purge, the nearer the deliverance. "The earth mourneth ... Lebanon is ashamed ... Sharon is like a wilderness ... now will I arise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up Myself." If you go to the Thames and observe the ebbing of the water, when the ebb is at the lowest a high tide is ready to come in; so when the church of God seems to be at a dead low water, the spring-tide of deliverance is nearest. When Diocletian raged and things seemed desperate, soon after was the golden time of Constantine. It is usually darkest a little before morning.

(v) Though the church of God may seem sometimes to be on the wane, yet when she loseth ground in one place, she gains in another; as when the fire is quenched at one end of the house, it breaks out at the other; or as the sun, when it leaves our hemisphere, goes to the Antipodes. At Rome there were two laurel trees; when one withered, the other flourished. An emblem of the church militant: when it seems to wither in one place, it shall revive and flourish in another. All this may comfort us concerning the church of God, and may be as physic to kill the worm of unbelief and fear in our hearts. "God is in the midst of her. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed."

(To be continued)

ABRAHAM BOOTH'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

Abraham Booth (1734-1806) was one of the best known and most highly esteemed of the old Particular Baptist ministers. For thirty-seven years he was pastor of the church meeting in Prescott Street, London. He was the author of The Reign of Grace.

In former days, at the ordination of a pastor, it was expected that he should give a public statement of what he believed. Abraham Booth's confession was delivered on February 16th, 1769.

As it has been customary on these solemn occasions, *to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed amongst us*, and as I am now called upon, in this public manner, to make a free and open confession of my religious principles, I would look up to the Father of lights, and the Spirit of truth, that I may be enabled to make *a good profession in the presence of many witnesses*; in the presence of God, of angels and of men.

As the existence of a Supreme Being, and our dependence upon Him, is the very basis of all religion whether natural or revealed, I

therefore do, first of all, profess my firm belief of that grand fundamental truth. That there is a GOD, all nature proclaims aloud through all her works. The countless tribes of animate and inanimate existences, from the highest to the lowest link in the vast chain of finite being, pour in their attestations to this most interesting truth. The meanest insect, the smallest spire of grass, the minutest grain of sand; these, all these bear the signatures of an all-wise Creator.

But, though the existence of a Supreme Being may be *clearly seen by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*, yet the circumstances of mankind have ever been such as to render it necessary that a more positive and explicit revelation of the perfections and purposes, of the works and ways of the great Creator, should be given to them. Infinite wisdom saw it necessary, and divine goodness would not withhold the benefit. Such a revelation, I believe, God has in fact given. This revelation, I am fully persuaded, is contained in the writings of the Old and the New Testament, which constitute that Book, which is, by way of eminence, called THE BIBLE; rejecting all those writings which are commonly called *apocryphal*, as making no part of that revelation which God has given to mankind.

(We omit a lengthy piece, typical of the mid-18th century, of how human reason, if deciding fairly, must accept Scripture as more than a human composition.)

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, containing a well-attested revelation from God, my Maker and my Sovereign, I therefore look upon and receive as *the only rule of my faith and practice*. This divine Book, this heavenly volume, I accept with humility and gratitude from the hand of my adored Creator, as a gift of inestimable value; and, considering it as the grand charter of my eternal salvation, I cannot but esteem it as my indispensable duty implicitly to submit to its sacred dictates, in every affair of religious concernment. And it is because I am fully persuaded that the following doctrines are contained in those oracles of eternal truth, that I embrace them – as articles of my faith, as the foundation of my hope, and as the source of all my spiritual joy.

I acknowledge myself deeply indebted to the inspired volume for my clearest apprehensions and most satisfactory discoveries of the Divine Being. It is from hence I learn with undoubted certainty, that there is but ONE GOD, that He is possessed of absolute and infinite perfection, and that He governs the world, His providence extending to all His creatures and all their actions.

From the same source of heavenly intelligence I am informed that in the unity of the Divine Essence there are three distinct Persons, the FATHER, the SON and the HOLY GHOST, who are all represented as

bearing divine names, possessing divine attributes, performing divine works, and receiving divine honours; consequently must be one in essence and equal in glory, whatever inferiority there may be in respect to office in the economy of redemption. The *reality* of these things I firmly believe on the authority of God's own declaration, though their particular *modus* greatly exceeds my feeble comprehension. I believe, wonder and adore!

I believe that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, with all their numerous inhabitants. Last of all, and nobly conspicuous amongst the amazingly diversified productions of His almighty power and infinite skill, being little inferior to the angels in light, He created man, and constituted him lord of this lower world. *Male and female created He them, after His own image and in His own likeness*; upright, innocent and holy; capable of serving and glorifying their bountiful Creator.

On the same divine warrant I believe that man did not long continue in these holy and happy circumstances; but, being left to the freedom of his own will, he transgressed the law which his Maker and Sovereign had given him, in consequence of which he fell into a state of guilt, depravity and ruin. And as he was not only the natural but federal head and representative of his unborn posterity, he sinning, all his offspring sinned in him and fell with him, the guilt of his first sin being imputed, and a corrupt nature derived, to all who descend from him by natural generation. Hence it is that all men are *by nature the children of wrath*; averse to all that is spiritually good, and prone to evil; dead in sin, under the curse of the righteous law, and obnoxious to eternal vengeance. From which state of complicated misery there is no deliverance but by Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

On the authority of the unerring Word I further believe that the eternal Sovereign, before the world began, of His *own good pleasure*, and to manifest the riches of His glorious grace, foreseeing the fall of man, chose a certain number of this apostate race to eternal salvation, whom *He predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to His own sovereign will*; and, in pursuance of this grand and gracious design, He entered into a covenant of grace and peace with the Son of His love on their behalf, in which a Saviour was appointed and all spiritual blessings provided for them.

In order to accomplish these gracious purposes of infinite mercy and eternal love towards apostate miserable wretches, I believe that the Son of God, being appointed from everlasting the Mediator of the covenant, and having engaged as Surety on the behalf of His people, who were become His care and charge, did, *in the fulness of time, become incarnate, took upon Him the form of a servant, paid the most*

consummate obedience to the divine law, perfectly performed the will of His Father, and finally, having all the sins of all His people imputed to Him and charged upon Him,* He died the ignominious, the painful and cursed death of the cross; pouring out His blood, yielding up His life, and offering His very soul a sacrifice, a vicarious atoning sacrifice, for their sins, and to expiate their innumerable and enormous crimes. In these sufferings of the Son of God on the cross I behold, in the clearest light, the infinite evil of sin displayed, and the awful wrath of God revealed against it, the law magnified, justice satisfied, and God Himself well-pleased.

I believe that Jesus the crucified arose from the dead the third day, by which He gave the highest possible evidence that the debt He became responsible for was perfectly paid, the sins for which He suffered entirely expiated, the divine law and divine justice fully satisfied, the powers of darkness vanquished, and death itself overcome; at the same time declaring, in a way superior to all the power of language, that the sleeping dust of His saints shall be raised to a state of immortal life and endless glory.

I believe that in order to the perfect performance of the various branches of His grand undertaking, having given undeniable evidence to His selected few that He was risen indeed, and having imparted to them the necessary instructions before His final departure, He ascended triumphant to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where He shines and reigns the incarnate God. There He is exalted as Head over all things for the good of His church, having the reins of government in both worlds put into His hands; so that He is not only to be acknowledged as King of Zion and Ruler in His church, but also as the God of providence and Governor of the world. There also, as our ascended Redeemer, our exalted Head, having entered those blissful abodes as the Forerunner of His people, and taken possession of them as their Representative, He ever lives to plead all His merit, to improve [make full use of] all His influence as a faithful Intercessor, as a prevailing Advocate, on their

* In three Dialogues lately published by Mr. A. Fuller, the venerable author of this Confession is exhibited under the assumed name of *Peter*, as *maintaining*, and Mr. F— under that of *James*, as opposing, this view of the *imputation of sin* to Christ. Had Mr. F— thought proper to have controverted any theological sentiment contained in Mr. B—'s printed works, he would have exercised an undoubted right; but, surely there is something bordering on disingenuity, to publish a conversation of this nature, when death has imposed silence on the pen and tongue of Mr. B—. Had he been living, it is not doubted but he would have felt himself called upon to defend a sentiment which he held to be of importance in the Christian system; and probably would have deprived some of the *zealous* advocates of Mr. F—'s statement, the pleasure of asserting that he "*sets his opponents quite in the background.*" (Original footnote from the 1808 edition of some of Abraham Booth's works.)

behalf. Hence it is that our faith in the time of trial shall not entirely fail; that our prayers are heard, and our praises ascend with acceptance, before the eternal throne.

According to the same sacred canons of my faith and practice, I believe that the justification of sinners in the sight of God is purely, solely, entirely by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them; without the consideration of any holy qualities wrought in them, or any works of righteousness performed by them, either with or without the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

I believe the absolute necessity of regeneration in order to eternal life; and am fully persuaded, that *without holiness*, that is a real love of God producing cheerful obedience to His commands, *no man*, whatever his religious pretensions or professions may be, *shall see the Lord*.

I believe that regeneration, faith and sanctification are not the produce of man's free will and power, but the effects of a divine agency by the Word of truth.

I believe the certain, infallible perseverance in grace to glory of all those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God and justified by the obedience of Christ; they being *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*.

As Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, has instituted various ordinances to be observed by His people till His second coming, which are designed, under a divine influence, to promote their edification in all the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, so I believe He has appointed two positive institutions, the observation of which He has in a particular manner enjoined upon all His followers: that is *baptism and the Lord's supper*; and the former as previously necessary to the latter.

I believe that baptism is immersion in water, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; and is a lively emblem of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as the Representative of His people, and of their being cleansed from sin in the fountain of His blood, their dying to it and rising again to newness of life. The requisite qualifications for this ordinance are, I further believe, faith in the Redeemer and a profession of it. Nor does it appear from the command of Christ or the practice of His apostles that we have any authority to administer this ordinance in any other way than immersion, or to any other subjects than such who appear, in a judgment of charity, to be thus qualified.

The *Lord's supper* is an ordinance in which, by receiving the elements of bread and wine according to the appointment of Christ, *we shew forth His death*. And is designed, I am persuaded, to impress our minds with a lively sense of the evil of sin, the sufferings of Jesus for it,

the benefits derived to us through those sufferings, together with that union and communion which we have with Him, and one with another.

As it is appointed for man once to die, and as at death the body is resolved into its primitive dust, so the immortal spirit returns to God who gave it. The souls of believers being dislodged from their earthly mansions, and made perfect in holiness do, I believe, immediately enter into glory; but those of the wicked are immediately transmitted into the abodes of darkness and despair; and *are reserved under everlasting chains, with apostate angels, till the judgment of the great day.*

I believe that *there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and that God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness* by Jesus Christ. At which awful and glorious period, all nations shall be convened before His great tribunal. Then will Jesus the Judge make an everlasting separation between the righteous and the wicked, awarding eternal life and infinite happiness to the righteous, but everlasting death and never-ending torment to the wicked. The equity of which sentence on either part, I am fully persuaded, will be admired and applauded by all holy intelligences, and acknowledged even by the damned themselves to their aggravated woe. The sentence passed, speedy execution shall follow. For at the conclusion of the august, the solemn scene, *the wicked shall go away, appalled and reluctant, into everlasting burnings; but the righteous, cheerful and exulting, into life eternal.*

Such are the leading articles of my faith; such the sentiments of my heart. These things, as a Christian, I again declare, I believe; and trust, that in some degree I have experienced their powerful, comforting, sanctifying influence on my own soul. Such also are the doctrines I am determined, by divine assistance, to preach, and to make the important subjects of my future ministrations. Notwithstanding, as I pretend not to infallibility of judgment, or to know all that is to be known in the present imperfect state concerning God or His will, concerning Christ or His kingdom, I desire ever to have a mind open to conviction, and susceptible of truth, by whatever means it may please God to inform me of it; and when known, to communicate it to others as cases and circumstances may require.

Further, I acknowledge it as my indispensable duty to cultivate a friendly freedom and brotherly affection with *all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, and bear His image. Such, of whatever denomination they be, I desire to esteem as my brethren, members of the same mystical body, and fellow-heirs of the same eternal inheritance.

And now to Him who *purchased the church with His own blood, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, and exercises a tender care over the weakest and meanest of His flock – to HIM, I say,

and for the edification of His people, those especially of this congregation, do I now desire to devote my strength, my life, my all; to be employed how, and as long, as His unerring wisdom shall direct and appoint. And the Lord grant that I may obtain mercy to be found faithful in that ministry I receive from Him, living under the habitual remembrance of that awful account I am to render to Him; that so, after I have preached to others, *I myself may not become a castaway*, being fully persuaded that a damned minister of the gospel is the most shocking character in hell: but, *taking heed to myself and to my doctrine*, may be enabled to give up my accounts with joy *in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming*.

And as it is *in Him* I desire to be found, at the last, the universal audit, so it is *in His name* I humbly go forth to the important, the arduous, the honourable work. On Him I depend for assistance in it; to Him I look for success in the performance of it.

“O my God! my adored Redeemer! my infinite, eternal ALL! Let my own soul, and the souls of my hearers, be ever precious in Thy sight! And grant, that after the exercise of much fervent, mutual love, and the enjoyment of many spiritual comforts in these Thy lower courts, we may finally arrive at those blissful regions where love is perfect and joy perpetual; where hymns of holy wonder and songs of devoutest praise shall be our uninterrupted and everlasting employ! Amen and Amen.”

THE CALL TO PREACH

My dear young friend,

I have read your letter several times. You put me in remembrance of the days when I was like you, seeking to know the way I should take. The call to the ministry is like the call by grace. It has to be worked out, and only in the working out do we manifest by the fruits we bear that we are called to preach the gospel. Many have gone forth to preach who have never been sent of God, and in our day and under what is called the supply system, many continue to preach who do not profit any people at all. I have known many sent out by churches who are in such a case.

How shall we know? I believe there are two witnesses that God gives to His ministers whom He sends forth into the harvest. There is an *outward* call, by the Lord impressing upon the godly a gracious persuasion that such an one is called to the solemn work of the ministry. You have had this as you set forth in your letter. There is also an *inward* call: a gracious exercise of soul stirring up desires to preach the gospel, yet feeling your own unfitness for such a great work. This I believe is

also with you, and according to its power in your soul you will be led to place your exercises before your church. I think this is the course you are called of God to take, and the church should give you an opportunity of displaying your gift in their midst, and the measure of acceptance in the hearts of the godly will be a confirmation to you that you are called to minister in their midst.

But ever remember that God is a sovereign and He does not call all His ministers alike. Paul was called in a way that we do not read of any others. I myself prefer God's way to all the ways that man has devised. For instance: we read of the call of the seven deacons in Acts chapter 6, and yet out of the seven who according to the church were called to serve tables, two of these, Stephen and Philip, were used of God to preach the gospel. We must not, my dear friend, as Huntington says somewhere, "chalk out lines for the Lord to walk in." It is very natural for us to do so. I planned out a way into the ministry but God did not purpose to send me that way. I now believe the Lord's way, that is the way I was led, was the best way for me. It took from me an arm of flesh upon which we all by nature so love to lean, and do still. I have ever found during the twenty-five years I have been a preacher and a pastor that an arm of flesh is the worst provision for me.

One word more. Never was there a time, I believe, that God-sent ministers were more needed in our churches. During your lifetime ten of our churches in Lancashire have closed their doors, and it seemed at one time that it was about to take place with you at H. Many churches are on their death beds at present and are reduced to just a small handful. In Yorkshire I do not think there is a gathering in any of the churches exceeding twenty people, many less.

What is the remedy? I believe nothing can save us but the hand of God again putting forth His power to bless the gospel in our midst and giving the churches pastors after His own heart. NOT supply ministers, but the heavenly pattern of a true minister, an under shepherd to lead the flock. We have come to the solemn position that there is now only one pastor in Lancashire. I am showing you this, my dear young friend, to enable you by God's grace to see our great need.

May the Lord lead you to minister to this need to the poor flock of Christ in the churches.

I have written you this because I love you in the Lord.

Your affectionate friend,

A. Lythgoe

Farcroft, Worsley, January 10th, 1956

You can show this letter to Mr. A., whom I highly esteem as a man taught of the Lord. I shall try to follow this with my prayers. A.L.

JOHN BERRIDGE

By John Gadsby (1808-1893)

(Continued from page 30)

John Berridge continues with his own testimony of how he was brought to know and love the truth.

“And now let me point out to you the grand delusion which had liked to have ruined my soul. I saw very early something of the unholiness of my nature, and the necessity of being born again. Accordingly I watched, prayed and fasted too, thinking to purify my heart by these means; whereas it can only be purified by faith (Acts 15. 9). Watching, praying and fasting are necessary duties but I, like many others, placed some secret reliances on them, thinking they were to do that for me, in part at least, which Christ only could. The truth is, though I saw myself to be a sinner, and a great sinner, yet I did not see myself an utter, lost sinner, and therefore I could not come to Jesus Christ alone to save me. I despised the doctrine of justification by faith alone, looking on it as a foolish and dangerous doctrine. I was not yet stripped of all my righteousness, could not consider it as filthy rags, and therefore I went about to establish a righteousness of my own, and did not submit to the righteousness of God by faith (Rom. 10. 3). I did not seek after righteousness through faith, but as it were by the works of the law. Thus I stumbled and fell (Rom. 9. 31, 32).

“In short, to use a homely similitude, I put the justice of God into one scale, and as many good works of my own as I could into the other; and when I found, as I always did, my own good works not to be a balance to the divine justice, I then threw in Christ as a makeweight. And this every one really does, who hopes for salvation partly by doing what he can for himself, and relying on Christ for the rest. But, Christ will either be a whole Saviour or none at all. And if you think you have any good service of your own to recommend you unto God, you are certainly without any interest in Christ. Be you ever so sober, serious, just and devout, you are still under the curse of God, as I was and knew it not, provided you have any allowed reliance on your own works, and think they are to do something for you, and Christ to do the rest.

“I now proceed to acquaint you with the success I have lately had in my ministry. As soon as God had opened my own eyes and showed me the true way to salvation, I began immediately to preach it. And now I dealt with my hearers in a very different manner from what I had used to do. I told them very plainly that they were children of wrath, and under the curse of God, though they knew it not; and that none but Jesus Christ could deliver them from that curse. I asked them if they had ever

broken the law of God once, in thought, word or deed? If they had, they were then under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' And again: 'He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.'

"If, indeed, we could keep the whole law without offending in one point; if we had done, and continue to do, all the things in God's law, then, indeed, we might lay claim to eternal life on the score of our own works. But who is sufficient for these things? If we break God's law, we immediately fall under the curse of it; and none can deliver us from this curse but Jesus Christ. There is an end, for ever after, of any justification from our own works. No future good behaviour can make any atonement for past miscarriages. If I keep all God's laws today, this is no amends for breaking them yesterday. If I behave peaceably to my neighbour this day, it is no satisfaction for having broken his head yesterday.

"If, therefore, I am once under the curse of God for having broken God's law, I can never after do anything of myself to deliver me from this curse. I may then cry out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin? And find none able to deliver, but Jesus Christ (Rom. 7. 23-25). So that if I am once a sinner, nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse me from sin. All my hopes are then in Him, and I must fly to Him as the only refuge set before me.

"In this manner I preached, and do preach, to my flock, labouring to beat down self-righteousness, labouring to show them that they were all in a lost and perishing state, and that nothing could recover them out of this state, and make them children of God, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And now see the consequence. This was strange doctrine to my hearers. They were surprised, alarmed and vexed. The old man, the carnal nature, was stirred up, and railed, and opposed the truth. However, the minds of most were seized with some convictions, and the hearts of some were truly broken for sin, so that they came to me as those mentioned in the Acts, thoroughly pricked in the heart, and crying out with strong and bitter cries, 'What must we do to be saved?' I then laid the promises before them, and told them if they found themselves under the curse, Christ was ready to deliver them from it; if they were really weary and heavy laden, Christ would give them rest; if their hearts were broken for sin and they looked unto Christ, He would heal them. I exhorted them also to thank God for these convictions, assuring them it was a token of good to their souls. For God must first smite the heart before He can heal it (Isa. 19. 22). I generally found that they received comfort from the promises; and though they complained much of the

burden of sin, and of an evil heart of unbelief, yet they always went away refreshed and comforted. Many have come to me in this manner, and more are continually coming; and though some fall off from their first convictions, yet others cleave stedfastly unto the Lord. They begin to rejoice in Him and to love Him; they love His Word and meditate much upon it; they exercise themselves in prayer, and adorn their profession by a suitable life and conversation.

“And now let me make one reflection. I preached up sanctification [by the works of the law he means] very earnestly for six years in a former parish, and never brought one soul to Christ. I did the same at this parish for two years, without any success at all; but as soon as ever I preached Jesus Christ, and faith in His blood, then believers were added to the church continually; then people flocked from all parts to hear the glorious sound of the gospel, some coming six miles, others eight, and others ten, and that constantly.

“Let me now apply myself to your own heart, and may God dispose you to receive my words in the spirit of meekness. Indeed, Sir, I love and respect you, else I could not have written to you so freely. Are you then in the same error that I was in for near forty years, *viz.*, that you must be saved partly by faith and partly by works? And have you constantly preached this doctrine? Then you may be certainly assured of these two things: first, That you never yet brought one soul to Christ by your ministry. And, secondly, That you are not yet in the way of salvation yourself. O be not displeased with me for telling you the truth! But you will say, perhaps, that you have not only been sincere, but ever zealous in preaching the Word of God. So was I; but there is a zeal which is not according to knowledge; and that zeal I had, though I knew it not. You may say, further, that you have read and prayed much. So have I; but still I knew nothing, as I ought to know, until God was pleased to show me that I was blind, and then I cried heartily to Him for light and direction, and He opened my eyes (John 9. 39).

“I now proceed to give you some further account of myself, and of the impediments which kept me from the truth. When I first came to the University, I applied myself diligently to my studies, thinking human learning to be a necessary qualification for a divine [i.e. a minister], and that no one ought to preach unless he had taken a degree in the University. Accordingly I studied the classics, mathematics, philosophy, logic and metaphysics, and read the works of our most eminent divines; and this I did for twenty years, and all the while was departing more and more from the truth as it is in Jesus, vainly hoping to receive that light and instruction from human wisdom which could only be had from the Word of God and prayer. During this time I was thought a Methodist by some people, only because I was a little more grave, and took a little

more pains in my ministry than some others of my brethren. But in truth, I was no Methodist at all, for I had no sort of acquaintance with them, and could not abide their fundamental doctrines of justification by faith, and thought it high presumption in any to preach, unless they had taken holy orders.

“But when God was pleased to open my eyes, about half a year ago, He showed and taught me other things. Now I saw that nothing had kept me so much from the truth as a desire of human wisdom. Now I perceived that it was as difficult for a wise or learned man to be saved as it was for a rich man or a nobleman (1 Cor. 1. 26). Now I saw that God chose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, for two plain reasons; first, That no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1. 29); and, secondly, That faith did not stand, or was not produced, by the wisdom of man, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2. 5). Now I discerned that no one could understand the Word of God but by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2. 12). Now I saw that every believer was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and thereby led to the knowledge of all needful truths (1 John 2. 20); and of course, that every true believer was qualified to preach the gospel, provided he had the gift of utterance. Now I saw that the Methodist’s doctrine of justification by faith was the very doctrine of the gospel, and I did no longer wonder at the success which those preachers met with, whether they were clergymen or laymen. They preached Christ’s doctrine, and Christ owned it, so that many were added to the faith daily.

“But you will say, perhaps, that these Methodists are schismatics. Let us therefore examine the matter. A schismatic is one that dissents and divides an established church; at least this is the general notion of a schismatic. Now, I ask, what do you mean by a church? Or what is it that makes one church differ from another? It is the doctrine. The Church of England differs from the Church of Rome, not by its steeples, bells or vestments, but by its doctrines. Schism, therefore, consists in departing from the doctrines of a church, and not from the walls of a church. In the time of Stourbridge fair, a sermon is always preached in the open field to the people at the fair, and preached by some Fellow of a college, or clergyman at Cambridge. Now, I ask, would you call this clergyman a schismatic? No, surely; and yet he preaches in the open fields, and upon unconsecrated ground. It is plain, then, that schism doth not consist in preaching out of the walls of a church, but preaching contrary to the doctrines of the church.

“And now, dear Sir, let me lay open my sin and my shame unto you. I solemnly subscribed to the articles of our church, and gave my hearty assent and consent to them. Amongst the rest, I declared that ‘we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings, and that we are justified by faith only,' as it is expressed in the eleventh article. But though I solemnly subscribed this article, I neither believed nor preached it, but preached salvation partly by faith and partly by works. And O what dreadful hypocrisy, what shameful prevarication was this! I called and thought myself a churchman, though I was really a dissenter and a schismatic; for I was undermining the fundamental doctrine of our church, and the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, namely, justification by faith only.

"And yet, dreadful as the case was, I fear it is the case of most of the clergy in England. Scarce anything is preached but justification by faith and works. And what is the consequence? Why, there is scarce any true religion amongst us, the gospel of Christ is not truly preached by us, and Christ will not own our ministry. Look around the parishes which are near you, and see whether you can find anything besides the form of religion, and not much of that. Nay, amongst those who are thought religious people; who are sober, serious, just and devout; who read, and fast, and pray, and give alms; amongst those you will scarcely find one who knows anything of the power of religion and has experimental knowledge of it. For if you ask such people, in the very words of Scripture, whether they know that Jesus Christ is in them, otherwise they are reprobates (2 Cor. 13. 5); whether Christ dwells in their heart by faith (Eph. 3. 17); whether their sins are forgiven for Christ's name's sake (1 John 2. 12); whether they have received an unction from the Holy One (1 John 2. 20); whether the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 5. 5); whether they are filled with joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15. 13); whether they walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and do ever rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (Acts 9. 31, 1 Pet. 1. 8); and lastly, whether the Holy Spirit bears witness with their own spirit that they are the children of God (Rom. 8. 14-16); if, I say, you ask the better sort amongst us whether they have any experience of these matters, they would stare at you with the utmost amazement, and would think you an enthusiast, if they did not call you so. If you read over the homilies of the church, if you read over the fathers of the church, if you read the works of the good old bishops that were published a hundred years ago, you will there find the gospel of Christ preached, and the true doctrine of our church. But since that time, I mean in the last century, our clergy have been gradually departing more and more from our doctrines, articles and homilies; so that at length there was scarce a clergyman to be found, but who preached contrary to the articles he subscribed. And almost all the sermons that have been published in the last century, both by bishops and curates, are full of that

soul-destroying doctrine, that we are to be justified partly by our own works and partly by Christ's merits.

"And now let me ask how the whole Church of Rome happened to depart from the simplicity of the gospel, and to fall into this doctrine of works and faith which we now preach? It was owing to the depraved nature of man, which makes him think himself to be something, and that he can do something, though he is nothing, and can do nothing, to justify himself in God's sight. At the Reformation, our church returned again to Jesus Christ, and placed justification on the gospel footing of faith only. And so it continues to this day; but though our articles and homilies continue sound and evangelical, yet our clergy have departed once more from both, and are advancing to Rome again with hasty strides; preaching, in spite of articles and subscription, that most pernicious, papistical and damnable doctrine of justification by faith and works; which doctrine, I am verily assured, no one can hold and be in a state of salvation."

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

Made Sure: Bernard Gilpin (1803-1871), A Faithful Gospel Ministry and Its Fruits, by P.A. Bradley; hardback; 461 pages; price £14.50 plus £3.27 postage till March 31st, £19.50 plus £3.27 *after* March 31st; published by and obtainable from The Huntingtonian Press, 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants. SO30 4EB

For lovers of the Gilpins and James Bourne, this is a feast of fat things.

It may be asked: why another book on the Gilpins? We have the various nineteenth century biographies, and in more recent years J.H. Alexander's *More Than Notion* and the publication of James Bourne's morning readings.

The answer appears to be that in a remarkable way, previously unknown diaries, correspondence, etc., came into the hands of Mrs. Bradley. She has ably and interestingly written this book, with lengthy quotations. It is essentially a spiritual book and very clearly that religion is revealed which is "more than notion: something must be known and felt." It is a pity that the author does not explain how unexpectedly she came across such valuable manuscripts – and also which parts in the book *are* entirely new.

Many of the remarkable characters, who became members of Bernard Gilpin's church in Hertford, are included (some of whom appear in *Witnesses of the Truth*). The variety of those who were blessed under Bernard Gilpin is strange. Some belonged to the aristocracy; some were from extreme poverty and degradation. Then there were his own two young daughters. It seems there had to be an unusual degree of church discipline, and there is an incredible account of a brawl that took place at a church meeting.

Specially interesting is that lovely character, Annette Benson, Bernard Gilpin's daughter. (It seems that J.H. Alexander had a special love for "dear

Annette,” as she called her, providing that interesting account of Annette’s life, *Something Known and Felt*, just before her death.)

Annette was wonderfully favoured and blessed while a young girl, and we have some fascinating details of her conversations with her sister Elizabeth. In Victorian times it seemed to be the practice to edit out so much from gracious letters when they were published. We feel this is the *real* Annette – we even have an account of her playing with her children in the sea. It is also a pleasure to read how her faith worked by love – in her behaviour, and in her kindness to the needy.

Again with Bernard Gilpin. We are given an unusual account of his views on William Huntington. We wonder where this is from?

Bernard Gilpin in this book comes out in a very gracious light. One particular instance. We were very struck by the occasion when he had to visit his daughter Annette in Dorset and on the Lord’s day had to go to hear a poor, despised Strict Baptist minister (we wonder if with some prejudice?). But he felt his soul cleave to the man of God both as a brother and a “master in Israel” – so much so that he wrote blessedly of his visit, and felt he himself came so much short.

Though of not so much spiritual interest, a family tree throws a lot of light on the intricate relationships between the Gilpins, the Bournes and the Bensons. Also, it is interesting (though sad) to read of what happened eventually to the meetings at Hertford, London and Pulverbach – which long since have ceased to exist. The Gilpins and Bensons never identified with any denomination, and after the second generation had gone, the witness disappeared.

It should be said that Bernard Gilpin was a very strong advocate of infant baptism. Formerly a clergyman in the Church of England, he deplored the fact that the prayer book taught baptismal regeneration, and felt that in no other way some of the strong expressions could be explained away. Yet after his secession, he still continued the practice of sprinkling infants, which he believed to be scriptural.

We are very grateful for this book, which we believe will be well received.

Review of *More Mountain Movers*, November 2005. Dr. Ella has asked me to make a correction to my Review of his book *More Mountain Movers*.

We said that “The Westminster Confession is criticised for being a state-sponsored document, but the 39 Articles are exonerated as the Queen was Head of the Church and acted in her spiritual capacity.”

What Dr. Ella wrote was, “True, such creed-making conferences were often, but by no means always, called on behalf of the Church by the Sovereign, but this was also in a church-given capacity and not as a result of secular rule. However one might deplore the interference of the Sovereign in church affairs, that Sovereign was a member of the Church and acted in his church capacity.”

J.R. Broome

He that hath tasted the bitterness of sin will fear to commit it, and he that hath felt the sweetness of mercy will fear to offend it.

Charnock

OBITUARY

John Pont, member of the church at Hanover Chapel, Tunbridge Wells for forty-one years, fell asleep in Jesus on April 24th, 2005.

John Pont was born on December 12th, 1929. At that time his parents lived in the old chapel house at Matfield. His father was the caretaker. Although his father helped in the building of the new chapel, the family moved to Tunbridge Wells in 1936 before services commenced in the new chapel. In 1949 they commenced attending Hanover, and except for a two-year break on National Service, he continued there for the rest of his life. Our friend often mentioned the warm welcome given to them by Mr. Curtis, the pastor, and here he found his spiritual home.

Gleaned from his writings:

At the age of eighteen, I began to have serious thoughts of my condition, and I feel the Lord gave me sufficient light to realise that all was not right. My condition was as described in Genesis chapter 1: "Without form and void," and yet the Lord gave me a little understanding and desire for light, life and power. Over the next few years I was brought to:

"Eternity, tremendous sound!
To guilty souls a dreadful wound;
But O, if Christ and heaven be mine,
How sweet the accents, how divine!"

I found that sin was mixed with all I did – even my best things were not free from it. I was mercifully kept from outward sins, but I felt to get worse as my efforts to live better continually failed. "The more I strove against sin's power, I sinned and stumbled but the more." At the same time the invitations and promises of the gospel became increasingly attractive; also many of our hymns seemed to express the desires of my heart. "'Tis a point I long to know" (Gadsby's 283) and, "See a poor sinner, dearest Lord," (Gadsby's 1056) were two that suited me well. I also remember on one occasion, when attending South Chard Chapel while on holiday, hymn 789 was given out and verse 5, I believe, was powerfully impressed upon the mind:

"Worship God, then, in His Son;
There He's love and there alone;
Think not that He will, or may,
Pardon any other way."

(This occasion he often referred to as a time of great blessing and encouragement.) I felt to be able to say, "I have seen the Lord as the way to God."

I was greatly helped by reading the closing remarks of Mr. Herbert Dawson in a sermon on, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," when he made mention of Elijah's words: "Go again," and the seventh time the servant said, "I see a little cloud." This helped me to go many times to the throne of grace to seek for an interest in His great salvation, and I was brought to feel that the sweetest word in the whole of Scripture to me was, "Come."

During my dear wife's serious illness in 1964, I was greatly supported with the words: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy

strength be.” The clouds were very dark and I felt that my dearest earthly possession was about to be taken from me. Mr. Durbidge quoted the words, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,” which came with some force and comfort into my soul.

Mr. L. Hyde came with the words, “My sons, be not now negligent” (2 Chron. 29. 11). The Lord removed the obstacles I felt to have regarding baptism, and with my dear wife I was made willing to take the solemn step in 1964.

The Lord has used afflictions of various sorts to keep me dependent upon Him and to lead me into paths I had not known or anticipated, but I have to say with the apostle, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.”

Through the sudden death of Mr. H. Wallis in 1966, our friend was appointed superintendent of the Sabbath School, in which office, despite much weakness, he continued until his death. His labours of love were so evident as he sought to instruct the young people in the Word of God. He was appointed deacon in 1976.

It was confirmed in 1986 that he was suffering from Parkinson’s disease, but the Lord brought him another nineteen years to labour for the glory of God, and for the good of the cause of truth at Hanover with much patience and perseverance despite increasing affliction. Many a time in the vestry did he say in his weakness, after struggling to make the journey, “The Lord has brought us here.” It seemed impossible at times, and he would sink into his chair exhausted through those efforts, but he would always acknowledge that the Lord had brought him again.

His passing was rather sudden at the close. On Saturday evening, April 16th, 2005, he was taken to hospital in great pain, but the Lord in His mercy made way for him to return to his home, where he spent his last few days being tenderly nursed by his loving family.

He often sought in public prayer that he might as Jacob gather up his feet into the bed and give up the ghost. The Lord granted him his request.

In his great weakness during those last few days, he spoke of the agonies of Christ. On one occasion he broke out in adoration: “O bless the Lord, my soul.” At another time, “It is well,” and another, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” His hope was in an unchanging, unfailing God. His hope was in the Lord.

Death to him was “no frightful foe,” and now he “with Christ doth reign.” The hymnwriter says:

“With joy I leave this world of woe;
For me to die is gain.”

and,

“Death lost his sting when Jesus bled;
When Jesus left the ground,
Disarmed, the King of terrors fled,
And felt a mortal wound.

“And now his office is to wait
Between the saints and sin;

A porter at the heavenly gate,
To let the pilgrims in."

Our dear friend knew in whom he believed, and was persuaded that the Lord was able to keep that which he had committed unto Him against that day.

To a visiting minister he mentioned, not many months before he was taken to glory, that his hope rested upon the righteousness and blood of Jesus Christ, and quoted the verses of this hymn:

"What mighty sum paid all my debt,
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood.

"What voice is that which speaks for me
In heaven's high court for good,
And from the curse has set me free?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood."

A sure foundation, a blessed hope which has now given place to eternal sight.

The words, "*He brought me*," gather together his whole profession. Our dear friend often used such language in attesting to the goodness of God toward him in his journey. He realised his times were in the hand of God.

"He that formed me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb:
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree."

God called him by His grace, *brought him* into soul trouble, and into the house of God where he served faithfully for so many years. We give thanks unto God for what the Lord accomplished in and for him. He would say as David said: "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast *brought me* hitherto?" (2 Sam. 7. 18) – a humble acknowledgment of God's mercies to him.

We have lost a praying soul, a true pillar in our church, a faithful deacon whose desire was for the glory of God, and with especial fervour he sought for the Lord's blessing at Hanover. May those prayers for his dear family and the church be abundantly answered.

The funeral service at Hanover was conducted by his pastor and at the graveside by his brother, where we united in singing,

"This God is the God we adore
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend" – a favourite of his.
H.G.J.

Thou sayest, I cannot believe, I cannot repent. But Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5. 31). Hast thou nought but sin and misery? Go to Christ with all thy impenitency and unbelief, to get faith and repentance from Him. This will be very acceptable to Him.

Thomas Wilcox

SINNERS WELCOME TO THE SAVIOUR

Sinners, hear the Saviour's call,
 He now is passing by;
 He has seen thy grievous thrall,
 And heard thy mournful cry.
 He has pardons to impart,
 Grace to save thee from thy fears,
 See the love that fills His heart,
 And wipe away thy tears.

Why art thou afraid to come
 And tell Him all thy case?
 He will not pronounce thy doom,
 Nor frown thee from His face:
 Wilt thou fear Immanuel?
 Wilt thou dread the Lamb of God,
 Who, to save thy soul from hell,
 Has shed His precious blood?

Think how on the cross He hung,
 Pierced with a thousand wounds!
 Hark, from each as with a tongue
 The voice of pardon sounds!
 See, from all His bursting veins,
 Blood, of wondrous virtue, flow!
 Shed to wash away thy stains,
 And ransom thee from woe.

Though His majesty be great,
 His mercy is no less;
 Though He thy transgressions hate,
 He feels for thy distress;
 By Himself the Lord has sworn,
 He delights not in Thy death,
 But invites thee to return,
 That thou mayst live by faith.

Raise thy downcast eyes and see
 What throngs His throne surround!
 These, though sinners once like thee,
 Have full salvation found:
 Yield not then to unbelief!
 While He says, "There yet is room";
 Though of sinners thou art chief,
 Since Jesus calls thee, come.

John Newton (1725-1807)

Our readers will discern the similarity of this hymn to our hymn 956:
 "Christ has blessings to impart."

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2006

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

TREMBLING FOR THE ARK
(1 Samuel 4.13)

The ark of the covenant was the visible sign of God's presence with Israel. Made according to the pattern given to Moses in the mount (Exod. 25. 10-22), it was the first piece of furniture for the tabernacle. The ark was a small box, made of enduring shittim wood, and overlaid with pure gold. Over it was a lid, made of pure gold with two cherubims made of the same piece. It was called the mercy seat. Here, on the day of atonement, the blood was sprinkled, and here was the meeting place between God and Israel. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (verse 22). Inside the ark were three things: the tables of the law, Aaron's rod that budded, and a pot of manna (Heb. 9. 4). So the ark was very sacred and very special.

Wonderful things had been performed through the presence of the ark. When Israel came to the River Jordan (at that time overflowing its banks), when the priests carrying the holy ark stepped down into the river, the waters divided so that Israel could cross safely. When Israel came to the walled city of Jericho, after the priests carrying the ark and the armed men and the people had marched round the city seven days, and seven times on the last day, the walls of Jericho fell flat. On each occasion the ark was an awesome sign of the presence of almighty God.

But if the ark did such wonderful things for Israel, it had not to be curiously looked into, as the men of Beth-shemesh did (1 Sam. 6. 19). It had not to be handled, as by Uzzah (2 Sam. 6. 6). It had not to be despised, as by Michal (2 Sam. 6. 16). In each case failure to honour the ark brought divine judgment.

In 1 Samuel chapter 4, however, we have the awful sin of treating the ark superstitiously and presumptuously. Israel had been defeated by the Philistines so the second time they daringly carried the ark into battle. "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* cometh among us, *it* may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (verse 3). *It* did not. The sign of God's presence will not save us without the reality. Israel had the sign, but God's presence was not with them any longer. Again they suffered humiliating defeat in battle.

Let us pause. We, too, have all the visible signs of God's presence among us. We have the Word of God, we have the gospel, we have our beautiful hymnbook, we have our services and prayer meetings; but the old question needs to be asked: "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Israel had sinned. There was open wickedness in the priesthood. Verse 4 is exceedingly sad: "The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas [the wicked priests], were there with the ark of the covenant of God." What a God-dishonouring contradiction!

But now we see Eli trembling for the ark. He *was* a godly man, despite all his sins (and it was exceedingly discreditable for him to overlook open evil in the priesthood, because it was his own sons. How often this has brought God's judgment in the church of God!) But look at Eli when he had the humiliation of being solemnly rebuked for his sins by a little boy, Samuel: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (1 Sam. 3. 18). That is grace.

Again when the messenger came with news of Israel's defeat. There were four evil tidings: Israel is fled; there has been a great slaughter; thy two sons are dead; the ark of God is taken. And old Eli could bear the first three, dreadful as they were, but not the last. "It came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy" (verse 18).

If ever there was a day when God's people need to "tremble for the ark," it is today. What appalling wickedness there is in the land! What solemn departures in the professing church of God! What bringing low in our own churches! John Newton says:

"The Lord, displeased, has raised His rod;
Ah! where are now the faithful few
Who tremble for the ark of God,
And know what Israel ought to do?"

Or, as Ezekiel puts it: those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof (Ezek. 9. 4).

What, then, is it to tremble for the ark of God? To have a tender heart in the fear of God; to be deeply burdened concerning the sad and solemn state of things; to confess our own sin. Above all to seek to wrestle in prayer that the Lord will appear. "In wrath remember mercy." "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

One final thing. The Lord will always have the last word. He is almighty. He is in control. The Philistines may capture the holy ark, seemingly triumph, set it up in the house of their god. But Dagon must fall before the ark of God, and whilst the holy ark remained in the land of the Philistines, it brought them nothing but sorrow. How glad they were to be rid of it!

So we see the ark of God returning to Israel. "And they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it" (1 Sam. 6. 13). Through mercy, may this be our favoured portion.

BE ZEALOUS

*Sermon preached by Samuel Ward (1577-1639), minister in Ipswich.
A review of his sermons appeared Gospel Standard 1997, page 359*

Text: “Be zealous” (Rev. 3. 19).

“Be zealous.” This watchword of Christ, if it be not now a word in season, I know not whenever it was, or will be. If God should now send through the earth such surveying angels as Zechariah mentions, chapter 1, could they return any other observation of their travels than this, “The whole world lies in lukewarmness”? Zeal hath been little practised, less studied. Zeal is everywhere spoken against; it hath many enemies and few friends. The world can no more abide it than beasts can the elementary fire. O that I had so much zeal as to set it forth in its colours, that I might regain the decayed credit of it with the sons of men!

He is earnest, or a zealot, whose affections are passionately disposed; his love is ever fervent, his desires eager, his delights ravishing, his hatred deadly, and his grief deep. This being the nature of zeal in general, Christian zeal differs from carnal and worldly chiefly in its causes and objects. It is a spiritual heat wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Ghost, improving the good affections of love, joy, etc., for the furtherance of God’s glory, His Word, His house, His saints, and salvation of souls; directing the contrary of hatred, anger, grief, etc., towards God’s enemies, the devil, his angels, sin, the world, with the lusts thereof. A zealot, like David (Psa. 119), has zeal in every affection. *Love* – “O how love I Thy law.” *Hatred* – “I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.” *Joy* – “Thy testimonies also are my delight.” *Grief* – “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.” The fervency of the true zealot is in the spirit, not in show; for God, not himself; guided by the Word, not by his humours; such a man’s worth cannot be set forth with the tongues of men and of angels.

It is good to be zealous in good things, and is it not best in the best? Is there any better than God, or the kingdom of heaven? Is it fitting whatever we do, to do it with all our might (Eccles. 9. 10)? Only not fitting when we serve God? Is mediocrity in all excellent arts excluded, and only to be admitted in religion? And were it not better to be of no religion than to be cold or lukewarm in any? Is it good to be earnest for a friend, and cold for the Lord of hosts? What aileth the world? Is it afraid, think we, that God can have too much love? Ought not all the springs and brooks of our affection to run into this sea? Who or what can be sufficient for Him, our Maker and Saviour? In other objects fear excess; here no ecstasy is high enough.

What makes one Christian differ from another in grace, as stars do in glory, but zeal? All believers have a like precious faith; all true Christians have all graces in their seeds; but the degrees of them are no way better discerned than by zeal. All Christians are the excellent of the earth; but the zealot surmounteth them all. One of these is worth a thousand others, one doth the work of many; these are the agents for doing God good service. There is no standing for any of God's enemies before them; they make havoc of their own and others' corruptions. All difficulties are but whetstones of their fortitude. The sluggard saith, "There is a lion in the way." Tell Samson and David so; they will the rather go out to meet them. Tell Nehemiah of Sanballat; he answereth, "Shall such a man as I fear?" Tell Caleb there are Anakims, and he will say, "Let us go up at once," etc. Let Paul be told that in every city bonds await him; he is not only ready for bonds, but for death. Tell Luther of enemies in Worms; he will go, if all the tiles of the houses were devils. They that mean to take the kingdom of God by violence provide themselves to go through fire and water and carry their lives in their hands; they say to father and mother, "I know you not," to carnal counsellors, "Get you behind me, Satan." Zeal is as strong as death, hot as the coals of juniper, floods of many waters cannot quench it.

If zeal were not some admirable good, the devil and world would not so hate it. Let Festus be the speaker for the rest, for he speaks what all the rest think; you know his mad objection, and Paul's sober answer in that place, Acts 26. 24 and the like, 2 Cor. 5. 13; whether we be mad or sober, it is for God and you. A Christian indeed is never right till he seems to the world to be beside himself; Christ's own kindred were afraid of Him. The apostles are said to be full of new wine, Acts 2; besides, with these the world is mad, they run at Stephen like mad men, Acts 7; Nicodemus, and such as he, never offends them.

You know what Ahab laid to the charge of Elijah, with the apology he made for himself. This is a stale imputation in ages. The apostles are said to be troublers of the whole earth. In the primitive church all contentions were laid to the martyrs. True it is, where zeal is there is opposition, and so consequently troubles. Christ sets this fire on earth, not as an author, but by accident [i.e. sovereignly permitting it]. The thief is the author of the fray, though the true man strikes never so many blows; the Ahabs of the world trouble Israel, then complain of Elijah.

O, say they, but some discretion would do well. It is true, but take withal Calvin's warning to Melancthon, that he affect not so the name of a moderate man, and listen to such syrens' songs till he lose his zeal. I have observed that which the world miscalls discretion to eat up zeal, as that which they call policy doth wisdom. The fear of overdoing makes most come too short. Of the two extremities we should most fear

lukewarmness. Rather let your milk boil over than be raw.... As this objection will not do, they fall to right down railing. "These Puritans, these singular fellows, unfit for all honest company!" With that which most call Puritanism I desire to worship God. For singularity, Christ calls for it, and presseth and urgeth it. What singular thing do you? or what odd thing do you? Shall God's peculiar people do nothing peculiar? I believe none shall ever please Christ till they appear odd, strange and precise men to the common sort. Let him that hath a right ear hear what Christ saith to the churches; "*Be zealous.*"

Yea, but by what means shall a Christian attain this fire, and maintain it when he hath gotten it? Thou mayest fetch it from heaven by thine own prayer, as did Elias and the apostles, men of infirmities as well as thyself. Pray constantly and instantly. Sermons are bellows ordained for this purpose. Let the Word dwell richly in thine heart. Excite thy dullness by spiritual hymns. Read or sing the 116th Psalm; and if thou be not zealous, every verse will stick in thy throat. Meditation is another help. Behold the Lord God, especially thy Lord Christ, in His glorious titles and majesty. Consider and reason thus with thyself (O man), canst thou tolerate a sluggard in thy work, if thou be of any spirit thyself? And shall He that is all spirit (for whom the angels are slow and cold enough) take pleasure in thy drowsy and heavy service? Even to Judas He saith, "That thou doest, do quickly"; so odious is dullness unto Him.

Behold Him as one that seeth thee and knoweth thy works. Behold Him as the beginning of creatures, especially of the new creature. O what love hath He showed thee in thy redemption! Out of what misery into what happiness, by what a price, to what end, but that thou shouldest be zealous of good works. Behold Him as a speedy and royal rewarder of His followers. Take thyself into paradise, represent to thyself thy crown, thy throne, thy white robes. Look upon these, and faint if thou canst.

Behold, also, He is a consuming fire, a jealous God, hating lukewarmness, not only destroying Sodom with fire and brimstone, and providing Tophet for His enemies, but awakening also His drowsy servants by judgments (as Absalom Joab, by firing his corn), His Israelites by fiery serpents. Whom He loveth He chasteneth, and keepeth them in the furnace of fiery trials, till they come to their right temper. He standeth and knocketh. If nothing will arouse us, a time will come when heaven and earth shall burn with fire, and Christ shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance with fire unquenchable. We, therefore, that know the terror of that day, what manner of persons ought we to be?

From God turn thine eyes unto man; set before thee the pillar and cloud of fiery examples, that have led us the way into Canaan. The stories of the Scriptures, the lives of the fathers, the acts and monuments

of the church, have special virtue for this effect. If thou canst meet with any living examples, follow them, as they follow Christ, and frequent their company. If thou findest none, let the coldness of the times heat thee, as frosts do fire. Let every indignation make thee zealous, as the ignorance of the monks made Erasmus studious. One way to be rich in times of dearth is to engross a rare commodity, such as zeal is. Now, if ever "they have destroyed Thy law," it is now high time to be zealous.... Consider and emulate the children of this generation, to see how eager every Demas is for worldly promotion. It angered Demosthenes to see a smith earlier at his anvil than he was at his desk.

But here methinks I hear the lukewarm worldling of our times fume and chafe, and ask what needs all this ado for zeal, as if all God's people were not zealous enough. Such as think they are, or can be zealous enough, need no other conviction to be poor, blind, naked, wretched and pitiful Laodiceans. Fire is ever climbing and aspiring higher; zeal is ever aiming at that which is before; carried toward perfection; thinking meanly of that which is past, and already attained, condemning his unprofitable service, as Calvin in his last will; this rule tries full conceited Christians.

"What would you have us to do? We profess, attend church, hear sermons, as Christians ought to do." To such God may well say, Let us have some of this zeal at home and in private. God respects the devotions of those whose families, closets, fields, beds, walks do testify of their worship, as well as churches.

"We would have you know that we are such as have prayers said or read in our families and household; or else we say some to ourselves at our lying down and uprising; and what more than that is needed?" First, know that zeal knows no such unmannerly courses as to slubber over a few prayers while you are dressing and undressing yourselves; as most do, half asleep half awake. Know further, that such as hold only a certain course of daily duties, as mill-horses their round, out of custom or form, are far from that mettle which is ever going forward, growing from strength to strength, and instant in duties, in season, out of season; and this says hard to lazy Christians.

"May not we go too far on the right hand?" It is true; but liberality fears covetousness and niggardness more a great deal than prodigality; so does zeal, lukewarmness, and coldness more than too much heat and forwardness; the defect is more opposite and dangerous to some virtues than the excess.

"There are but few such, no, not of the better sort you speak of." Grant there be any, and zealous emulation seeks the highest examples. He that hath true zeal, will strive to purge himself, as Christ is pure.

"Will you have us run before our neighbours, or live without company?" Cowards stand and look who goes first; soldiers of courage

will cast lots for the onset and fore-rank, for desperate services and single combats.

“Some indeed care not whom they offend, they are so harsh and fiery.” Will true Christianity allow us to bear with any sin? Can hot iron choose but hiss if cold water be cast on it? Can a righteous soul choose but vex itself at evil? Such persons as can listen to profane and filthy speeches show what mettle they have for the Lord of hosts.

“All are not by nature of so hot disposition or so fiery-spirited as others.” If there be such a dull, phlegmatic creature as hath no life or spirit in anything he goes about, or whom nothing will move; he may plead temperament; and yet grace is above nature. But the best way is, see every man compare his devotion in matters of God with his spirits and mettle in other affairs, wherein his element or delight lies. If the one equal not the other, the fault is not in nature: the oldest man hath memory enough for his money, and the coldest constitution heat enough where it likes.

“Well, our hearts may be good as the best, though we cannot show it.” Fire cannot be long smothered, it will either find a vent or go out; zeal will either find word or deed to express itself withal.

“All have not so much leisure to spend so much time and study about matters of religion; they have somewhat else to do.” There are indeed many vanities which distract and divide the mind of worldlings; but zeal counts one thing needful, to which it makes all other stand by. Is there any so good a husband of his time that will not steal some hour for his pleasure, that cannot spare his God and his soul half an hour, morning and evening? If thou beest not a vain and willing deceiver of thyself and others, deal honestly and plainly with thy soul, try thyself by these few rules; and if thou judgest thyself to come short of them, amend and “*be zealous*.”

The Spirit, knowing that which is spoken to all to be in effect as spoken to none, directs that this message be addressed particularly to the angels, that is ministers, of the churches.... As in the time of the Old Testament, the custody of the fire and light was the charge of the priest, so here I observe Christ to lay it upon His ministers, interpreting His rule by His practice: “Tell the church, tell the angel of the church.” Implying that they should exceed as far the people as angels do men, and that He will reckon with them for the religion of the people, because cold ministers make bold sinners.

We therefore, brethren, upon whom it lies to keep life and heat in the devotion of the world, to consume the dross of heresies that have fallen into the sink of our times; we that are to make ready our people for the second coming of Christ, is the spirit of Eli, think we, sufficient for us? What manner of person ought we to be, burning in spirit, fervent in

prayer, thundering in preaching, shining in life and conversation? Why is it then, my brethren, that some of us pray so rarely and so coldly in private (the evils of our times will not out but by frequent fasting and fervent prayer), in public so briefly, so perfunctorily and feebly that we scarce have any witnesses of what we say? Do we love Christ more than ordinary? Would we give proof of our treble love to Him? Let us, then, feed His flock with a treble zeal, expressed in prayer, preaching and living. Let us make it appear to the consciences of all that the top of our ambition is God's glory, and that we prefer the winning of souls to the winning of the world.

Chiefly mine affections burn within me for the good of mine own nation. For I must bear it record, it hath knowledge, I would I could say according to zeal. Where is it in divers places of the land to be seen? I had almost said, in my haste and heat, there is none that hath zeal, no, not one, there is no courage for the truth; but that I remember that Elijah was checked for overshooting himself in his too short and quick computation. I hope the Lord hath His fifties amongst us, though but thin sown in comparison of the swarms of church-papists, of profane atheists, key-cold worldlings and lukewarm professors.

Do we think He will ever tolerate us, in the temper we are in? What is it but a state of neutrality, indifferency, or such mediocrity as will just serve the time, or stand with reputation of neighbours? But behold, He stands at the door and knocks, by plagues, by the hammer of dearths, discontents, fires, inundations, especially by the Word; His locks are wet with waiting. He hath indeed brooked and borne us a long time. O, before He shakes off the dust of His feet against us, and turn to some other nation more worthy, let us open the door, that He may come in and sup with us.

The Lord give us not only understanding, but zeal in all things; He baptize us with fire; He breathe on us, and inspire into us the Spirit of life and power. So shall we run the ways of His commandments.



What should a sinner do but go to Christ? What can come of a sinner if Christ receive him not? Yea, what is a Saviour of sinners for but for receiving sinners and saving them from their sins? And yet sinners coming unto Christ and Christ's welcoming them make unbelievers murmur both against Christ and believers. So sure it is that no man can see any glory in that grace of Christ that he hath no sight or sense of his own need of. Every believer's experience witnesseth to this, that every one that believes on Jesus Christ acts that faith as the chief of sinners. Every man that seeth himself rightly, thinks so of himself, and therein thinks not amiss. God only knows who is truly the greatest sinner, and every humbled sinner will think he is the man.

Traill

THE SWEET ASSURANCE OF HOPE

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) on Ephesians 1. 18: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling."

Observation 1. The first observation is this: *That every man in the state of grace is called to have assurance*, and there are grounds enough for it. O saith the apostle, would you did know what is the hope of His calling, what grounds you have of hope from that calling of God that hath put you into the state of grace! The state itself affordeth it, and the Word of God upon you affordeth it, only you want eyes to see it; therefore I pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened to know it, daily enlightened to see those grounds.

My brethren, every believer hath grounds enough of assurance if their eyes were but enlightened. There is a whole epistle written on purpose. God wrote one book to show the vanity of the creature; He hath written another book on purpose to assure us and every believer of salvation. The first Epistle of John is written on purpose for that end; you shall see it is his scope both by the first chapter, verse 4, so he beginneth, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full," and by chapter 5. 13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And, saith he, I write to all sorts of Christians that are called; so he saith, chapter 2. 12, 13, "I write unto you, little children" – those that are babes are capable of assurance, to know the hope of their calling, if God enlighten them – "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men," etc. All sorts of Christians are capable of assurance if God enlighten their eyes, and if they be once called there is abundance of grounds to give them assurance, to give them hope of salvation.

He telleth us in the tenth verse of the fifth chapter, "He that believeth ... hath the witness in himself," that is, he hath the matter of it. Yea, there is no act of faith but putteth forth a witness, as when we come to a hollow place there is no voice but turneth back an echo; only if you speak low the echo answereth you low, but if you speak loud the echo is loud too. So if a man's faith speaks strongly, it will echo forth back again a strong witness; there is the witness of blood and the witness of faith. "He that believeth ... hath the witness in himself."

There is no grace a man hath but is a ground of assurance. There is no exercise of grace but is a ground of assurance. In your very not sinning you may fetch assurance from it; so John telleth us, 1 John 3. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"; you shall find that

in your hearts that you cannot sin; there is an evidence of grace when you are tempted to sin. The grounds that every believer hath for assurance of salvation, if he did but know them, they are infinite ones and infallible. So much for the first observation.

Observation 2. To give you a second observation. Though a man have never so much ground of hope from God's calling him, yet, notwithstanding, he must have the eyes of his mind enlightened to know what is his hope, what are the grounds of evidence and assurance of salvation; and further than he hath an eye and an act of knowledge drawn forth, he cannot see it. Therefore the apostle prayeth that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling."

To make this plain to you. All graces, as they work with a borrowed strength, not with a strength of their own but with the strength of the Holy Ghost, so they shine to comfort you with a borrowed light, as the stars do with the light of the sun. A man hath a natural power to know what is within him, so saith the apostle, 1 Cor. 2. 11. Let any man ask me what I think, I can tell him, and so can you; it is from the natural spirit that is in every one. "What man," saith he, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" The spirit of a man that is in him doth know it; it can tell you a man's thoughts and affections. But if you would come to know whether faith be in you or not, or whether true love to Christ be in you or no, or zeal for His glory, now you must have the Spirit to enlighten your eyes; though it be in you, the mere spirit of a man will not do it. So it followeth, "We have received ... the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God." If you will come to know whether you have grace or no, which God hath bestowed upon you, here you must have the eyes of your mind enlightened, "that ye may know," saith the apostle, or else you will not see it. Your graces shine with a borrowed light. You can tell, "I think such thoughts as believers think"; but to tell that this is true faith and differeth from that of hypocrites, this you cannot tell without the Holy Ghost enlighten you. Therefore he prayeth "that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know."

I will give you a scripture more for this, Rom. 8. 16 – mark that place – It is the Spirit, saith he, that "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He doth not only say He beareth witness *to* our spirits, but He beareth witness *with* our spirits. Our spirits, our graces (that which is born of the Spirit is spirit), never witness unless the Holy Ghost witness with them. If He do not give in His testimony with them, your graces will give no witness at all; if He do not enlighten the eyes of your mind to know, you will not know the hope of your calling, you will have no assurance.

Likewise that other place, Rom. 15. 13; the apostle prayeth there, that they may “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Doth a man abound in hope? Hath he any comfort, any assurance? For I take “hope” there for assurance, as I do here, any confident persuasion. It is, saith he, through the power of the Holy Ghost. So much for the second point.

I might interpret it thus. The scripture is not of private interpretation; so saith the apostle (2 Pet. 1. 20). Read another book, your natural understanding will help you to understand it. But, saith he, the scripture is not of private interpretation; that is, no man’s private understanding will help to understand it, but that Spirit that wrote it. Look into your own hearts, there is a word written in the heart, as here the word is written in our books. That word written in the heart, the law written there, is not of private interpretation; all the human wit that any man hath who hath grace, cannot help him to do it, to know the meaning of it, but that Spirit that wrote it there. For so you know we are called “the epistle of Christ ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3. 3). He only is able to read it; unless He enlighten your eyes, give you an eye, and give you light, and draw forth an act of knowledge, you will not know what is the hope of His calling, you will not know what ground you have for assurance of salvation.

Observation 3. To come to a third observation, and it is a good one. You know I interpreted the hope of His calling partly in this sense, to be that which God calleth you to have. Art thou a believer? He calleth thee to hope; as He calleth you to holiness, so He calleth you to assurance, to hope. What is the reason, then, that poor souls want comfort? It is God’s mind you should have it, there is enough in the Word to comfort you; there is enough in your own hearts to comfort you, there is a Holy Ghost that dwelleth within you. God, I say, calleth you to hope. Satan, my brethren, and Antichrist call you to doubt; so the Papists do; but God calleth you to hope, calleth you to assurance.

Romans 15. 13, “The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.” God is a God of hope, and He would fill your hearts with peace and joy through believing. He is not only called the God of hope because He is the Object of hope, but because He is the Author of it; and all the Scripture is written to work hope in us, so saith verse 4 of the same chapter. God’s mind is that the saints should have nothing else, “that ye may know what is the hope of His calling”; only your eyes are dark indeed, there lieth the defect; naturally you are dark and can know none of these grounds. Therefore the apostle prayeth that the eyes of their mind may be enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling.

Observation 4. In the fourth place, if you observe it, it is what is the hope of *His* calling, it is not what is the hope of *your* calling, or what is

the hope of your grace; he giveth it not that title. Take calling in that sense for God's work of conversion upon a man's soul, I do observe but this out of it, and it is to you a note of much consequence: If you come to have good assurance that the Holy Ghost giveth, He will draw your eye unto His work, rather than unto the work that is wrought in yourselves.

I will explain myself to you as well as I can. It is the property of the Holy Ghost when He doth give any man assurance and hope, and enlighteneth his eyes to see what the hope of God's calling is, not to make the heart pore upon the work in himself but to draw his heart up to God as the worker of it, and to have a hint from thence to stand admiring of Him that thus called him, and by His mighty power wrought these things in him through His free grace. When men look upon grace wrought in themselves, self-love rejoiceth in it, and they boast as if they had not received it. No, saith the apostle, look not upon the hope of *your*, but upon the hope of *His* calling; as having received it from Him, let it lead you to the fountain of His free grace.

I do observe it there in 1 Cor. 2. 12 (I quoted the place before): "We have received," saith he, "the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Mark that expression; not only know the thing, that this grace is wrought, but with this addition, it is the free work of God's grace. This is the end always of the Holy Ghost when He giveth assurance, that is His manner, as He discovereth His graces to you, these things are in you, so that these things are freely given you of God, He leadeth you to the fountain of His grace, that you may admire it and fall down before it; that you may know, saith he, praying for assurance, what is the hope of His calling. He fixeth their eyes there.

THE COMFORTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Dr. John Owen (1616-1683)

There are but three things in the whole course of our pilgrimage that the consolations of the Holy Ghost are useful and necessary in:

I. *In our afflictions*: affliction is part of the provision that God has made in His house for His children (Heb. 12. 5, 6). The great variety of its causes, means, uses and effects is generally known. There is a measure of them appointed for everyone. To be wholly without them is a temptation; and so in some measure an affliction. That which I am to speak unto is *that in all our afflictions we need the consolations of the Holy Ghost*. It is the nature of man to relieve himself, when he is entangled, by all ways and means. According as men's natural spirits

are, so do they manage themselves under pressures. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity" (Prov. 18. 14), at least, will struggle with it.

There are two great evils, one of which does generally seize on men under their afflictions and keep them from a due management of them. The apostle mentions them both: "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Heb. 12. 5). One of these extremes do men usually fall into; either they despise the Lord's correction or sink under it.

1. *Men despise it.* They account that which befalls them to be a light or common thing; they take no notice of God in it. They can shift with it well enough: they look on instruments, second causes; provide for their own defence and vindication with little regard to God or His hand in their affliction. And the ground of this is because they take in succours in their trouble that God will not mix His grace withal. They fix on other remedies than what He has appointed and utterly lose all the benefits and advantage of their affliction. And so shall every man do that relieves himself from anything but the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Men faint and sink under their trials and afflictions*, which the apostle farther reproveth (verse 12). The first despise the assistance of the Holy Ghost through pride of heart; the latter refuse it through dejectedness of spirit and sink under the weight of their troubles. And who is there that offends not on one of these hands? Had we not learned to count light of the chastisements of the Lord and to take little notice of His dealings with us, we should find the season of our afflictions to comprise no small portion of our pilgrimage.

Now there is no due management of our souls under any affliction, so that God may have the glory of it and ourselves any spiritual benefit or improvement thereby, but by the consolations of the Holy Ghost. All that our Saviour promises His disciples, when He tells them of the great trials and tribulations they were to undergo, is, "I will send you the Spirit, the Comforter; He shall give you peace in Me, when in the world you shall have trouble. He shall guide and direct and keep you in all your trials." And so the apostle tells us, it came to pass (2 Cor. 1. 4-6); yea, and this, under the greatest afflictions, will carry the soul to the highest joy, peace, rest and contentment. So the same apostle, "We glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5. 3). It is a great expression. He had said before, We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (5. 2). Yea, but what if manifold afflictions and tribulations befall us? "Why, even in them also we glory," says he, "we *glory* in our tribulations."

But whence is it that our spirits are so borne up to a due management of afflictions as to glory in them in the Lord? He tells us, verse 5, it is from the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And thence are believers said to "receive the Word

in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1. 6) and to “take joyfully the spoiling of their goods.” This is that I aim at: there is no management nor improvement of any affliction, but *merely and solely by the consolations of the Holy Ghost*. Is it, then, of any esteem or value unto you that you lose not all your trials, temptations and affliction? Learn to value that whereby alone they are rendered useful.

II. *Sin is the second burden of our lives and much the greatest.* Unto this is this consolation peculiarly suited. So Hebrews 6. 17, 18, an allusion is taken from the manslayer under the law, who, having killed a man unawares and brought the guilt of his blood upon himself, fled with speed for his deliverance to the city of refuge. *Our great and only refuge from the guilt of sin is the Lord Jesus Christ*. In our flying to Him does the Spirit administer consolation to us. A sense of sin fills the heart with troubles and disquietness. It is the Holy Ghost which gives us peace in Christ, that gives an apprehension of wrath. The Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts; from thence does Satan and the law accuse us as objects of God’s hatred; [but] the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. There is not any one engine or instrument that sin uses or sets up against our peace, but one effect or other of the Holy Ghost towards us is suited and fitted to the casting of it down.

III. *In the whole course of our obedience are His consolations necessary also that we may go through with it cheerfully, willingly, patiently to the end.* In a word, in all the concerns of this life and in our whole expectation of another, we stand in need of the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

Without them, *we shall either despise afflictions or faint under them*, and God be neglected as to His intentions in them.

Without them, *sin* will either harden us to a contempt of it or cast us down to a neglect of the remedies graciously provided against it.

Without them, *duties* will either puff us up with pride or leave us without that sweetness which is in new obedience.

Without them, *prosperity* will make us carnal, sensual, and to take up our contentment in these things and utterly weaken us for the trials of adversity.

Without them, the *comforts* of our relations will separate us from God and the loss of them make our hearts as Nabal’s.

Without them, the *calamity* of the church will overwhelm us, and the prosperity of the church will not concern us.

Without them, *we shall have wisdom for no work*, peace in no condition, strength for no duty, success in no trial, joy in no state – no comfort in life, no light in death.

Now our afflictions, our sins, and our obedience with the attendancies of them respectively, are the great concernments of our lives. What we are in reference unto God is comprised in them and the due management of them, with their contraries, which come under the same rule; through all these does there run a line of consolation from the Holy Ghost that gives us a joyful issue throughout. How sad is the condition of poor souls destitute of these consolations. What poor shifts are they forced to retake themselves unto! What giants have they to encounter in their own strength! And whether they are conquered or seem to conquer, they have nothing but the misery of their trials!

A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

Sermon preached by Thomas Watson, 1662

(Continued from page 46)

“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved” (Psa. 46. 5).

If God be in the midst of the church, let us do two things:

I. Let us *take heed of driving God from us*. There are ways whereby we may drive God from the nation. As when bees are in the hive, and bring their honey, you may drive them out with smoke, so sin is a smoke which will drive God out from a nation: “A people that provoketh Me to anger ... these art a smoke in My nose.” In particular, there are nine sins which drive God out of a land, and when He marcheth out judgment marcheth in.

(1) Idolatry. “For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight” (2 Kings 17. 12, 18). Idolatry is a sin which breaks the marriage knot, and makes the Lord disclaim His interest in a people: “Thy people ... have corrupted themselves.” Before, God called Israel *His* people; but when once they had defiled themselves with idolatry, then God disclaims them. He doth not say to Moses, *My* people, but *thy* people, as if He had quite discarded them and cut off the entail [settlement] of mercy. Take heed of idolatry, yea, and of superstition too, which is a bridge leading over to it. Superstition is an intermixing our fancies and inventions with divine institutions. It is an affront offered to God, as if He were not wise enough to appoint the manner of His own worship.

(2) Rapine [robbery] and oppression. “I have forsaken Mine house; Mine heritage is unto Me as a speckled bird” (Jer. 12. 7, 9), or as a bird of prey. When God’s dove becomes a vulture, and is given to ravening and cruelty, staining her feathers with blood, God will then break up house and be gone.

(3) Uncleaness. "They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker" (Hos. 7. 4). They who should have been temples of the Holy Ghost are hot ovens burning with lusts. "I will spread My net upon them"; that is, I will spread the net of My judgments over them, and they shall be taken in the net.

(4) Covetousness. "I will stretch out My hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord; for from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness" (Jer. 6. 12, 13). When men smell rank of the earth, when they love the exchange better than the temple, and are more for the earthly mammon than the heavenly manna, God will take His leave and be gone. God is a Spirit. He can no more converse with an earthly people than a prince can converse with a swine.

(5) Apostasy. "They are all grievous revolters ... reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them" (Jer. 6. 28, 30). This made God remove His golden candlestick from the church of Ephesus, because she had left her first love (Rev. 2. 4). And if apostasy will make God depart from a people, then how can we expect He should stay long with us? Where is that zeal for God, and love to the truth, as formerly? We live in the fall of the leaf. There are many who courted the Queen of Religion when she had a jewel hung at her ear, but when she is in her desolation and her jewels of preferment are pulled off, now they desert her. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back. If all who look back should have this judgment inflicted on them, we should hardly go into the streets for meeting pillars of salt! Merchants tell us of divers ships cast away at sea. I believe there have been of late more shipwrecks at land than at sea; I mean, such as have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The golden head is degenerated into iron – a more feculent [turbid] and impure metal.

(6) Weariness of God's ordinances. "When will the new moon be gone ... and the Sabbath?" (Amos 8. 5.) "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8. 11). God hath fed this nation with the finest of the wheat, even the Bread of Life. We have had the cream of ordinances. God hath come down to us in a golden shower of blessings. The vintage of other nations hath not been so good as the gleaning of England; but have we not said: "What a weariness is it!" Is not our sin sermon-surfeiting? Though we have liked the dressing, we have loathed the food. We have said: "Who is this Moses, and what is this manna?" And may we not fear that God is now coming to punish us for this sin? When we have lost our stomachs, God may cause the cloth to be taken away; and would not that be dismal? How sad is it for any nation when their seers are blind! In what condition

is that people who have husks given them instead of manna, and music instead of food? Weariness of the gospel forfeits the gospel. If God sees that the sanctuary blessings bear but a low price, He will remove the market.

(7) Perjury. “The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant ... therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto Me, I will not hearken unto them” (Jer. 11. 10, 11). When a people play fast and loose with God, breaking their solemn vows and obligations, whether sacramental or otherwise, this is a God-provoking sin. It will make God go away from a nation, and though they cry after Him, He will turn a deaf ear. God will pass by infirmity, but He will punish treachery.

(8) Hatred of reformation. When God calls to a people by His Word, Spirit, judgments, but they regard Him not, He will pack up and be gone. “I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not ... therefore will I do unto this house which is called by My name, as I have done to Shiloh” (Jer. 7. 13, 14). Why, what did God to Shiloh? There the priests were slain, the ark was carried away captive; all the signs of God’s presence were removed, the vision ceased, and we never read that the ark returned to Shiloh any more. Hath not God called to us to be a holy reformed people, but are there not those found among us who hate holiness, and cry down reformation? O take heed that God doth not do to us as He did to Shiloh – unpeople us, unchurch us, and send a flying roll of curses against us.

(9) Incivilities offered to them who labour in word and doctrine. God will avenge the wrongs done to His ambassadors. “The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. 36. 15, 16). Let us take heed of these sins, which will cause God to depart from the nation.

II. If God be in the midst of His church, let us do what we can to *keep God among us*. Israel endeavoured to keep the ark among them, which was the sign of God’s presence. “Woe also to them when I depart from them!” If God be gone, then all other blessings go too. Peace and trading will be gone. O let us strive to keep God among us! What is the glory of a nation, but the presence of God in His Word and ordinances? “I ... will be the glory in the midst of her.” If God be once gone, the glory is departed. If God be gone, England will be like a house that hath the furniture taken down, and is falling to ruin. “Owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.” If God be gone, Satan will be the next tenant.

Question: How shall we keep God amongst us?

Answer. (1) By prayer. "We are called by Thy name; leave us not." Exercise eyes of faith and knees of prayer. Let us hang upon God by holy importunity, and not let Him go. "They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening." Is not God upon the threshold of the temple, ready to fly? Are not the shadows of the evening stretched out? And may we not fear the sun-setting of the gospel? O let us by humble prayer lie at Christ's feet and constrain Him to stay with us. Prayer makes a sweet sound in God's ears, and He will not go away where there is that music.

Answer. (2) By setting upon the work of reformation. "Amend your ways and your doings." There is a profane party in the land who drink, and roar, and declare their sin as Sodom. These Samsons are like to pull down the house upon our head; instead of bringing the water of tears to quench God's anger, they add fuel to the flame. The men of Lystra, seeing the miracle wrought by Paul and Barnabas, cried out: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." But we may now say, the devils are come up to us in the likeness of men. Never was there such a spirit of wickedness in the land, never were there such heaven-daring abominations committed; but "though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend" (Hos. 4. 15). Though others are licentious and exorbitant (being carried to hell with wind and tide), yet let us keep our garments pure and preserve the virginity of our consciences; let us labour to reform ourselves, and mourn for what we cannot reform in others. Let us walk accurately and circumspectly (Eph. 5. 15). Let us shine forth in a kind of angelical brightness, that we may not only profess the gospel, but beautify [adorn] it (Tit. 2. 10). Were we such a reformed people, we might keep God still in the midst of us; and as a pledge of His favourable presence, He would entail His gospel, that crowning blessing, both upon us and our posterity.

(To be concluded)

GRACIOUS TEACHING

My dear F.,

Yes, we were surprised to hear from you, but it was very agreeable to us and we were very interested to know how you are and how things are with you. Yes, as you truly say, how solemn are the days, and who indeed knows the end of these things? Yet the Lord liveth and all these sad and terrible things are at His wise control and must be the fulfilment of His own will.

To be rightly led and taught of God is the greatest mercy we can know. It means, "Safety on earth, and, after death, the plenitude of

heaven.” Many who are professors of religion know nothing of such teaching, and they who through grace do know it are often questioning their case and standing. “Do I love the Lord, or no? Am I His, or am I not?” “When wilt Thou come unto me?” And such expressions do not come from sinners dead in sin, but from living souls. To be made truly willing to suffer with the people of God is much better than having our fill of empty sinful pleasure (so-called) and then to be cast away at the last. As you know, F., the right pathway is narrow and crucifying to the flesh. Faith and good hope and love to Jesus will enable you to walk in that path.

Flesh and sense will always be crying out. It can do no other than that. But a sweet sense of the love of Jesus to you, even of that love that made Him bear the cross, will put all quite straight and enable you to say from your heart, “Sweet affliction that makes me mourn over my untowardness and long to love a precious Christ more.” Rightly to suffer with Christ is to suffer without the camp. Grace will bring all the enabling you need and it comes so freely and so blessedly so that you will say in gracious amazement, “Why me? Why me?”

I am glad you are given discernment to distinguish as to the preaching. Hold to that which humbles you and reproves you. That ministry will in due time greatly comfort you. You will according to the will of God come to drink it in like a thirsty ox. It will tumble down so sweetly into your heart so that your comforts will abound.

We are so glad to hear from you and would be pleased to hear again. It is quite a sacrifice to be deprived of the Lord’s house and the means of grace, but press on, F. To endure to the end is a great mercy. You will see that we too are in a quiet part of the country.

We feel the loss of our little chapel and friends most keenly and have to say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.” I have practically filled all Sundays for next year round about here. Mrs. F joins me in our kindest Christian love and all good wishes for your real good.

Hoping to hear again from you and desiring the blessing of the Lord God to be upon you.

Yours very sincerely,

Chas. A. Frost

Cricklade, Wilts., December 12th, 1940

Prayer is the assuasion of grief, the easement of a burdened heart, and the vent of a joyful one. It is the rich savour of mystical incense, the overflowing of a living fountain, an all-prevailing sacrifice, and the delight of the Almighty. Moreover it is the greatest, best, most blessed and most glorious privilege with which perishing sinners ever were favoured.

Huntington

SANCTIFIED TROUBLE

My dear Friend,

It was very kind of you to write to us as you were enabled around the Christmas period.

Truly like you we find it for the most part a pathway of affliction and trial. How one feels to need it to be sanctified, and yet while supported by grace, what is it but a drop in the ocean compared with Christ's and also what our sins deserve.

It is a painful weaning time not to be able to serve the churches as in the past, and have limitations in connection with my own pastorate. Have now been upheld for twenty-five years as pastor at Hope, Blackboys and Pick Hill, Horam. To my feelings I have miserably failed, but prove that my God faileth not. In the last year, 1980, if not very much deceived, help was received from the Lord.

About Easter period I very quickly was removed to hospital with diabetes. The word that sweetly came with a measure of power was: "All must come, and last, and end, as shall please my heavenly Friend." It was the latter part that was so sweet which brought peace into my soul. I then could leave my dear wife in her disability and my church and congregation in the Lord's hand. It continued for just over a week, then the comfort receded, conflict came on; so we find that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency ... be of God and not of us."

A few weeks ago while travelling in the train to take a service as helped at Notting Hill, these words walked up and down inside of me: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The next morning we received an exceeding bitter blow which until now has made us to "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man." We seek for grace to be given to bow before the high decrees of heaven, and truly to say, "Thy will be done."

I very much appreciate your New Year address in the *Gospel Standard*. I was sorry to read about what someone wrote to you in condemnation. Truly it is through good and evil report you have to tread. May you still be helped, dear friend, in this very difficult work of yours, both editorial and pastoral. You have been helped, and I believe you will until the end. I very much enjoyed the poetry or hymn at the end on page 32 ["The Unknown Way"]. It is good.

May reasonable health and strength be given you and your dear partner helped along both in body and soul and may your dear children be blessed with the fear of the Lord.

Yours affectionately in the truth,

R.S. Jupp

Blackboys, Sussex, January 3rd, 1981

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2. 8-11).

The last time I had the pleasure of speaking to you, it was about the Church of Ephesus, that Christ blamed it for something. He had this against her, that she had left her first love, and He bids her repent, and do the first works; if not, He will come quickly and remove the candlestick out of its place. Ephesus was once one of the most flourishing Churches of Asia, but Jesus did come quickly, and He removed the candlestick. It is now only a heap of ruins [c. 1840]. When the traveller is there, he goes over ancient archways and heaps of stones, and the yellow corn is seen growing where Ephesus once stood. There is a village near where it was; and Mr. Hartley, a traveller, tells us that he found only one Christian in the whole village. So may God do with us – He may take away our candlestick. We have many churches just now and flourishing congregations; but God may leave us a heap of ruins, with only one Christian to tell us that the candlestick hath been taken away.

So it was with Ephesus; but it is very different with Smyrna. Notice, Christ does not blame her for one thing. What! were the Christians of Smyrna so holy that even the eye of Christ did not see any fault? Well, *we* can get no comfort from that; for if Jesus were to send us a letter, it would be full of blame. But no! the Christians of Smyrna were just what Christians are now, but Christ washed them in His own blood, and clothed their naked souls in His righteousness; and therefore He saw them all fair. This message to Smyrna reminds me of the Epistle to the Philippians; it is all kindness, all love. So is this message of Christ's to the Christians in Smyrna; it is all mercy, peace, gentleness, kindness and love. Smyrna is still one of the most flourishing towns of Asia. It has 100,000 inhabitants, and it has several churches, and two stations, where are Protestant ministers, just like our own. God lighteth the lamp wheresoever He will.

But let us now see the *message* that was sent to Smyrna, and notice, first, *the character Christ takes to Himself here*. He takes different characters in all the messages to the seven churches, and it is very

beautiful to remark that He takes a character which suits the case of each of them. To the Church of Ephesus He says, "I am He that holdeth the seven stars in My right hand, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"; showing them that He could remove the candlestick when He pleased. And *here* He takes His encouraging character: "These things said the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive." Notice, in the first chapter of the Revelation, what John says, when Jesus was revealed to him at Patmos, when "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" – John says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead"; and Jesus said unto him, "Fear not" – just what He used to say upon the earth. You remember He said to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee, "Be not afraid"; and here, when John fainted, Jesus encouraged him by saying the very same words, "Fear not." And when on earth He used to stretch out His right hand – so John says He did to him: "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not."

And Jesus says here, "These things saith the First and the Last." He was the first at creation, and He will be the last at it; it is He that will gather everything together like a scroll. It is He who will make all things new; He says, "I will create new heavens and a new earth." And He is the first and the last in providence. From the time when a child is born into the world, Christ directs all the providences that happen even unto its dying day. And He is the first in grace. It was He who carried on the plan of salvation. And He was the last at it; it was He who said, "It is finished." It is He who laid the foundation-stone of this church, and it is He who will put on the top-stone. He is the first at a work of grace in the soul, and He is the last at it – He will be with you in your dying hour. It is this that gives us hope: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

And again, Jesus says of Himself here, He was dead and is alive again. How encouraging is this character of Christ! Jesus *was* dead – He has not still to die; it is all over. It is this that gives peace to an awakened soul, to know that Jesus was dead. Well, then, Christians, you are quite safe; no wrath can come upon you, every drop of God's wrath hath fallen on *His* head. You have no more cause to fear it falling upon you than you would have to fear a storm of thunder and lightning, or an earthquake that happened more than eighteen hundred years ago. This gives great peace.

But there is another thing that gives peace – Christ was dead and *is alive again*. He has risen, and hath been accepted, and is now at the right hand of God; and we have peace from this, because we know that we

shall be as pleasing and acceptable in the sight of the Father as Christ is. Jesus says, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

But let us see *what Christ says of the church*. They had three kinds of troubles: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty." Afflictions very often go together. One trial seldom comes alone; perhaps sickness, or bereavements, and then poverty. But as putting the tree into the bitter waters made them sweet, so methinks it makes the bitter cup sweet – that there is so much sweetness in the cup, that none of the bitter will be felt, because Jesus says, *I know it*. It is *Christ* that knows. He measures all your suffering. He will not give you too much or too little. And again, Christ says, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Another of the Christian's troubles, and the third one that Christ mentions here, is Satan the devil. This is the worst of them all.

The church of Smyrna was very much tried, but it was the purest of them all: when gold is put into the fire, all its dross is taken away – so it was with the Smyrna Christians. Many of its members were burnt at the stake. Their bishop, Polycarp, a very precious man, was cruelly put to death: and it is not that Satan is not as busy now, but he is sometimes a roaring lion, and sometimes an angel of light. It is true we have not persecutions at present, for the devil just now is flattering men. Christians are mixed with the world, the chaff with the wheat. Christ's people can hardly be distinguished from the world, yet the world hates them as much as ever. "Marvel not though the world hate you." But the devil *may* come out again like the roaring lion seeking his prey. *Our prisons may again be filled with Christians.*

But let us now see *the encouragements that Christ gives*. He says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich." I had rather Christ would say that of me than all the wise men in the world. I had rather that Jesus would say unto me, "Thou art rich," than that all the world should say it. *They* are very apt to say of Christians, They are poor; but it is because they are blind. I have no doubt this word in the Bible is very little believed, but it is no less true: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" But do not mistake me, you will never get to heaven because you are poor. There are very few of the poor in my parish who seem to be rich in faith; and O if you are not in Christ, you are miserably poor, and will be miserably poorer still. But be ye rich in faith, and ye shall be heirs of the kingdom!

Again, Christ says, "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer." O that is a sweet word – fear none of them, the smallest or the

greatest of them. If you stand on the seashore, you will notice that sometimes after a very small wave, a very large one comes. So it is often with affliction; Christ sends a small trial first, that He may prepare you for a large one; but fear *none* of them. If you were to bear the burdens yourself, you would be overwhelmed; but take them to Jesus, lay them all upon Him, and then you will slip from under them, and you will have to bear nothing. I believe there is not one who is a Christian here, but who will have to suffer in some way or other; for it is written, “Thou *shalt* suffer.” But fear *none* of them. Fear not tribulation and poverty, fear not reproaches, fear not persecution, “fear none of those things which thou *shalt* suffer.”

And here is another of Christ’s encouragements: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” The second death! and are there two deaths? Yes. Have you ever been at a deathbed? Have you ever seen the eyes roll back, the lips quiver, and the hands grow cold and motionless? Have you ever seen the deathbed of a sinner, of one who cried out, O for another day! O for another hour! O for another moment! – of one who was *obliged* to die? Well then, that is but a shadow of the second death.

When you are walking on the road, and when the sun causes you to see your figure, that is only the shadow – the substance is the real thing. So it is agreed by the soundest divines (and I believe it is true) that God intended the first death to be a type, or shadow, of the second death of the Christless soul. If the first, the shadow, be so dreadful, what will the second death be? – when it shall be eternally dying, but never dead; when you shall be wishing to die, but are not able! When you see one ill with fever, he is anxious to get water, but he cannot swallow it; and this is but a type of the burning thirst of those who have died without Christ, when they shall ask for a drop of water to cool their parched tongue. But it is very different with the believer. Death is no death to him, for Christ hath taken away its sting. It is to him an entrance into life, and then he shall not be hurt of the second death – it shall pass by, but shall not touch him.

And again, Jesus says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is called in one place a crown of gold, in another a crown of righteousness, in another a crown of glory, and here it is said to be a crown of life – it shall never fade! But what is meant by being faithful unto death? It is to be believing unto the end, to believe unto your dying hour; and then, when God wipes away the tears, Christ shall put on the crown.

He wants no company who hath Christ for his companion.

Sibbes

A WITNESS FROM SIXTY YEARS AGO

There was much evil and corruption in the world during the last War, but we are reminded of the testimony of His Excellency the Governor of Malta, General Sir William Dobbie. A notable figure, he was never ashamed of his faith. O that there were such men in high places today!

A naval officer, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, said of him:

“Gen. Dobbie is a big man. He is big physically; he is big professionally, being one of the foremost Fortress men in the British army; he is big morally. As one who has had the honour to be a guest of Gen. and Lady Dobbie during the present siege of Malta, I would like to mention how impressive Gen. Dobbie can be. His charming house at San Anton is run with a dignity befitting a representative of the King, combined with the simplicity of a soldier. After dinner the guests proceed to the drawing-room, where, standing in front of the fireplace, Gen. Dobbie says: ‘It is usual in this house to say a few words of thanks to Almighty God’; and then, for a minute or so, he gives an extempore prayer of thanks for the day and its events. No wonder he is one of whom it has been said that he fights with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. No wonder he has been an inspiration to the garrison and people of Malta.”

Gen. Dobbie’s name became a household word in wartime Britain because of the brave and noble defence of the Island of Malta. Speaking of this he said:

“I have purposely left to the last the point which really overshadows all others in importance. During those two years of siege I was very conscious of the good hand of God upon us, and I am sure that the continued safety of Malta was ultimately due to His divine protection.... I am convinced that God, for Christ’s sake, does still answer prayer, and I believe that the recognition of this fact was the secret of the spirit of endurance and fortitude shown by so many persons in Malta.... Acknowledgement of God through Christ, and trust in Him, is now as ever the thing which matters most.”

Of himself General Dobbie said:

“I came to know Christ as my Saviour forty-seven years ago, and all through my military service to the present day He has been my Saviour and my Lord. Although I have often and often been unfaithful to Him, yet He has never been unfaithful to me, nor has He let me down. I have always been sensible of the fact that my sins, which were forgiven me, were blotted out once and for all, and that in spite of my failures, I have become ‘a new creature in Christ Jesus.’ That realisation has given me a profound peace which none of the circumstances of army life in peace

or in war have been able to disturb. ... To serve God and to follow Him is a very real and practical thing in the army. The help that He gives is also real and practical, as I have proved times without number. I have made it a habit to bring all my problems to Him, both great and small, both professional and private, and I can testify that the help He gives is certain and convincing.

"I have known the Lord Jesus now for forty-seven years, and I could not face life without Him. I pity from the bottom of my heart those who are trying to live without Him.... It is no small thing to know that all the past has been forgiven, that help from the hands of Almighty God is available for the present, and that the whole future for eternity is assured. I am not presumptuous when I say I know that, because it has all been given to me by His grace, apart from my own deserts. I commend such a Saviour to all."

At the time Mr. J.H. Gosden wrote:

"O if Britain could boast of ten such righteous men in her high places, how different would be her prospects! We are profoundly thankful for this witness humbly and simply borne to the faithfulness of God and the reality of His salvation in Christ."

JOHN BERRIDGE

From John Gadsby's *Memoirs of Hymnwriters and Compilers*
(Continued from page 59)

After Berridge had preached in this new strain a week or two, and was ruminating whether he was yet right as he had perceived no better effects from these than his former discourses, one of his parishioners unexpectedly came to inquire for him. Being introduced, "Well, Sarah," said he. She replied, "Well! Not so well, I fear." "Why, what is the matter, Sarah?" "Matter! I don't know what's the matter. These new sermons. I find we are all to be lost now. I can neither eat, drink nor sleep. I don't know what's to become of me." The same week came two or three more on a like errand. It is easy to conceive what a relief these visits afforded his mind, in a state of such anxiety.

Now he was deeply humbled, that he should have spent so many years of his life to no better purpose than to confirm his hearers in their ignorance. Thereupon immediately he burnt all his old sermons, and shed a flood of tears of joy in their destruction. These circumstances alarmed the neighbourhood. The church quickly became crowded, and God gave testimony to the word of His grace in the very frequent conviction and conversion of sinners.

Hitherto he had confined his labours to his own parish, and had been accustomed to write his sermons at full length; but an incident

occurred, as unexpected to him as it was novel in itself, which led him to preach extempore. He had not exercised his ministry in an evangelical strain many months before he was invited to preach what is commonly called a Club Sermon. All his old sermons were burnt, and much of his time was engrossed in writing new discourses. When he intended to compose this, he was so much engaged with people who came under serious impressions that he found himself straitened for time, and therefore resolved to give the people one of his own discourses, which he had delivered at home, not expecting that any of his parishioners would be present.

On the Lord's day evening, one of his hearers informed him of his intention to accompany him the next day. This was an unwelcome intimation, and he endeavoured to dissuade him from his resolution, but to no purpose. Upon this, he resolved to rise very early, pursue his journey, and compose his sermon at the place where it was to be delivered, that he might not be interrupted by the visits of his people. In going, he comforted himself that there would be but a small congregation, and that a shorter discourse might be ventured on. But, to his great surprise, on his arrival, he was informed that all the clergy and people of the neighbouring parishes were come to hear him. This wrought up his mind to such a degree of agitation as absolutely incapacitated him for study, and he was therefore obliged to ascend the pulpit, and preach, *bona fide*, an extempore sermon.

But here God wonderfully and most agreeably disappointed his fears, by affording him such extraordinary assistance as enabled him to rise superior to all his embarrassment, and to command the most solemn attention from his numerous audience. This was a happy event both for himself and others as it released him from writing his sermons before he delivered them, for he never afterwards penned a discourse, except on a particular occasion, and gave him the opportunity of preaching more frequently, not only at home, but in the adjacent villages.

Hitherto the Methodists, as they were called, Whitefield, Wesley, Lady Huntingdon, etc., had been personally unknown to him, and as reports had operated much to their disparagement, he had had no inclination to seek an acquaintance with them. But *now* a correspondence was opened and an intimacy formed, which continued with some of them to the end of their lives. I learn, by the following extract of a letter, that his first sermon out of doors was on May 14th, 1759:

"On Monday se'nnight, Mr. Hicks accompanied me to Meldred. On the way we called at a farmhouse. After dinner I went into the yard, and seeing near 150 people, I called for a table, and preached for the *first time* in the open air. We then went to Meldred, where I preached in a field to about four thousand people. In the morning, at five, Mr. Hicks

preached in the same field to about one thousand. Here the presence of the Lord was wonderfully among us, and I trust, beside many that were slightly wounded, near thirty received true heart-felt conviction.

“On Monday last, I went to Shelford, four miles from Cambridge, near twenty from Everton. The journey made me quite ill, being so weary with riding that I was obliged to walk part of the way. When I came thither, a table was set for me on the common, and to my great surprise I found near ten thousand people round it, among whom were many gownsmen from Cambridge. I was hardly able to stand on my feet, and extremely hoarse with a cold. When I lifted up my foot to get on the table, a horrible dread overwhelmed me, but the moment I was fixed thereon, I seemed as unconcerned as a statue. I gave out my text (Gal. 3. 10, 11), and made a pause, to think of something pretty to set off with; but the Lord so confounded me (as indeed it was meet, for I was seeking not His glory, but my own) that I was in a perfect labyrinth, and found, if I did not begin immediately, I must go down without speaking. So I broke out with the first word that occurred, not knowing whether I should be able to add any more. Then the Lord opened my mouth, enabling me to speak nearly an hour, without any kind of perplexity, and so loud that everyone might hear. The audience behaved with great decency. When the sermon was over, I found myself so cool and easy, so cheerful in spirit, and wonderfully strengthened in body, I went into a house and spoke near an hour, to about two hundred people. In the morning I preached again to about a thousand.”

For several years Berridge was a very rigid Arminian. Nor was it by arguments in debate upon the subject of controversy between Arminians and Calvinists, but by a long confinement from preaching, occasioned by a nervous fever, that he was led into more consistent views of divine truth, and in the firm belief of which he ended his days. In this long and severe affliction, the Lord led him into a path which he had not known, and taught him many useful lessons to which he had been altogether a stranger. Hitherto he had learnt to be an active, but not a passive, servant of the Lord. To be laid aside in the plenitude of his success was so irritating to his nature that, like Jonas, his heart fretted against the Lord, and he wished he had never been employed in the work of the ministry. To such a pitch of criminal exasperation was he carried against the government of God, for checking his ministerial career, that he could not even endure the sight of his Bible, nor bear to hear the people sing in his adjoining church. In this furnace of affliction he became much more acquainted with the plague of his own heart, was led to see that the work of God could be carried on without his agency, and was convinced of the divine sovereignty in the dispensations of grace and appointments to the sacred office.

After this event, his connections with Christians of the Calvinistic persuasion were enlarged. Some time before Mr. Whitefield's death, he made his first visit to the Tabernacle in London, and continued to renew it every year to the close of his valuable life. Jesus was a name on which he dwelt with peculiar emphasis and delight. With what exalted affections would he extol the bleeding Lamb, with what streaming eyes would he point to His agonizing sufferings! How would they sparkle when he displayed the exceeding riches of His grace! And what a reverential grandeur marked his countenance when he anticipated His glorious appearing! In short, to adopt the language of the melodious poet, Jesus was

"The circle where his passion moved,
And centre of his soul."

No minister could with more judgment detect the human heart in all its subtle machinations. Communion with God was what he much enforced in the latter stages of his ministry. It was, indeed, his own meat and drink, and the banquet from which he never appeared to rise.

He did not confine his labours to the narrow limits of Everton, a small and trifling parish, but, like the majestic sun, illumined an extensive tract of country. His love to mankind was ardent. He knew the worth of an immortal soul; he knew the awful terrors of the Lord; he knew the emptiness of the present world; he knew the sandy foundation upon which thousands build; he knew the dangerous devices of Satan; he knew the awful precipice upon which the ungodly stand. His bowels melted with pity, his heart yearned to assist them. He therefore left no means unattempted to awaken their concern. He would take the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Hertford and Huntingdon, making *the episcopal mandate the rule of his operation*: "Go and seek Christ's sheep wherever thou canst find them." In this circuit he preached upon an average from ten to twelve sermons a week, and frequently rode a hundred miles. Nor were these extraordinary exertions the hasty fruit of intermitting zeal, but were regularly continued during the long succession of more than twenty years, exemplifying through the whole of his ministerial career the motto of Dr. Doddridge, "Let us live while we live."

As to his usefulness, I learn from more sources of information than one that he was in the first year visited by a thousand different persons under serious impressions; and it has been computed that, under his own and the joint ministry of Mr. Hicks, about four thousand were awakened to a concern for their souls in the space of twelve months. He perpetually aimed in his preaching at laying the creature low and exalting the Saviour. His discourses were chiefly of the expository kind, experimental and practical. His voice was strong and loud, but perfectly

under command. The numbers that sometimes heard him were very great, ten and fifteen thousand at some places composing his congregation, and he was easily heard by all of them. People came to hear him from the distance of twenty miles, and were at Everton by seven o'clock in the morning, having set out from home soon after midnight. At that early hour he preached to very considerable congregations; also at half-past ten and half-past two o'clock, and again in the evening. Incredible as this history of his success may appear, it comes authenticated through a channel so highly respectable that to refuse our belief would be unpardonably illiberal.

This work was at first accompanied with bodily convulsions and other external effects on some of the hearers; but those effects soon subsided, and the work was carried on more quietly and gradually. As his labours were prosperous, so they were opposed. It could not be grateful to the prince of darkness to behold his kingdom so warmly attacked, and his subjects in such numbers desert his standard. Hence he stirred up all his strength, and a furious persecution ensued. No opposition was too violent, no names were too opprobrious, no treatment was too barbarous. Some of his followers were roughly handled, and their property destroyed. Gentry, clergy and magistrates became one band, and employed every engine to check his progress and silence him from preaching. The Old Devil was the only name by which he was distinguished among them for between twenty and thirty years. But none of these things moved him. He had counted the cost, and was prepared for the fool's cap. The clamours of the multitude had no more effect upon his mind, in the regular discharge of his duty, than the barking of the contemptible cur has upon the moon in her imperial revolutions. Vengeance was not his. The only revenge he sought was their salvation, and when they needed any good office, his hand was the first to render it.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

Baptism: Its Mode, Design and Subjects: a Review, by J.C. Philpot; 48 page booklet; price \$2.55 plus postage or £2.20 plus postage; published by Old Paths Gospel Press, P.O. Box 318, Choteau, MT 59422, U.S.A.; and obtainable from Gospel Mission in the U.S.A. or Sovereign Grace Mission in the United Kingdom, Chapel House, High Street, Southill, Bedfordshire, SG18 9HU.

It is unusual to find anything by J.C. Philpot on the subject of baptism. Really the title is *not* the title of Philpot's writing but of the book he was reviewing. The review was of a book by A.J. Baxter, then of Nottingham, but later of Eastbourne. Though later well known in Calvinistic circles, in 1859

when Philpot wrote the review, he was virtually unknown. Baxter's book bore the title *Baptism: Its Mode, Design and Subjects*.

The subject is whether baptism is by immersion or sprinkling. A.J. Baxter contended that the Greek *en* (in Matthew 3. 6) is often translated "at," whilst the Greek *baptizo* can often be translated other than "dip." Philpot's answer is that the normal, usual sense of the words is "in" and "dip."

J.C. Philpot is caustic in his reply. As a Greek scholar he insists that A.J. Baxter does not understand the original principles of the Greek language.

The booklet is helpful and would be profitable for those drawn into controversy on the subject. At the end is an appendix, quoting from various learned authors on how the ordinance was originally performed (by dipping) and on the true meaning of the word *baptizo*.

In places there is a little confusion as the footnotes have been incorporated in the text.

The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News for The Vilest of Men, by John Bunyan; 127 pages; paperback; price £5; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian Bookshops.

This well-known treatise was written by John Bunyan in 1688, the last year of his life. The subject is based on the last clause of Luke 24, verse 47: "Beginning at Jerusalem," the whole verse reading, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Feeling himself to be the chief of sinners or a "Jerusalem sinner," the author draws on his own experience as outlined in his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, to display the riches of divine grace and mercy to the greatest sinners.

The book is divided into four parts: 1, The text explained; 2, Why mercy is first offered to the biggest sinners; 3, The doctrine applied; and 4, Conclusion and Answers to objections. There is much sound theology contained in this little book and whilst the terms *offer* and *proffer* are used, the way in which they are used show them to be synonymous with invitations. See William Gadsby's hymn 524, second verse:

"What sweet invitations the gospel contains,
To men heavy laden with bondage and chains;
It welcomes the weary to come and be blessed
With ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest."

Faith as the gift of God must be given before these invitations are effective. The author says on page 85, "Faith alone knows how to deal with mercy; wherefore, put not presumption in the place thereof"; and on the following page: "Presumption, then, is that which severs faith and repentance, concluding that the soul shall be saved by grace, though the man was never made sorry for his sins, nor the love of his heart turned therefrom."

Should any readers feel that their sins are too great to be forgiven, we recommend them to read *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*.

J.A. Hart

THE END OF THE WAY

The following beautiful lines were written by a young woman in Nova Scotia, an invalid for many years with spinal disease, and a great sufferer, but in whom the grace of God was most wonderfully manifested.

My life is a wearisome journey,
 I'm sick with the dust and the heat,
 The rays of the sun beat upon me,
 The briars are wounding my feet;
 But the city to which I am journeying
 Will more than my trials repay,
 All the toils of the road will seem nothing
 When I get to the end of the way.

There are so many hills to climb upwards,
 I often am longing for rest,
 But He who appoints me my pathway
 Knows just what is needful and best;
 I know in His Word He has promised
 That my strength shall be as my day,
 And the toils of the road will seem nothing
 When I get to the end of the way.

He loves me too well to forsake me,
 Or give me one trial too much;
 All His people have been dearly purchased,
 And Satan can never claim such.
 By and by I shall see Him and praise Him
 In the city of unending day,
 And the toils of the road will seem nothing
 When I get to the end of the way.

When the last feeble step has been taken,
 And the gates of the city appear,
 And the beautiful songs of the angels
 Float out on my listening ear;
 When all that now seems so mysterious
 Will be plain and clear as the day –
 Yes, the toils of the road will seem nothing
 When I get to the end of the way.

Though now I am footsore and weary,
 I shall rest when I'm safely at home;
 I know I'll receive a glad welcome,
 For the Saviour Himself has said, "Come!"
 So when I am weary in body
 And sinking in spirit, I say,
 "All the toils of the road will seem nothing
 When I get to the end of the way."

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2006

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

THE END OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
London, on Lord's day evening, March 5th, 1972*

Text: "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22. 37).

In the verse I have read the Lord is speaking and He refers to something that is yet to be accomplished in Him. "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me." What was it that was written? It was this: "He was reckoned among the transgressors." This takes in the prophecy that I have read in Isaiah (chapter 53) concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is said that He was numbered among the transgressors, was with them and made intercession for them. A transgressor is a law-breaker; transgressing indicates a stepping over a boundary, going beyond the limit, doing what we are forbidden to do. Of this we are all guilty, we are every one of us transgressors; that is, we have violated the law by going beyond its limits. This is universally true of all fallen mankind, and it is true of everyone in this chapel. There is no exception, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There is a stepping over the limit and there is a coming short of the requirement. If we really know ourselves, I believe we shall have to confess that we are guilty in both respects.

What I have read is a remarkable truth. Although it was not yet accomplished, it was about to be accomplished. "He was reckoned among the transgressors." Although He was reckoned *among* them He was never one *of* them, for He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Although He was treated as a transgressor, that never made Him one. He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; yet He was never a transgressor. Although all the sins of His people were committed to Him substitutionally, yet they never made Him a transgressor. He stood in the *place* of transgressors, for all His people are transgressors; but still it never made *Him* one. He was ever inherently and practically pure, holy and just.

Yet though He was never a transgressor, He suffered and died to *save* transgressors. One of them was there, crucified by His side, and for him the Lord suffered, as we know. He said unto Jesus, "Lord,

remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” And Jesus said unto him, “To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” The Saviour died to save him and all His people *as* transgressors; and if He died to save you and me we shall be brought solemnly to know and feel that we are transgressors and that we have sinned against His holy law. His Word says that he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. All those He died to save are brought to feel their guilty condition as transgressors and something of the awfulness of sin. What an amazing thought it must be to every one of us that He condescended to take our nature upon Him, to redeem us as poor, vile transgressors of the law, and in ourselves under its curse!

There is something in the prophecy of Isaiah about this, not only that He suffered for these transgressors, but that He makes intercession for them. This is not a universal consideration; all for whom the exalted Saviour *intercedes* in glory will one day be there themselves, for they are the trophies of His grace, the purchase of His blood; they are the redeemed of the Lord, delivered from the power of darkness and transformed into the kingdom of His dear Son.

But it is said here, “The things concerning Me have an end.” This is my point more particularly. The Lord refers to “things concerning Me”; He Himself is the Speaker, the only begotten Son of God. Yet being the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. They were vital things that concerned Him, and if we have any grace in our hearts, the things that concerned Him will concern *us*.

A great many people are about who apparently have no concern whatever; as far as we can observe they just live to this world; and so they die. But there are things that concern the Lord’s people, and they are the same things that concern Christ. In this aspect the things that concerned Him were the things that He was about to suffer, the price He was about to pay, the death He was about to die; and, if we have any grace, the things that will concern us are those very things. But ours is a concern as to whether we have any interest in them, whether we have part and lot in the matter of redemption, whether He died for us – for you, for me.

This concern bears an evidence of grace, and I wonder how many of this little company have this concern in their hearts. Of some I have no question. For myself, I would have to say that I could wish it was a much deeper concern, a heavier burden, a more pressing matter with me than often it is, for we are apt to become taken up with secondary things, although they may be consistent things. There are many things that come into our lives which can soon distract us from the one main thing which should be our chief and principal concern. In the days of Mr. Philpot, when he used to preach at Allington, the place used to be packed; people

were listening outside through the windows, and during the dinner break the farmers walked about talking, not about the failure of the potato crop, but, "Where do I stand for eternity?" – that was *their* concern. Is that really *our* concern – "Where do I stand for eternity?" Perhaps it is often a secret cry:

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

O dear friends, what little, deep, inward, prayerful concern have we about our standing for eternity, and where we shall spend it!

I was intending to speak particularly about the things that concerned Christ. He said, "The things that concern Me have an end" – that is, they have an end in view. One of the things that concerned Him was to *fulfil all the prophecies of the Old Testament that relate to Him*. All through the Old Testament we have, as you know, under the Mosaic law, the sacrifices, types and shadows, the promise of His coming, of His sufferings, and particularly in Isaiah 53 which I have read this evening. As you know, He often referred to the Old Testament Scriptures, and His concern was that every reference to Him, to His sufferings, His substitution, and His ultimate glory, should be perfectly fulfilled. What concerned Him was to give *absolute* satisfaction to the claims of justice, for unless that satisfaction was absolute and perfect, it could not be accepted. It is solemnly true what we have been singing concerning His substitution:

"Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the awful stroke that found Him
Was the stroke that justice gave."

But that is what concerned Him – to receive that stroke, and to bear what was involved in it, because if the sword did *not* fall upon Him it would *fall upon us*. This was what concerned Him – that His poor, sin-polluted people should be delivered from the sword of justice. Therefore He bore the stroke Himself.

What concerned Him was to *fulfil the law*. It is said by the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." That is what concerned Him – to honour the law to perfection, so that His dear people, as they stand in union with Him as His body, should thereby become dead to the law and be delivered from its awful curse. This is what concerned Him, friends. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

The whole of His substitution, then, was *the* matter that concerned Him. Solemn thought! It was a deep concern to Him; to drink that bitter cup, this brought matters to a point, and to this end, He set His face toward Jerusalem. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

That is what concerned Him – *to complete the work He came to do*. He knew perfectly well what was involved, but He came to complete it, to finish it. As we know, when He was about to expire He said, "It is finished." And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. These were the things that concerned Him.

There is another point that concerned Him, and that is that *He should rise again and ascend up into glory as our great High Priest*, in order to dispense the blessings He procured by His intolerable sufferings. So, as in Isaiah 53, "He made intercession for the transgressors." He is our all-prevailing Intercessor enthroned in heaven above. This concerns Him – that He should be *exalted a Prince and a Saviour* to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. His concern now is to dispense the blessings of pardon and redemption to His poor, suffering people who have transgressed His law and in themselves are under its curse.

"The things concerning Me," He says, "have an end." What is the end? It is not a termination of anything, but a *fulfilling* of things. This end is the effect of all that He suffered and had in view. One end that the Saviour had in view was *the glory of God*. In John 17 we read that He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." That was one end the Saviour had in view in all that He suffered; not only that His poor, helpless people should be eventually redeemed, pardoned and justified, but that His Father should be honoured and glorified in the accomplishment of this. "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

Another end in view was the *gift of eternal life* to all for whom He suffered. The things that concern Him are linked with the ultimate result and efficacy of His substitution; these are bound together. It was a concern to Him that His Father should be honoured and glorified in His substitutionary work, and that He should be accepted by the Father. In John 17. 2 we read; "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." One of two things awaits us then, either the awful consequence of sin in eternal death, that is separation from God and divine punishment, or eternal life. O what an inestimable blessing that will be – eternal life!

"Eternal life at His request
To every saint is given;

Safety on earth, and after death
The plenitude of heaven"

I remember visiting a friend in hospital just before he died and he repeated that verse to me, "Eternal life at His request to every saint is given." And so it is. Yet these "saints" are transgressors, but they are saints because they are separated from the world that lieth in wickedness; they have an interest in the Saviour's intercession, in His prayers. It is His prayer for us that holds us up, bears us along, brings us through, and will ultimately bring us into the heavenly mansions. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

"The things concerning Me have an end." Another end in view, I believe, is that day when *all His ransomed children will be with Him*, every one of them, when the harvest is gathered in. This may not be so very long now, for sometimes it does appear that the dispensation of time is closing down upon us. Christ will then have every one of His children with Him from the least to the greatest of them. What a wonderful mercy it will be if you and I are among them, most unworthy of all though we may feel to be! We shall feel to be the most unworthy, and yet what a mighty work it is! What encouragement there is for poor sinners to wait upon the Lord for this blessing, even though they may feel to be the vilest sinner out of hell; yet still they are "welcome to the throne of grace the Saviour's blood to plead."

That which concerned Him, and the end the Saviour had in view, may also refer to that day when He would be able to say, "*Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given Me*; here are the trophies of My blood; here they are, they have come out of great tribulation with their robes washed and made white in My blood." This was the end in view. What a glorious prospect it is for believers in Jesus to look forward to, especially when they feel a sweet hope spring up within that one day they will be there. It seems too great for us to contemplate, I know, but still, if it is really true that the dear Saviour died to redeem us, you and me – if He did – may I not say that He will not be satisfied without us? If He paid the price to deliver us He would not be satisfied without us, for these are the trophies of His grace and blood.

Then there is just another point, another end in view. Not only will the Lord's people be there, but they will be *conformed to His glorified image*, as to His human nature. This the Apostle Paul refers to in his Epistle to the Philippians where he says, He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." It will bear a conformity to His glorified body. I know this is all amazingly profound; still, it is the end in view. May not this take us to the glorious resurrection, when all the redeemed of the Lord will be raised from the dead, when this mortal will put on immortality and this corruptible body

will put on incorruption? This poor body that is sown in dishonour will then be raised in honour. This is the end in view, and this is something that concerns Him, to be accomplished in the time appointed.

Here is the blessed truth, and here may be a point for some heart-searching in my own case and perhaps in yours. Do the things that concerned Him concern you? Do they concern me? Is it our great concern to be right with God, to be presented blameless? Is it our great concern to be found at His right hand in that great day? If that is really a prayerful exercise and a deep concern in our souls, then I believe that we shall be there; but if there is no concern about it, then there is no evidence that we shall be there unless it be on His left hand to hear that dreadful word, "Depart, ye cursed." O what real concern is there in our hearts as to our standing? There is a lot of religion about, but how many are there that are really brought to a point, that are really concerned, whose language is, "Give me Christ, or else I die"? I have often mentioned this, but it is a real concern. May we feelingly say,

"Prepare me gracious God
To stand before Thy face.
Thy Spirit must the work perform.
For it is all of grace."

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE CROSS

By Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher (1796-1868)

Let us lift up our eyes to the inscription which beams from the cross of the divine Sufferer. We there read, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," written in three different tongues – Greek, Latin and Hebrew – the three theological languages, that all the world may read and understand. Pilate had so ordered it, induced partly by an obscure and reverential presentiment, and partly in order to give the hated Jews a final blow. No sooner had the latter read the inscription than they angrily hasten to the governor, and say to him in an imperious tone, "It must not be as thou hast written. Down with that inscription from the cross of the blasphemer. Write that He presumptuously said that He was the King of the Jews." But Pilate briefly and resolutely replied, "What I have written I have written!" And thus, Pilate, it ought to be. What thou didst write was not from arbitrary choice, for Another guided thy hand. Thou hast prophesied as did Balaam of old; and with thy inscription art ignorantly and involuntarily become a witness for the truth.

Wilt thou behold the King of Israel? Come, friend, and follow me to Calvary's bloody hill. Seest thou that Man on the cross, dying the

death of a malefactor? "What?" sayest thou. "Is this a King?" Do not shake thy head, but know that thou art wanting in discernment, not He in majesty. Retrace the ancient Levitical service, and behold in the sacred and prophetic language of the Old Testament that which shall throw light upon the appalling scene. Light thy torch in the Psalms of David, in which thou hearest a great King say, "They pierced My hands and My feet"; "They gave me also gall for My meat, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink"; and yet He remains a King. Listen to the prophet Isaiah speaking of One who though He was "bruised for our iniquities," yet the government was upon His shoulder, and of His peaceful kingdom there shall be no end. Read the words of Zechariah, "Awake, O sword ... against the Man that is My fellow!" and hear the forerunner in the wilderness, exclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Return with these lights to Calvary, and say if thou art still so much astonished at finding the inscription on the cross, which stands between the other two, bearing the words, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." A cloud of holy witnesses adoringly surround the cross, venerable figures, tried saints, patriarchs and seers, poets and prophets, kings and priests. The figure of the bleeding King did not mislead them. Reverentially, and far from starting back with surprise, they read the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Dost thou inquire, Where is the majesty of this King? Be not offended at the gloomy cloud which frowns around Him. The eye of faith penetrates through it, and perceives a rainbow-garland of angels' heads and seraphic faces. And who, in the further distance of the heavenly world, compose the brilliant host that, sunk in adoration, lie on their faces beneath the trees of life? They are the saints of God, who inherited the kingdom before the Lord of Glory descended to the earth. They now behold Him paying the promised ransom for them and supporting the blissful abodes they inhabit with the pillars of justice. And look still further in spirit. The multitudes of people out of every age and nation, their eyes attentively directed to the cross, and their faces expressive of sacred peace and silent blessedness – who are they, who, in the interminable circles, surround the fatal hill? It is His church, His redeemed people, including the best and noblest of mankind in every age. See the censers in their hands. They desire only to hear and know respecting the Lamb that was slain.

Such are the sights which faith beholds. And on beholding such a representation, the cross before it changes to a throne, the crown of thorns about the brow of the dying Man becomes a diadem, and Pilate's inscription is read with reverence and adoration, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews!"

Yes, it is He! Thou mayest recognise Him by the victories He achieves, even on the fatal tree. He is assailed by powerful temptations which rise up in the shape of the scornful revilings of the people, who exclaim, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him," a powerful assault of the wicked one. How much did the taunting advice to come down correspond with the necessities of His suffering human nature! If He had followed it, not only He Himself would have been delivered at once from His torment, but the host of blaspheming adversaries would have been driven from the field in an unexampled manner, convinced of His divinity almost more plainly than was afterward the case by His resurrection from the dead.

Alluring thought, at one blow to strike the raging multitude dumb, and bend their knees in the dust! But far be such an idea from Him! It is a snare, a trap of the artful fowler, a rock under water to wreck the project of the atonement just before its final accomplishment. Jesus surveys the infernal toils, and says in spirit, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; I will not come down, but bleed, sacrifice Myself, and pay the wages of sin." In sublime silence He rejects the call and bears the torment; nor did He deviate from His path a single moment. Come, let us interweave an olive-branch in His crown of thorns and wreath about with the laurel of victory the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.

Yes, while hanging there, He is still a royal conqueror. Thou mightest think that no one was more overcome than He. But the prospective glass of faith will show thee something different. A conflict of desperation has commenced, and the human race is its object. The hostile parties are the captain of the Lord's host and the infernal powers. How the demons of the pit rage and struggle! The prey is to be taken from them and the captive delivered; the sceptre to be wrested from their hands, and the right they had acquired over us by the divine decision again torn from them.

And it is the Man in the crown of thorns who threatens their dominion, and is now overturning it. Nothing in the arsenal of hell is left untried which may afford any hope of victory. The Lion of the tribe of Judah bleeds, but His blood is the enemy's overthrow. He falls into the hands of His adversaries, but this is the means of rescuing us out of their hands. He suffers Himself to be fettered by the bands of Belial, but His claims beget our liberty. He empties the cup of wrath, but only that He may fill it with blessings for us. He suffers Himself to be wounded in the heel, but at the same moment breaks the head of the old Serpent, and conquers the enemy, like Samson, by His fall.

Such are the achievements of the dying Jesus. To us He would not seem more glorious were He to descend in majestic splendour from the

cross, amid the music of angelic harps, than He appears to us yonder in His bleeding form. We see Him decked with victorious insignia, and, while sounding the trumpet of triumph, we exclaim, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews!"

A third victory is gained at the cross, the greatest and most wonderful of all. I call it the victory of the Lawgiver over the law. There was no want of wish and will in heaven to save us. They existed abundantly; but the right to undertake the great work was wanting. The holy and inviolable law was the bolt which fastened the door of the treasury of divine mercy. The law put in its protest against our redemption. Its language was, "No salvation for sinners till their guilt is expiated"; and even eternal Majesty felt bound by the protestation.

But divine wisdom was able to loose their fetters. The eternal Son descended upon earth to change the negative of the law into an affirmative. He suffered Himself to be made under the law, and fulfilled it, as our Representative, in such a manner as to enable Him to stand forward, and say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" But this did not remove the barrier from the sluices of divine mercy. The curse had to be endured, to which we had become subject by a breach of the law. He submitted to this likewise and drank the cup of wrath. Did a drop remain? "Not one," was the law's decision. And when the voice of mercy was heard from heaven, the law had nothing to object. Divine justice resigned the sceptre to its august sister, Love, without infringing its glory in the slightest degree. We admire the victory over the law in the way of justice, and adoringly read the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Yes, He is a King! But where is His kingdom? He is founding it while hanging on the cross. The drops of blood which trickle down are the price He paid to ransom His people, and the dying groans which issue from His breast, the joyful peal which announces the birthday of His Zion.

He did not found His kingdom when gathering the people around Him and addressing them from the mount of the beatitudes. Nor when He cast out the spirits of darkness, and by His miraculous aid won the eternal gratitude of hundreds of the weary and heavy-laden. Had He left the world after these triumphs, all would have remained upon earth as before, and He Himself have been without a kingdom and a people. Teaching, preaching and example could not effect it. The new city had to be founded on the blood of the covenant; and it was done. The hands that were nailed to the cross overcame the world and founded, in the midst of the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of light and peace. O wonder beyond compare! What Pilate wrote remains forever true, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

The Jews did not imagine it was He. They ventured to cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" You know that their imprecation was fulfilled in the manner they desired. "Woe!" exclaimed the blood, and cried to heaven for vengeance upon them. Behold the result! A heavy storm gathers over Jerusalem. The torch of war is lighted in the land. A forest of hostile lances begirds the holy city. The temple sinks in flames. The walls fall down. Not one stone remains upon another, and the blood of the children of Abraham flows in torrents. Those who escape the sword must flee into the wide world, far from their beloved hills and the graves of their forefathers, into the barren and inhospitable waste. And Israel remains to this day a subjugated people. In their wretchedness they are a lasting memorial that He, whose blood they had invoked over them, was and is a King, and does not suffer Himself to be mocked with impunity. But we wait for a time in which the Lord will make it evident in another and more gratifying manner in these His ancient covenant people that He is their real and true King. When they shall eventually come with weeping and lamentation and He shall gather them out of the land of the north, and lead them in a plain path by the rivers of water, and shall say to them, "I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is My firstborn," then the most obstinate unbelief shall no longer rebel, but reverently fold the hands on reading the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Yes, He is our King! He reigns from the cross. From thence to this hour He carries on the government in the city of peace. True, He no longer hangs there, but when He presents Himself to the eye of faith, He appears, as before, in His bleeding form, and hanging on the tree. It is from thence He takes the spoil from the strong, and produces repentance in the sinful. From thence He humbles the lofty looks, and melts the stony heart in the fire of His love. From thence He comforts the anxious soul, and dries the weeping eyes of the contrite. O how variously does He daily make it manifest that He, as the crucified Jesus, is the true King of Israel! Yes, in His crown of thorns, He governs the world of spirits and of hearts; and the greatest marvels by which He glorifies Himself upon earth, He performs with His pierced hands. Hence Calvary continues to be the place where we pay our homage, and where we cease not adoringly to cry, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews!"

Thus, in fact, no human hand ever wrote anything more true and well-founded than the inscription which Pilate, under divine direction, wrote and placed on the cross. Yet a little while, and signs from heaven, angelic appearances, falling stars, and graves opening at the trumpet's sound will confirm it.

My friends, the time is at hand when we shall no longer read it on the cross, but in the radiant letters on the flowing robe of the returning

Conqueror. O that then none of us may be forced to say to the rocks, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us!" but each of us meet Him with joyful acclamations, and hail Him Lord of all!

NO CONDEMNATION

By Robert Haldane (1764-1842)

In 1816 Haldane visited Calvin's Geneva, at the time sunk in rationalism. Addressing students in their rooms on the Epistle to the Romans, from this small beginning a gracious revival broke out in the city. Some of those influenced became eminent ministers. So his commentary, published some twenty years later, has a wonderful history behind it.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8. 34).

"Who is he that condemneth?" In the preceding verse it is asked, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Here it is demanded, Who shall condemn them? They who cannot be accused cannot be condemned. God Himself is pleased to justify the elect, to deliver them from condemnation, and views them as possessing perfect righteousness; and being in this justified state by the judicial sentence of God, who shall dare to condemn them? None can discover a single sin of which to accuse them as still subjecting them to the curse of the law, and to bring them into that condemnation from which they have been delivered by what God Himself hath done for them.

It is here supposed that their condemnation is impossible, because it would be unjust. In similar language the Lord Jesus Christ, the first elect of God, speaking by the Prophet Isaiah, 50. 8, says, "He is near that justifieth Me; who will contend with Me?" These words relate to His confidence in His heavenly Father, who would uphold Him as His righteous Servant; and it is on His righteousness and work that the acquittal of all those whom the Father hath given Him, and who are elected in Him, is rested. The apostle, having said that it is God that justifieth them, next proceeds to give the reasons of their freedom from condemnation. Four grounds are here stated: first, Christ's death; second, His resurrection; third, His enthronement at the right hand of God; and fourth, His intercession.

1. "It is Christ that died." By His death the penalty of the holy law, on account of its violation by His people, was executed, and satisfaction

made to divine justice. In answer to the question, "Who is he that condemneth?" the apostle replies that Christ died. By this he intimates the impossibility of our being absolved from sin without satisfaction for the injury done to the rights of God's justice and the sacred majesty of His eternal laws which had been violated; for the just God could not set aside His justice by His mercy, and justify sinners without an atonement.

It is on this account that God had instituted sacrifices under the law, to hold forth the necessity of a satisfaction, and to prove that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. There is, then, a manifest necessity of repairing the outrage against the perfections of God, which are the original and fundamental rule of the duty of the creature. This reparation could only be made by a satisfaction that should correspond with the august majesty of the holiness of God; and consequently it must be of infinite value, which could only be found in a person of infinite dignity.

To the death of Jesus Christ as the atonement for sin our eyes are constantly directed throughout the Scriptures, whether by types, by prophecies, or by historical descriptions of the event. Death was the punishment threatened in the covenant of works against sin. But Jesus Christ had neither transgressed that covenant, nor could participate in the imputation of the sin of Adam, because He sprang not from him by the way of natural generation. Being, therefore, without sin, either actual or imputed, the penalty of death could not be incurred on His own account.

Death, then, which is the wages of sin, must have been suffered by Him for sinners. Their iniquities were laid on Him, and by His stripes they are healed. His death, therefore, utterly forbids the condemnation of the elect of God, who were given to Him and are one with Him, of whom only the context speaks. It must be a just and full compensation for their sins. It is evidently implied that none for whom He died can be condemned. For if condemnation be forbidden by His death, then that condemnation must be prohibited with respect to all for whom He died. His death made satisfaction to justice for them, and therefore, in their case, both accusation and condemnation are rendered impossible.

2. "Yea rather, that is risen again." This is the second ground affirmed by the apostle against the possibility of the condemnation of God's elect. What purpose would the death of Christ have served if He had been overcome and swallowed up by it? "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." If He be not risen, it must be because He had not expiated those sins for which He died, and was therefore retained a prisoner by death. But since the Surety has been released from the grave, complete satisfaction must have been made; for if but one sin which had been laid upon Him had continued unatoned for, He would have remained for ever in the grave, death being the wages of

sin. But now, since He has risen from the grave, the obligation against His people must be effaced and entirely abolished, His resurrection being their resurrection (Col. 2. 12).

It is on this account that the apostle here opposes to condemnation not only the death of Christ, but also His resurrection, as something higher, and as being our full absolution. And, by the commandment of Jesus Christ, the gospel was not announced to the Gentiles, nor spread through the world, till after His resurrection, as He Himself said: "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24. 46, 47).

The resurrection, then, of Christ, is the proof of His victory, and of the entire expiation of His people's sins. It is therefore opposed to their condemnation, as being the evidence and completion of their absolution and acquittal; for as the death of Jesus Christ was His condemnation, and that of all united to Him, so His resurrection is His absolution and also theirs. As the Father, by delivering Him to death, condemned their sins in Him, so in raising Him from the dead, He pronounced their acquittal from all the sins that had been laid upon Him.

This is what the apostle teaches respecting the justification of Jesus Christ. He was justified in the Spirit (1 Tim. 3. 16); that is, declared and recognised to be righteous; and with regard to His people's justification in Him, that as He had died for their sins, so He was raised for their justification. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a manifestation of His Godhead and divine power. He was declared to be the Son of God, and consequently possessing over all things absolute power and dominion. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."

3. "Who is even at the right hand of God." This is the third ground on which the security of God's elect is rested. Jesus Christ sits at God's right hand. This is a figurative expression, taken from the custom of earthly monarchs to express special favour and denotes, with respect to Christ, both dignity and power. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Having finished the work of redemption, this was the result of His labours and the testimony of its consummation.

His thus *sitting down* indicates an essential difference between our Lord Jesus Christ and the Levitical priests. "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." The Levitical priests had never finished their work: it was still imperfect. They *stood*, therefore, ministering daily, in token of continued service. But Christ having

offered one sacrifice for sins, by which He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, for ever *sat down* on the right hand of God (Heb. 10. 12).

Jesus Christ, then, is not only raised from the dead, but has also ascended into heaven, and is possessed of all power and glory, and is there to defend His people. His seat at the right hand of God signifies His permanent exaltation as Mediator, and His communion with God in sovereign power and authority, reigning as the Head and King of His church. The amount of the apostle's reasoning is that such being the condition of Him who was dead and is risen again, possessed of the keys of hell and of death, who shall dare to appear before Him to bring an accusation against His members or to condemn the elect of God?

4. "Who also maketh intercession for us." This is the fourth and last ground of the security of God's elect. The *intercession* of Jesus Christ is the second act of His priesthood, and is a necessary consequence of His *sacrifice*, which is the first act, and precedes the third, namely, His coming forth from the heavenly sanctuary to *bless* those whom He has redeemed to God by His blood. His intercession consists in that perpetual application which He makes to His Father, in the name of His church, of the blood which He shed on the cross for the salvation of His people, in order to obtain for them the fruits of that oblation. It was necessary that His sacrifice should be offered upon earth, because it was an act of His humiliation; but His intercession, which supposes the establishment of righteousness and peace, is made in heaven, being an act of His exaltation.

This intercession was figuratively represented by the high priest in Israel when, after having offered in his linen garments the sacrifice, without the precincts of the holy place, he took the blood of the victim and, clothed in his sacerdotal golden robes, entered alone into the most holy place, and sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy seat. Jesus Christ, then, who suffered without the gate (Heb. 13. 12), in accomplishing the truth of this figure, first offered upon earth His sacrifice, and afterwards entered in His glory into heaven, to present to His Father the infinite price of His oblation by the mystical sprinkling of His blood. This is not to be understood as being any bodily humiliation, as bowing the knee before God, but it is the presenting of His blood of perpetual efficacy. It is the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

The blood of Jesus Christ being the blood of the everlasting covenant – that blood which was to reunite God with men, and men with God – it was necessary, after its being shed on the cross, that it should be thus sprinkled in heaven. "I go," says He to His disciples, "to prepare a place for you." It was necessary that this blood should be sprinkled

there, and also upon them, before they could be admitted. But by its means they were prepared to enter into heaven, and heaven itself was prepared for their reception, which without that sprinkling would have been defiled by their presence. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."

Jesus Christ is not only seated at the right hand of God, but He is there for the very purpose of interceding for His people. By the perpetual efficacy of His blood their sins are removed, and consequently every ground of their condemnation. This never-ceasing intercession of Him who ever liveth to advocate their cause not only procures the remission of their sins, but also all the graces of the Holy Spirit; and by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit an internal aspersion [?] is made upon their hearts when they are actually converted to God, and when by faith they receive the sprinkling of the blood of their Redeemer. For them He died, He rose, He ascended to heaven, and there intercedes. How, then, can they be condemned? How can they come short of eternal glory?

A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

Sermon preached by Thomas Watson in 1662

(Concluded from page 82)

Question. But is not the decree past? Are there any hopes that God will be still in the midst of England?

Answer. There is hope in Israel concerning this. I would encourage God's people, and speak something that might be as the cork to the net, to keep their hearts from sinking. I confess, when I look upon the dark side of the cloud, it fills me with trembling and astonishment. The sins and divisions of the nation are grey hairs upon us. It is ominous when the joints of the same body begin to smite. But though we have many symptoms of a dying patient, yet there are six seeds of hope left that God will still abide in the midst of England.

1. That there is a generation of righteous persons in the land. God would have spared Sodom if there had been ten righteous persons in it. It is to be hoped that there are many *tens* in England. Though the vine in the land is so blasted that the Lord might cut it down, yet there are some good clusters, and for these God may spare the vine and say, Is there not a blessing in it (Isa. 65. 8)? Were the godly (who are the chariots and horsemen in Israel) all removed, the Lord would make quick work with the nation; He would destroy the weeds were it not for the corn. The ship of church and state would soon be drowned if the elect

were not in it. The saints stay God's hand when He is going to strike: "Haste thee" to Zoar "for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither." The saints are "the excellent of the earth"; "precious and honourable." For their sakes God may yet be entreated to be propitious to us.

2. Another seed of hope is that the Lord keeps up a spirit of prayer among His people. The Spartans' walls were their spears. The wall and bulwark of a nation is prayer. As there are [many] crying sins in the land, so there are [some] crying prayers. Whole volleys of sighs and groans are daily sent up to heaven. When the Lord intends to pour out the vial of His indignation, He stops all the sluices of prayer: "Pray not thou for this people." God hath not said so *yet*. Prayer is a powerful orator for mercy. It comes, as it were, with letters of *mandamus* [judicial writ from the Queen's Bench] to heaven: "Concerning the work of My hands command ye Me." Prayer staves off wrath from a land. "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them." Why, what did Moses? He only prayed. Prayer overcomes the Almighty; it finds God free, but leaves Him bound. This gives some crevice of hope that God will not wholly leave us. There are those who cry day and night: "Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach." When prayer leads the van, deliverance brings up the rear: "Thou wilt prepare their heart; Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear."

3. Another seed of hope is the tender respect God hath to His own glory. This was Joshua's argument: "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" If the people of God should be extinct, and the cause of religion trampled under foot, this would reflect upon the glory of God, and His name would suffer. The wicked seldom prevail, but they blaspheme. They say: "Where is your God?" Now, God's glory is dear to Him; it is the most orient pearl in His crown. He will stand upon His honour. While He consults His people's safety, He promotes His own glory: "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake."

4. Another seed of hope is the blessed intercession of Christ. The Lord Jesus bears the names of His people upon His breast, and sets them as a golden signet upon His heart. His prayers go up to heaven as sweet odours: "The smoke of the incense ... ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Though our sins go up to heaven as the smoke of a furnace, yet Christ's prayers go up as the smoke of incense. Christ's intercession is meritorious; His blood will never leave crying till the blood of His enemies be shed.

5. A fifth seed of hope is the mercy of God. "In His love and in His pity He redeemed them." God is the "Father of mercies." Mercy doth naturally issue from Him. He is rich in mercy. He delighteth in mercy. Justice is God's "strange work"; mercy is His proper work. Why may not mercy give the casting voice? That which may make us hope in

this mercy is (i) the mercy of God is free: "I will love them freely." Mercy sheds out its pardons to whom it will. Mercy doth not go by desert, but by prerogative. (ii) The mercy of God is healing: "I will heal their backslidings." Mercy can heal impurity and stubbornness in a people. Mercy can as well give repentance as deliverance. Mercy can destroy the sins of a nation and save a nation. It can burn up the chaff and save the corn. Mercy can stop the bloody issue of sin, and so make way for "the issues from death." Pliny saith the watercourses of Rome are the world's wonder; but behold here a sacred watercourse of God's mercy! This is a sweet wonder. Mercy can overcome a sinful people; it can save a nation from its climacteric year....

6. The last seed of hope for [England] is that there have been many sins committed *in* the nation which are not the sins *of* the nation. Some have perjured themselves, but all have not. A sober and considerable party in the nation (however traduced) have entered their dissent openly against the scandalous actings of others; so that it is to be hoped the Lord will not impute the sin of some to the whole.

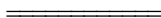
Thus I have showed you a rainbow in the cloud, and given you some probable grounds of hope that the Lord will still be in the midst of England, which I intend as a preservative against despondency, *not as a fuel for security.*

Question. But how is it possible there should be any good towards us? that the sins in which the nation hath been so steeped and parboiled should be forgiven? that our divisions and animosities should be healed, God's ordinances refined, and the Lord continue His gracious presence in the midst of us?

Answer. I say, with our blessed Saviour: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." What cannot that God do that can create? God can bring about those things which in the eyes of sense are not feasible. That iron should swim, that the rock should be a spring, is in nature impossible; but God hath brought this to pass. Cannot God untie those knots which do amuse and puzzle us? "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people ... should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of Hosts." Can difficulties pose the Almighty? "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" Did not He make the dry bones live? God can bring light out of darkness, harmony out of confusion. He can do more than we can think (Eph. 3. 20). Else He should not be God. How apt are God's people to be discouraged with seeming impossibilities! See Moses, who was one of the brightest stars that ever shined in the church's orb, yet ready to hesitate and sink at seeming impossibilities: "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and Thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to

suffice them?" As if Moses had said in plain English, he did not see how such a numerous people could be fed for a month. God gives him a kind of check for his infidelity: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" Do I find mouths and not meat? Cannot I make provision for My household? When things act never so irregularly, God can put them in joint again. When His church is so low that she seems to be in the grave and have a tombstone laid upon her, He can in an instant cause a glorious resurrection. Therefore let us not be out of heart, but still rest on the arm of God's power and sovereignty, remembering there are no desperate cases with God.

The Lord may let His church be awhile under the hatches, to punish her security, and awaken her out of her slumbering fits; yet surely the storm will not continue long. The church shall not die in travail, but God will manifest that He is in the midst of Zion. After she hath suffered awhile (as her Head Christ hath done), He will cause the morning star of salvation to appear, and she shall come out of all her troubles "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."



MY EARLY LIFE AND BAPTISM

By Elizabeth Parish

Mrs. Parish, who was a church member at Rochdale Road, Manchester, for nearly fifty years, wrote the following as a small pamphlet three or four years before she died, aged ninety, on December 7th, 1952. (See Gospel Standard 1953, page 191.)

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16. 16).

These are the words of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself was baptized in the River Jordan, so left the example to His followers.

Many of the Lord's dear people are today very troubled because of the few baptisms and additions to the churches. Members are rapidly being called to their eternal home, but very few come along to take their places. This calls for *much prayer* and examination.

Believer's baptism and the Lord's supper are the only two ordinances observed in our beloved denomination.

In the preaching today *seldom do we hear these ordinances mentioned or explained*. In past days, ministers frequently spoke of them in their discourses, and described the characters to whom they applied.

Philip, after talking with the Ethiopian, preached unto him Jesus. This preaching would include baptism for believers. See Acts 8. 35-38.

There are many churches now which used to have a number of men members, so reduced, not one left to carry on duties which should be attended by men only.

Women are struggling to keep the places open which, but for their loving service, would be closed. We find them taking duties as secretary, treasurer, correspondent, etc. All honour to them for their efforts, but they would very gladly be relieved of them.

There is no *merit* in baptism, nor is it essential to our salvation. It is distinctly a request or command from our Lord to those, *both men and women*, who desire to love, serve and follow Him. His commands are not grievous (1 John 5. 3) and His teachings very simple.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are those who have been brought to see themselves as guilty sinners before God, begging for mercy, needing forgiveness for their sins, and salvation through the precious blood of Jesus, who died that sinners might live.

There are some people who are manifestly sincere and true Christians who are waiting for something very special. What say the Scriptures? "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

The answer was, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

The man was then baptized and we read he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8. 37-39). And so it is in the path of obedience and love to our dear Lord we realise that real joy and happiness. Note Hymn 54, Gadsby's.

In keeping His commandments (Psa. 19. 11).

The Lord knew that sometimes baptism would mean to some much suffering and separation. It always means separation and by its publicity shows plainly the desire to live henceforth a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and separate from the world.

For the most part, we have no more desire to go back into the world, though often tempted to turn aside and only are we kept by the mercy and care of a gracious God. There are great and choice privileges in the church of God. It is only by baptism can we become members of His church, and so be permitted to partake of the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper, which He Himself instituted. There is also the loving fellowship and the communion of the saints, so helpful as we travel along the journey of life together.

"Hear the blessed Redeemer call you;
Listen to His gracious voice;
Dread no ills that can befall you,
While you make His ways your choice.

"Jesus says 'Let each believer
Be baptized in My name.'
He Himself in Jordan's river
Was immersed beneath the stream."

I relate now a little of my own experiences, in thankfulness to a kind and gracious God who has kept me through the sixty-one years since I was baptized.

I was born in the year 1862 in a small village named Over, near Cambridge, in a godly Christian home. My parents were very gracious people, both members of the Strict Baptist chapel there.

It was a happy home, with seven children. We were brought up strictly to observe the Sabbath – Sunday School morning and afternoon and other three services when old enough.

We were not allowed running out in the streets on the Sabbath. It is a fruit-growing country and we had a lovely big fruit garden, where we were permitted to go, in the intervals. The chapel was very near to our home. I never remember Sunday as a dull or dreary day, but look back to those days with much pleasure, especially the Sunday School.

We were taught to commit to memory Dr. Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs*, many of which I remember today. Only the Bible was read and taught, and many portions learnt by heart, for which I am thankful now.

The chapel and cause is old, now entering on its 300th year.

Mr. A. Coughtrey was our minister in my young days and remained there for, I believe, twelve years. He left Over to become the pastor at Nottingham. Some years after he was appointed Editor of the *Gospel Standard*. I have happy memories of Mr. Coughtrey, but cannot remember much of his preaching; but one thing I never forgot. In his sermon one Sunday morning he quoted that hymn which begins, "'Tis a point I long to know, oft it causes anxious thought." I had never heard it to notice it before.

He often mentioned and said, "Blessed Toplady," whom he seemed to admire so much. In my ignorance I thought he referred to a lady of great learning. After leaving school I left home to be taught a business life. I became very worldly, entering into pleasures my parents would not have approved.

During this time I usually went to a Strict Baptist place of worship on the Sabbath. One Sunday morning I heard a very noted minister from London, Mr. Styles, a tall, solemn preacher. His text was "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33. 25). What wonderful language. Is this *the gospel*? Well, I had never heard it before. I was young, living a careless, frivolous life, and yet I listened to that sermon and strange to say, I felt it was all for me. I have never forgotten the power and blessedness of it, though at that time I knew not the Lord as my Saviour. Many times after I felt that wonderful promise fulfilled.

Mercifully after a time I was brought home through illness and I never returned there.

A way was opened for me to earn a good living by business at home. There the Lord met with me. I saw myself a sinner, lost and helpless, and in great need, in remembering those days.

“Amazed, I see the hand,
That stopped me in my wild career;
A miracle of grace I stand
The Lord has taught my heart to fear.”

“Determined to save, He watched o’er my path
When Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death,
And can He have taught me to trust in His name
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”

Many were my thoughts and prayers at this time. I travelled much alone. I felt I could not talk about it. I began to attend regularly the services and the weekly meetings for prayers and preaching.

I was so attracted to, and envied the dear friends and members of the church, men and women, many poor and old, but to me the best people on earth, for I felt they were indeed the beloved of the Lord. How I loved them and longed to be with them, though very unworthy. At last I spoke to my dear father. He was one of the deacons. He soon found where I was, and to whom I was trusting and looking alone, the dear Lord Jesus. He gave me loving counsel and sympathy and wished me to speak to the minister, which I did. I told him of my great wish to follow my Lord in baptism. I was not great in experience or doctrine or knowledge. That came after, but I know I loved the dear Lord Jesus, who said: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”

The minister arranged for me to meet the deacons, and afterwards, I was proposed for baptism. Mr. F. Kirby was proposed at the same time. He afterwards became a deacon and remained so for fifty years.

I gave in my testimony first and as I looked round on the faces of those dear people – about thirty or forty – what love I felt to them, which if expressed, would have been:

“Hinder me not, ye much-loved saints,
For I must go with you.”

As I told the friends in my simple way how I had been led along so far, and the words which had so helped me were in the hymn:

“Jesus my *All* to heaven has gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon;
His track I see, and I’ll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view.”

It was a time of love. How clearly I recall it all after sixty-one years. We were both received and the baptism was arranged for June 1st, 1887, in the River Ouse at Over Cote.

Mrs. Dogget came before the church later and was accepted, and it was arranged for her to join us.

There were no baptisteries in the chapels in those days, so friends from other village chapels around came to this place to baptize, “as there was much water there.”

June 1st came, a lovely summer morning. My two dear sisters and parents, with myself, were looking forward with pleasure to the solemn service at the river. During the morning a thunderstorm came with very heavy rain and lasted a long time. My father was busy in the stable, polishing the harness for the pony, as we had two miles to drive to the river.

I went to him and said, “Father, will the service be postponed if the rain continues?” He said, “No, my dear. It is ‘Through floods and flames if Jesus leads I’ll follow where He goes.’”

And so I have found it all through life. However, it cleared, and was a beautiful afternoon. There were many people gathered around and it was an impressive sight.

Some were sitting on the bank, some in boats and also on the drawbridge. A wagon was there for the minister to conduct the service and give a short address. How lovely the hymns sounded by the river and trees – “Jesus, and shall it ever be,” and others. Afterwards we were each led down into the water and baptized. A very quiet and solemn service and never forgotten.

We all returned to the chapel (it was Wednesday afternoon) where tea was provided, and a service in the evening. The minister from Cambridge, Mr. Jull, preached from 1 Corinthians 15: 58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast,” etc. How happy I felt to be a member, a follower of the dear Lord Jesus, and one amongst those dear people, so well I loved. I have always felt those few years leading up to my baptism and after were amongst the happiest of my life. Many times since, in looking back, I have said,

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”

In the year 1888 I was married to Mr. Jethro Parish, of Withington, Manchester. I keenly felt leaving my dear people. My dear husband and I regularly attended Rochdale Road Chapel, which became our spiritual home.

In 1903 I applied for membership. After meeting the minister and deacons, I came before the church on April 3rd to relate my experience, and on April 5th was received into the church. My transfer from Over was sent to the Manchester church.

I found many friends at Manchester who received me in a very loving manner and my feeling was:

“There would I find a settled rest
(While others go and come)
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”

JOHN BERRIDGE

*From John Gadsby's Memoirs of Hymnwriters and Compilers
(Continued from page 94)*

“Soon after I began to preach the gospel at Everton,” says Berridge, in a letter, “the churches in the neighbourhood were deserted, and mine so overcrowded, that the squire, who did not like strangers (he said) and hated to be incommoded, joined with the offended parsons; and soon after, a complaint having been made against me, I was summoned before the bishop. ‘Well, Berridge,’ said his lordship, ‘did I institute you to Eaton, or to Potton? Why do you go preaching out of your own parish?’ ‘My Lord,’ says I, ‘I make no claims to the living of those parishes. ’Tis true, I was once at Eaton, and, finding a few poor people assembled, I admonished them to repent of their sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of their souls. At that very moment, my Lord, there were five or six clergymen out of their own parishes, and enjoying themselves on the Eaton bowling-green.’ ‘Pooh! I tell you,’ retorted his lordship, ‘if you continue preaching where you have no right, you will very likely be sent to Huntingdon gaol!’ ‘I have no more regard, my Lord, for a gaol than other folks,’ rejoined I; ‘but I had rather go there with a good conscience than be at liberty without one!’ His lordship looked very hard at me. ‘Poor fellow,’ said he, ‘you are beside yourself, and in a few months you will either be better or worse.’ ‘Then, my Lord,’ said I, ‘you may make yourself quite happy in this business; for if I should be better, you suppose I shall desist of my own accord; and if worse, you will not send me to Huntingdon gaol, for I shall be better accommodated in Bedlam!’ His lordship then pathetically entreated me, as one who had been and wished to continue my friend, not to embitter the remaining portion of his days by any squabbles with my brother clergymen, but to go home to my parish, and so long as I kept within it I should be at liberty to do what I liked there. ‘I have but a little time to live,’ said he. ‘Do not bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.’

“At this instant, two gentlemen were announced, who desired to speak with his lordship, ‘Berridge,’ said he, ‘go to your inn, and come

again at such an hour, and dine with me.’ I went, and on entering a private room, fell immediately upon my knees. I could bear threatening, but knew not how to withstand entreaty, especially the entreaty of a respectable old man. At the appointed time I returned. At dinner, I was treated with great respect. The two gentlemen also dined with us. I found they had been informed who I was, as they sometimes cast their eyes towards me, in some such manner as one would glance at a monster.

“After dinner, his lordship took me into the garden. ‘Well, Berridge,’ said he, ‘have you considered of my request?’ ‘I have, my Lord,’ said I, ‘and have been upon my knees concerning it.’ ‘Well, and will you promise me that you will preach no more out of your own parish?’ ‘It would afford me great pleasure,’ said I, ‘to comply with your lordship’s request, if I could do it with a good conscience. I am satisfied the Lord has blessed my labours of this kind, and I dare not desist.’ ‘A good conscience!’ said his lordship. ‘Do you not know that it is contrary to the canons of the Church?’ ‘There is one canon, my Lord,’ I replied, ‘which saith, “Go, preach the gospel to every creature.”’ ‘But why should you wish to interfere with the charge of other men? One man cannot preach the gospel to all men.’ ‘If they would preach the gospel themselves,’ said I, ‘there would be no need for my preaching it to their people; but as they do not, I cannot desist.’

“His lordship then parted with me in some displeasure. I returned home, not knowing what would befall me, but thankful to God that I had preserved a conscience void of offence. I took no measures for my own preservation, but divine providence wrought for me in a way I never expected. When I was at Clare Hall, I was particularly acquainted with a Fellow of that college, and we were both upon terms of intimacy with Mr. Pitt, the late Lord Chatham, who was at that time also at the University. This Fellow of Clare Hall, when I began to preach the gospel, became my enemy, and did me some injury in some ecclesiastical privileges which beforetime I had enjoyed. At length, however, when he heard that I was likely to come into trouble, and to be turned out of my living at Everton, his heart relented. He began to think, it seems, within himself, we shall ruin this poor fellow among us. This was just about the time that I was sent for by the bishop. Of his own accord he writes a letter to Mr. Pitt, saying nothing about my Methodism, but, to this effect: ‘Our old friend Berridge has got a living in Bedfordshire, and I am informed there is one ____ that gives him a great deal of trouble, has accused him to the bishop of the diocese, and, it is said, will turn him out of his living. I wish you could contrive to put a stop to these proceedings.’

“Mr. Pitt was at that time a young man, and not choosing to apply to the bishop himself, spoke to a certain nobleman, to whom the bishop was indebted for his promotion. This nobleman, within a few days, made

it his business to see the bishop, who was then in London. 'My Lord,' said he, 'I am informed you have a very honest fellow, one Berridge, in your diocese, and that he has been ill-treated by a litigious person _____. He has accused him, I am told, to your lordship, and wishes to turn him out of his living. You would oblige me, my Lord, if you would take no notice of that person, and not suffer the honest man to be interrupted in his living.' The bishop was astonished, and could not imagine in what manner things could have thus got round. It would not do, however, to object; he was obliged to bow compliance, and so I continued ever after uninterrupted in my sphere of action. The person, having waited on the bishop to know the result of the summons, had the mortification to learn that his purpose was defeated. On his return home, his partisans in this prosecution hurried to know what was determined on, saying, 'Well, you have got the Old Devil out?' He replied, 'No; nor do I think the very devil himself can get him out.'"

It would be a task to recollect the numerous instances of Berridge's benevolence. Never man entered upon the work with more disinterested views. His purse was as open as his heart, though not so large. At home, his tables were served with a cold collation [light meal] for his numerous hearers, who came from far on Lord's days, and his field and stable open for their horses. Abroad, houses and barns were rented, lay-preachers maintained, and his own travelling expenses disbursed by himself. Cottagers were always gainers by his company. He invariably left a half-crown for the homely provision of the day, and during his itinerancy it actually cost him £500 in this single article of expenditure. Nor was his liberality confined to these channels. His ear was ever attentive to the tale of woe, his eye was keen to observe the miseries of the poor, the law of kindness was written upon his heart, and his hand was always ready to administer relief. The gains of his vicarage, of his fellowship, and of his patrimonial income (for his father died very rich) were appropriated to support his liberality; and even his family plate was converted into clothes for his itinerant preachers.

But the most prominent feature in his character was his unaffected humility. He never spoke of himself but in language the most depreciating; and when he related any interfering providence or display of stupendous grace on his behalf, it would generally be with streaming eyes, and the sweetest expressions of praise upon his lips. He was naturally of a jocular turn of mind, and in his earlier days had been the very life of his companions. No doubt, when grace laid hold of him, this proved a source of great grief to him.

"His stature," says Mr. Whittingham, "was tall, but not awkward; his make was lusty, but not corpulent; his voice was deep, but not hoarse; strong, but not noisy; his pronunciation was distinct, but not broad. In

his countenance there was gravity without grimace; his address was solemn, but not sour; easy, but not careless; deliberate, but not drawling; pointed, but not personal; affectionate, but not fawning. He would often weep, but never whine. His sentences were short, but not ambiguous. His ideas were collected, but not crowded. Upon the whole, his manner and person were agreeable and majestic."

In January 1793, he intended to have visited London again; but, instead of his presence, his friends received the lamentable intelligence of his death. For some days previous to his decease, his strength and health had visibly decreased; and on Sunday the 20th, he came down into his parlour as usual, but with great difficulty reached his chamber in the evening. A few hours after he was in bed, he appeared to be seized with the symptoms of immediate dissolution. His face was contracted and his speech faltered; and in this situation he continued till about three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, January 22nd when, breathing less and less, this champion for his Redeemer fell a victim to mortality, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. His frame of mind during his last hours appears to have been peculiarly comfortable. Mr. Whittingham, whom I have already mentioned, said, "Sir, the Lord has enabled you to fight a good fight, and to finish a truly glorious course." He answered, "Blessed be His holy name for it." It was also said to him, "Jesus will soon call you up higher." He replied, "Aye, aye, aye; higher, higher, higher!"

On the ensuing Lord's day, his remains were interred in his own churchyard. As he was never married, he left no widow to deplore his loss, nor children to perpetuate his memory. The *Christian World Unmasked*, and the hymns called *Zion's Songs*, are the only works which he issued. His hymns appear to have been originally published in 1795. Prior to this time, however, some of them appeared in the *Gospel Magazine*, under the signature, "Old Everton," the earliest being in 1774. In the preface, Berridge says, "Many years ago these hymns were composed in a six months' illness, and have since lain neglected by me, often threatened with the fire, but have escaped that martyrdom. Fatherly mercy prevented that literary death, for authors can seldom prove cruel to their own offspring, however deformed."

The following is the epitaph on his tombstone, written by himself (except, of course, the last date): "Here lie the remains of John Berridge, late Vicar of Everton, and an itinerant servant of Jesus Christ, who loved his Master and His work; and, after running on His errands for many years, was caught up to wait on Him above. Reader, art thou born again? (No salvation without a new birth.) I was born in sin, Feb., 1716; remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730; lived proudly on faith and works for salvation till 1754; was admitted to Everton Vicarage, 1755; fled to Jesus for refuge, 1755; fell asleep in Jesus, Jan. 22nd, 1793."

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Banner of Truth Magazine: Issues 1-16: Sept. 1955 – Aug. 1959; hardback; 544 pages; price £16; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We well remember attending a Sovereign Grace Union committee meeting in Manchester in 1955 when an old Church of England Calvinist with joy produced a new magazine, saying, “Have you seen this?” It was the first issue of *The Banner of Truth* and its appearance was highly welcomed. The magazine had been launched by Sidney Norton of Oxford and his assistant minister, Iain Murray, and was designed to counteract the prevailing Arminian teaching and the lack of knowledge of the old godly divines.

The original editorial began:

“Dear Reader, We are living in the midst of a dying nation. Throughout this century successive partial judgments – wars and bloodshed – testimonies of the displeasure of God, have fallen upon us. These providential warnings have gone unheeded. The land abounds in sin, God is against us, and at any time may pronounce that final, fatal sentence, ‘I will not again pass by them any more.’ Partial judgments unregarded ever terminate in total ruin (Amos 7). The Lord has said, “Shall not that land tremble for this, and everyone mourn that dwelleth therein?” Yet such is our desolate state that there is no trembling at God’s Word, no mourning, no repentance, but rather, like a dying man – with eyes dim and senses decayed – our poor country is unable to see or hear what God is plainly declaring against us. Blindness, apathy and false security are always the marks of a nation not far from judgment, as it was with Israel of old: ‘Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not,’ so it is with us. It is true that some appear to feel the seriousness of our days, that the issue at stake is nothing less than our national survival, but how can they provide a remedy who are not even aware of the cause of our present condition? Various designs and schemes are continually brought forward, vain desires and hopes are expressed, but they are all doomed because the mind of God who smites us is not enquired after. The true cause of all our troubles and dangers, with the only remedy for them, is utterly neglected. The providences of God, the manner in which He is ordering the events of our days, will only be understood by them that know and fear Him: it is to such readers that we now send this out, praying that the Lord will cause it to fall in your path. God’s people today are a scattered remnant. ‘Thou hast shewed Thy people hard things.’ We need rallying to a Banner, the Banner of Truth. We are in an evil day; only those who have their loins girt about with truth shall be able to withstand.”

J.H. Gosden, in December that year, welcomed *The Banner of Truth* in the *Gospel Standard*. Later, when the eighth issue appeared, devoted to “The Christian Ministry,” Mr. Gosden wrote: “We are unacquainted with the Editor of *The Banner of Truth*, but feel most impressed by the solemn content of the issue. Our ministerial friends might do well to obtain a copy and prayerfully read it. Searching though it is, it may be made a means of gracious reviving by the Holy Spirit in our own souls.”

This new publication consists of a reprint of the first sixteen issues of *The Banner of Truth*. We found it exceedingly profitable though obviously not agreeing with the free offer in the Puritans and the “Marrow Men.” We hope we

shall not be deemed uncharitable if we state that we feel the magazine as a whole was much better *then* than *now*.

1. There were much clearer articles on the doctrines of grace. Has *The Banner of Truth* become more generally evangelical in recent days? Mr. Sidney Norton, the originator, dropped out after a few issues, and we know that before his death, he was not happy about some developments.

In the introduction Iain Murray makes it clear that Dr. Lloyd Jones was not too sympathetic in the early days as he thought the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in election and redemption was too strong!

2. The articles were so clear and beautifully written fifty years ago. Today so often there are many abstruse words.

3. There were more articles from the old divines: Gurnall, Goodwin and Calvin in the first issue.

4. There were some superb historical essays by Iain Murray: Martin Luther: Certainty in the Truth; Former Generations Called to Witness; The Great Awakening in Wales; Augustine; M'Cheyne; John Elias; John Knox; The Puritan View of the Ministry; and many others.

There are also numerous book reviews of the old classics that were being republished. We feel this has been a wonderful work, and the *Banner of Truth*'s best publications have been the old divines. No magazine has recommended them more highly than the *Gospel Standard*. Fifty years ago the Puritans were virtually unknown; today in evangelical circles the names of Owen, Manton, Gurnall, etc., are commonplace. It would be a wonderful thing if the revival of interest in the old Puritan writers had been followed by a true revival of vital godliness in the professing church of God. The question has been asked: where do you find a Puritan congregation today?

All in all we were delighted to receive this book, and found it both interesting and spiritually profitable.

William Carey and the Missionary Vision, by David Webber; paperback; 116 pages; price £6; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

For a long time we have felt that William Carey was a great and godly man. His work in taking the gospel to India and the formation of the Particular Baptist Missionary Society is well known. We have always felt that there is "a deep that coucheth beneath," the real Carey who has never been made fully known to the public.

When in 1978 a new biography by M. Drewery appeared, she appears to have had access to unpublished letters and papers, and constantly seems bewildered why such a great and eminent man should so often be speaking of himself as a poor, helpless worm, sinful and unworthy. In glancing at various works on Carey, illuminating references like the following crop up:

"I have long made the language of Psalm 51 my own. 'Have mercy upon me, O God: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.' Should you outlive me, and have any influence to prevent it, I earnestly request that no epithets of praise may ever accompany my name, such as 'the faithful servant of God,' etc. All such expressions would convey a falsehood. To me belong shame and confusion of face. I can only say, 'Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.'" (*Carey to Ryland, January 30th, 1823.*)

Carey's instructions were that nothing, apart from his name and dates, should appear on his grave but:

“A wretched, poor and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall.”

The present book is a plea for the continuation of missionary work. There is an account of Carey's early life, followed by his “An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.” It is interesting to read this in full, and fascinating to realise Carey's intimate knowledge of the details of religion in all the countries of Asia and the east.

The book closes with Andrew Fuller's sermon on “The Dangerous Tendency of Delay in the Concerns of Religion,” preached in 1791 on Haggai 1. 2. There is nothing remarkable in the sermon – surprisingly, no Fullerism!

The Fountain of Life: Collected Writings of William Huntington; large paperback; 340 pages; price £10.50 plus postage or \$16.99 plus postage in the U.S.A.; printed by Grace and Truth Online Publications, and obtainable from Christian Bookshop, 21 Queen Street, Ossett, W. Yorks., WF5 8AS.

Lovers of Huntington will welcome this well-produced book, in clear print, of some of his works. These are:

The Dimensions of Eternal Love
The Destruction of Death by the Fountain of Life
The Eternal Setting of the Sun
The Saint's Seed-time and Harvest
An Innocent Game for Babes in Grace
The Broken Cistern and The Springing Well

There is an account of William Huntington's conversion and of his ministry by Dr. George Ella, and a list of the writings by or about Huntington that are currently available.

The publisher describes the chapters as “Christ-exalting and experimental as they set forth the true work of God in the salvation of sinners.” The publisher's desire is “that this publication will prove edifying to readers and also provide a welcome introduction to the writings of Huntington to those who may be unfamiliar with the works of this man who was greatly used by God in his day and generation.”

This is a new publisher, Ian Potts, who has discovered modern “Print On Demand” methods of book production. (We do not know Mr. Potts.) Along with the work by Huntington he has also published a book written by himself (*Christ, the Sun of Righteousness*, 136 page paperback, £6.95) in which he contends strongly for the doctrines of grace, often using the Scriptures typically. Like Huntington he stands against the free offer of the gospel and the law being the believer's rule of conduct.

The Encyclopaedia Puritannica Project. Version 2.0. Distributed by Reformation Heritage Books, U.S.A., and available in the U.K. from M. Miller, 63 Atwood Terrace, Tudhoe, Spennymoor, Co. Durham, DL16 6TE. Recommended price is \$89.95 + postage. This is a CD containing over 150 books in electronic format, which can be read using any web browser on a computer. Although the title might seem to indicate that the content is chiefly from Puritan

authors, many of the books are more recent. Where there are Puritan works, they tend to be odd volumes taken from complete works e.g. from John Owen, Thomas Manton, Thomas Brooks, Stephen Charnock and others. John Bunyan is surprisingly absent. There is a marked emphasis on Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed theology, with works decrying believer's baptism and contending for exclusive psalmody. One feature of this CD is that all Scripture quotations from all the books are cross-referenced, so that it is easy to see the comments from any author or work relating to a particular text. Those interested would be advised to visit the web site <http://www.puritannica.com> for further information on the detailed contents of the CD.

One can only stand amazed at the number of good books which are now available on CD or freely accessible on the Internet. The improved aids to Bible study using modern technology can be very useful – but only emphasise the necessity of the gracious, humbling teaching of the Holy Spirit lest we should be left at the end of our lives with only a book-learned religion.

John A. Kingham

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM

The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of Love!
Jehovah, Great I AM,
By earth and heaven confessed;
I bow and bless the sacred name,
For ever blest.

The God of Abraham praise,
At whose supreme command,
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand:
I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame and power;
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.

The God of Abraham praise,
Whose all-sufficient grace
Shall guide me all my happy days,
In all my ways.
He calls a worm His friend,
He calls Himself my God;
And He shall save me to the end,
Through Jesus' blood.

He by Himself hath sworn,
I on His oath depend;
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne,
 To heaven ascend:
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace
 For evermore.

Though nature's strength decay,
And earth and hell withstand,
To Canaan's bounds I urge my way,
 At His command.
The watery deep I pass,
With Jesus in my view;
And through the howling wilderness
 My way pursue.

The goodly land I see,
With peace and plenty blest;
A land of sacred liberty,
 And endless rest.
There milk and honey flow,
And oil and wine abound;
And trees of life for ever grow,
 With mercy crowned.

There dwells the Lord our King,
The Lord our Righteousness,
Triumphant o'er the world and sin,
 The Prince of Peace;
On Zion's sacred height
His kingdom still maintains;
And glorious with His saints in light
 For ever reigns.

He keeps His own secure,
He guards them by His side,
Arrays in garments white and pure
 His spotless bride:
With streams of sacred bliss,
With groves of living joys,
With all the fruits of Paradise,
 He still supplies.

Before the great Three-One
They all exulting stand,
And tell the wonders He hath done,
 Through all their land;

The listening spheres attend,
 And swell the growing fame,
 And sing, in songs which never end,
 The wondrous name.

The God who reigns on high
 The great archangels sing;
 And, "Holy, holy, holy," cry,
 "Almighty King!
 Who was and is the same,
 And evermore shall be;
 Jehovah, Father, Great I AM,
 We worship Thee."

Before the Saviour's face
 The ransomed nations bow;
 O'erwhelmed at His almighty grace,
 For ever new:
 He shows His prints of love,
 They kindle to a flame!
 And sound through all the worlds above
 The slaughtered Lamb.

The whole triumphant host
 Give thanks to God on high;
 "Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost,"
 They ever cry;
 Hail, Abraham's God, and mine!
 (I join the heavenly lays,)
 All might and majesty are thine,
 And endless praise.

Thomas Olivers (1725-1799)

While we endeavour to prepare our way to Christ by holy qualifications, we do rather fill it with stumbling blocks and deep pits whereby our souls are hindered from ever attaining to the salvation of Christ. Christ would have us to believe on Him who justifies the ungodly, and therefore He doth not require us to be godly before we believe. He came as a Physician for the sick, and doth not expect that they should recover their health in the least degree before they come to Him. The vilest sinners are fitly prepared and qualified for this design, which is to shew forth the exceeding riches of grace pardoning our sins and saving us freely. It is no affront to Christ, or slighting and contemning the justice and holiness of God, to come to Christ while we are polluted sinners; but rather it is an affronting and contemning the saving grace, merit and fulness of Christ, if we endeavour to make ourselves righteous and holy before we receive Christ Himself and all righteousness and holiness in Him by faith.

Marshal

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2006

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

TRUST IN THE LORD

*Farewell sermon preached by John Berridge,
at Whitefield's Tabernacle, Moorfields, London, on April 1st, 1792.
He died a few months later.*

Text: "Trust in the Lord at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us" (Psa. 62. 8).

This Psalm is a very precious one, full of gospel manna, containing directions for the church how to walk with God.

The psalmist says, "Truly," in good truth, "my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation." And does he not give a good reason why his soul waited upon God? It was because all his salvation came from Him. And where should a sinner look, but to Him that has purchased [obtained] salvation for sinners, and brings it to them who find their need of it?

He then says, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God." He hath put in another word, *only*; it is but a little one, but it is very emphatical, for it is a common case with people to make Christ half a Saviour, relying upon Him and upon themselves; saying they are to be saved by faith and works. No, says David, that will not do for me; I must have all my salvation from the Lord.

"He only is my rock"; the rock on which my heart shall rest, that is, on Jesus. And if He is not your only rock, my brethren, you will find that the rock which you trust in will slip away from you. Jesus will not suffer His glory to be diminished, nor let any steal one jewel from His crown, for He is worthy of all the honour that we can give Him, and He is jealous of His honour. Do you be jealous of His honour too, and show that you are desirous of giving Him all the praise that He deserves, and give Him all that you can, you will never give Him what He deserves; you will always be defective in this to all eternity, for while we are giving to Him our best praises, our obligations to Him increase every day.

He then says, "I shall not be greatly moved," while the Lord only is my rock, and my salvation. I find Him to be as He says; He is my defence from time to time; I shall not be greatly moved.

The word *greatly* is often of use to the children of God, who fall into doubts at times, ready to fear they shall fall from their confidence.

No, says David; make the Lord all your rock, and build upon Him all your salvation; then, though you may be shaken at times, and find your confidence beginning to totter, yet you shall not be greatly moved. The Lord will come again, and lift you up, and cause you to rejoice in Him.

But David is so pleased with the words that he hath uttered that he repeats them over again; and he could not repeat them too often: "My soul," says he, "wait thou only upon God." Before, he told you what was his daily use, and now he exhorts and encourages himself to go on with this waiting. Do not be afraid of your being disappointed; continue waiting and looking for the Lord, for He will never let them fail who trust in Him.

Now if David encourages himself in trusting in the Lord, we have also the same reason, for our hearts at times are ready to sink, and to think that we shall be wrong at last; therefore take David's words, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

But Satan may say, Where will you look and go? What says Peter? "Unto Him who has the words of eternal life." So we may say to our souls, when they are beginning to doubt, Where would you go? Where would you find salvation in any other? Christ only has the words of eternal life.

Then he adds: "He is my defence." I find Him so, while I am trusting in Him; though I am often afraid, yet He is better to me than either my fears or my hopes.

Then he adds: "I shall not be moved." Thus, by exhorting and waiting upon the Lord, he gets more strength. He drops the word *greatly*, which he began with, when he said, "I shall not be *greatly* moved"; and now he speaks courageously: "I shall not be moved." The Lord is my defence; He holds me up, carries me on, and at length He will bring me to Himself in glory.

Then David goes on to the words in my text: "Trust in the Lord at all times, ye people."

Now he exhorts us what to do. Good advice; the best advice; and such as all the children of God are taking, and never find themselves disappointed: "Trust in the Lord"; make Him your confidence for all things: not only for all things, but at all times. When people are in peace and prosperity they do not seem so much to see their need of trusting in the Lord as they did; but they are ready to drop their confidence when the Lord has given them what they want of worldly things. Now this is a shameful practice, and the Lord often takes away what He had given them, because they make a bad use of it. Has the Lord given you outward peace and prosperity? Trust in Him to preserve it; for none can preserve it but He who gave it.

But are you brought into worldly trouble, and in great distress, and know not which way to look? You have no friend, perhaps, to go to; and your heart is ready to say, What must I do now? All have forsaken me. No; there is One that never forsakes His people. But you can see no way how you are to be relieved. What of all that? Has the Lord no better eyes than you? He can make a way for you, no doubt, if you trust in Him. But you say, What am I to expect? Why, that relief which you want. Therefore, however difficult your worldly affairs may be, and though you have no friend at hand to help you, yet there is One above, always at hand. Go to Him; He will not despise the poor and destitute, but will hear their cry and will help them.

If He bids you come to Him and trust in Him at all times, it is your business to go to Him at all times; and the more distressed your circumstances are, the more fit for God to take care of. Supposing your bosom is full of guilt, and you find trouble on account of it. In this case, you say you cannot go to Christ, whereas it is the only reason that you should go. Sinners will not go to Christ while they are at ease; but when they know themselves to be in a lost state and condition, and when they can find no help anywhere else, then Jesus says, "I am come to save the lost." Go your way to Him. He bids you trust in Him at this time, when under a sense of your lost estate. If you see yourselves ruined, however deplorable and wretched your case be, it is not too hard for Christ; for He receives all that come to Him, not with frowning looks, no, but with a smiling countenance. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

What are you to do but to trust in Him in this time of sin and misery? Go to Him just as you are. Do not be running to some of your lusts, nor imagine that you can do anything to prepare your way; but go and cast yourselves at the feet of Christ saying, Lord, I am come as a ruined sinner. I know none can help me but Thee, and Thou hast ordered me to trust in Thee at all times. I am come, Lord, at this time.

But, perhaps, when you are dying, your adversary the devil may tell you, Now you are sick and lying upon a dying-bed, it is too late to come now; why did you not come sooner? There was mercy to be had then, but you have overstayed your time. Christ has been calling by His Word, and by His ministers, but you would not hear them; and now He has sent the summons to you to remove you out of this world, and you would be glad of salvation, when you can have no more comfort here. Well, when these words, words like these, are brought to your hearts, remember from whom they come: they come from the adversary of your souls. O he does not love to see a sinner, burdened with sin, looking unto Christ!

But Satan may say, Did you ever hear of a sinner so great as you are come to Christ, and was received by Him? Yes, tell him; you read of a

cross-thief, as bad as yourself, that railed on Christ when on the cross; and when he went to Christ, he must naturally think, Will He show mercy to me? He asked for mercy and he received it. Go you and try; that is the only way to deal with Jesus. Mind not what the adversary tells you. If your grief is great, confess it, and tell the Lord all your trouble; and at the same time tell Him, for He loves to be told of His Word with confidence and modesty. Tell Him when you go, though your heart is discouraged, and Satan distresses you, and unbelief terrifies you, yet you have got His word: "Trust in Me at all times." I come at this time. It is late, indeed; but it is in the time of life. I come to Thee, Lord, and beseech Thee to help me; show Thy mercy towards a poor sinner who is come at last. I am now come, and desire to partake of that mercy held forth to sinners. Lord, send me that mercy, and I will shout the loudest of Thy children above.

There is nothing which the Lord delights in more than to hear His people, when they come to Him, plead His Word and hold it fast. Though Satan wants to take it away from you, yet never give it up. Die with your souls deceived (if that is possible) in the hands of Christ. Tell Satan, Though I am as vile as any in the world, yet the Lord has taught me to put my trust in Him; I will go to Him, and endeavour by His grace, to trust in Him at all times. Ah but, says Satan, what a poor feeble faith is thine! What hast thou to depend upon, sometimes hoping, and sometimes doubting? Dost thou expect that the Lord will look upon thy little faith? Yes, tell him; the Lord does not so much look at the greatness of our faith, when we go to Him, as at the reality of it. Though faith is weak, when we come before the Lord, yet He will receive it. He never sent any away for the weakness of their faith; but He often reproves His people because they do not believe more strongly. Go to Him and tell Him your condition, and when you call upon Him, expect an answer. Nothing pleases the Lord more than when a poor, tempted and troubled soul comes to Him, as Abraham did, against hope, believing in hope. You are ready to think his was a poor hope from time to time, for about twenty-five years; but he believed in hope. And what is said of this believer in God? That he gave glory to Him.

The Lord is never more glorified than when we go to Him, relying upon His Word, notwithstanding providences and everything else make against us. Yet, even then, says the poor soul, the Word is for me; for Christ invites sinners to come, whoever they are.

Though Abraham against hope believed in hope, yet the Lord did not look upon this as a poor testimony of his faith. We see, by his not hearkening to what he felt within him, nor to the temptations which the devil cast in his way, that he only looked at the Word of God, relying

upon His Word and promise, though all providences made against him, he thereby gave glory to God.

And so it will be with us. When we find many things make against us, if we have but a word of promise to rely upon and hold it fast, then we are giving glory to God. What says the tried old soldier, Job? "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Well said! Though the Lord seems, by His providence and dealings with me, to cast me off and to take no notice of me, I do not mind that. The Lord says, "Trust in Me at all times." Go to Him; lie at His feet; tell Him you are come, merely relying upon His word of promise, and that you have nothing to encourage you but His word. Put your trust in Him, and you will find that the Lord in due time will come and bless you.

I might mention many other times in which we might trust in the Lord; but they are comprised in this little word *all*: and a precious word it is: "Trust in the Lord at *all* times." When you are full of fears, then you should bring the little word *all* unto Him, and say, I have nothing to encourage me to come unto Thee, but that precious little word *all*: "Trust in the Lord at *all* times."

Satan is very crafty. He will tell poor souls, Why, what do you mean by trusting in the Lord? What right have you to do so? Are you a child of God? Are you one of the elect? You are doubting of it every day. What have you to do to trust in the Lord? Give him this answer: Though I am often afraid about my adoption, and cannot say I am one of the children of God, this I can say, I am one of the *people*. What does my text say? "Trust in the Lord at all times, ye *people*." You may go with this to the Lord. Though you cannot satisfy yourself that you are an adopted child, you may say, I am one of the *people*, and will lie at Thy feet till Thou dost show me that I am Thine adopted child.

Many are often discouraged in themselves because they know not their election. Seek for it; wait upon the Lord; wait His time; and in due time He will make it manifest. For your encouragement, the Lord has given you these words in our text: "Trust in the Lord at all times, ye *people*." Are you not one of the people? May you not plead this with the Lord, who commands all His people to trust in Him? Why, then, go to Him as one of the people, and expect to receive His salvation.

Take notice; it is not said in my text, "Trust in Him at all times, *My* people;" but "*ye* people." Thereby he gives a general order. Go to Him, then, as one of the people, and expect His help.

But let us notice the next words in my text: "Pour out your hearts before Him." This is a precious command. Many times the children of God are so burdened with grief, with sin and worldly cares that they know not how to bear them; and their bosom is so full of sorrow, so that they sit down and mourn over their hard lot. The devil dearly loves to

see a child of God sit down and say, What a sad condition I am in! I dare not go to the Lord, I am so miserable. Well, suppose you are; where would you go? You cannot be worse for it. Others are running about from post to pillar, desiring to know what they shall do; their trials are so great, they know not how to be delivered out of them, and they go and ask one neighbour and another till they tire them all out. What does the Lord say to them? He gives good advice. Instead of making your neighbours your counsellors, go to Him, who is the chief Counsellor, able to tell you what to do, and willing to relieve you at all times. Go to Him, and say, Lord, I am come with a heart laden with grief and with worldly cares, and know not which way to turn myself. What must I do? The first thing which He tells you to do is, "Pour out your hearts before Me." You have been pouring them out before your neighbours, and what have you got there? Why, nothing. Then come and pour them out before Me.

The word *pour* plainly signifies that the heart is full of grief, and almost afraid to empty itself before the Lord. What does He say to you? "Come, and pour out all your trouble before Me." He is never weary with hearing the complaints of His people; therefore you should go, and keep nothing back. Tell Him everything that hurts you, and pour all your complaints into His merciful bosom. That is a precious word: "Pour out your hearts before Him." Make Him your Counsellor and Friend. You cannot please Him better than when your hearts rely wholly upon Him. You may tell Him, if you please, you have been so foolish as to look to this friend and the other for relief, and found none; and you now come to Him, who commands you to pour out your heart before Him.

But perhaps your heart is burdened, not only with worldly cares but with sinful lusts and corruptions. A sore burden indeed! And you are afraid and ashamed, perhaps, to go and tell the Lord all your trouble. But you need not be afraid of going when He commands you. He knows everything in your heart: all worldly cares, all sinful burdens; and when the heart is quite full, He says then, "Pour out all before Me." Here is great encouragement for you. Take the encouragement which the Lord offers [gives]; go and tell Him your grief and burdens.

Ah! says the poor soul, I have been to the Lord again and again; but I find I am sinning against Him daily, and I am ashamed to go to Him. Now my conscience accuses me, and the devil tells me I am impertinent; how shall I appear before Christ to pour out my heart before Him? Go and pour out your heart before Him till that crafty devil leaves you. You have the best reason in the world to go to the Saviour. He that knows what you are, what burdens you are bearing, and what sins you have committed, even He says, "Come and pour out your hearts before Me."

But I may add further, does not the Lord command us in His Word and in His prayer to say, "Forgive us our trespasses"? And does not this plainly intimate that trespasses are to be forgiven daily? Where are you to bring them, but to the Lord? Go, therefore, and tell Him you are come, according to His Word, to acquaint Him with your sins and trespasses. Ah but, you say, I have gone so often already that I am ashamed to go. What does the Lord say to Peter? If thy brother trespass against thee seven times a day, thou shalt forgive him. And Peter had not a little forgiven him.

Go to Christ every day for pardon. If you keep your guilt in your bosom, it will only make it rankle. Tell Him you are weary and ashamed of yourself, and you are come to tell Him all your grief, and to beg that He will come and deliver you from guilt, and save you more and more from the power of sin. Whatever burden, therefore, you have upon your heart, the Lord would not have you suffer it to rest there; for if you do, it will make you feeble by and by. But when you find your breast full of trouble, remember His kind word to you: "Come, poor soul, and pour out your burdens before Me." Pour out your whole hearts and let Him know everything that distresses you.

But what follows in the last words of my text: "God is a refuge for us"? O these are precious words! We may look round about us again and again for a place of refuge, for a person to apply to for help, and we shall find ourselves frequently, if not continually, disappointed. Therefore the Lord tells His people for their comfort that God is a refuge for them. Are you poor? The Lord is rich. Can you find no refuge in your fellow-creatures? And have you nowhere to fly to? Go to the Lord.

It is very strange, when the Lord has all things in His hands, and all love in His heart, and advises His people to come to Him, telling them that He is a refuge for them, they so often delay to come; they had rather find refuge from a fellow-creature than from their God. They who have learned to trust in the Lord know what precious words these are: "God is a refuge for us." Come and try, and you shall find Him so too.

The devil will often be telling you that are the people of God, There is no help for you, even in your God; you have been seeking for help a long time, but have found none. What will you do now? Why, tell him, you will go to Him that says, "God is a refuge for us." But the devil will say, You are so poor, and so despicable a creature; what, can you think that Christ will take any notice of you? Why, your own brethren are ready to overlook you, and the world despises you; and yet you think Christ will take notice of you! Tell the devil, Yes; He never fails them that trust in Him. Whatever your circumstances may be, though you may look all around you, this and that way, and find no place to flee to, no refuge for your souls, yet God, the faithful God, says He is a refuge for

you. Trust Him; go to Him accordingly; look unto Him at all times. Let your condition be what it may; be it ever so deplorable and wretched, yet the Lord tells you, when you go, "I am a refuge for you."

Be sure, if you forget every other part of the sermon, carry this home with you: "God is a refuge for me." Therefore, though I find no help in myself, nor in creatures, yet there is help enough in God. All my help is laid upon Him; and He tells helpless creatures, "I am a refuge for you."

Hear it, ye poor, burdened sinners, and thank Him for His kind word. Go to Him to have His promise fulfilled time after time. Yet a little while and He will bring you to His kingdom, where you shall live and reign with Him for ever.

Are you sick and in great distress, and without any friend to apply to, ready to say, What must I do now? Why, my text tells you what you are to do at all times. Whatever your case is, whether sick, poor, naked or wretched, come to the Lord. He says, "I am a refuge for you."

But you say, Lord, I have been sinning against Thee time after time. I know it, says Christ; but if you come, weary of sin and desirous of gospel rest, you shall find that I am a refuge for you.

But you say you come so often that you are ashamed to come. That may be a good argument to keep you from your fellow-creatures: you have been knocking often at their doors, and they are ready to say, You came to my house the other day. Well, say you, may I not come every day? No; you find no such help from man. But Christ never complains of your coming too often, but is better pleased with those that are oftenest knocking at His door, and looking to Him for the help which He has promised.

And you that are poor in spirit, who cannot find relief in yourself, nor from your fellow-creatures, go to Christ, and He will be ready to help you: "God is a refuge for you." O think of that word, whenever troubles enter in your mind. Repeat them again and again, and shame the devil out. Tell him, though everything looks black, yet "God is a refuge for me." Are you to believe the devil or God? Keep these words always in your mind; for all of you will be in such circumstances at times as not to know where to go, nor what to do; then these words come sweetly into the bosom, "God is a refuge for me." He loves to help the helpless, to hear the poor, wounded soul, and to save the guilty sinner. While He is doing this, He is acting the part of a Saviour, and brings glory to Himself.

But I might add, that no one knows the compassion which is found in the heart of Jesus, but Himself. Therefore, when you go to Him, do not entertain any unkind thoughts of Him, for He invites sinners to come to Him, all poor and wretched sinners; and He that invites us to come has blessings to dispose of. Keep the last words of my text evermore in your

mind; they will be of use to you, living and dying, sick or well. Whatever circumstances you are in, you may find the want of such words as these: "God is a refuge for us." Take heed, when you go to Him, to do as David did; plead His Word with Him. This is one part of the Christian's duty which he often neglects. David says, "O keep my soul, and deliver me." What then, David? Why, says he, "for I put my trust in Thee." He pleaded the Lord's Word, and so may you.

The promises in the Bible are free for all who see their need of them; and the Lord has told thee, if thou trustest in Him, thou shalt never be confounded. But perhaps you are thinking, if I trust in the Lord, I shall be confounded; and suppose you are, you will lose nothing by your trusting, even though it should not be fulfilled. But remember that the Lord will never suffer His promise to fail: "Faithful is He that hath promised." Though you may often doubt of His performing, yet He never did, nor ever will fail. Therefore, "Trust in the Lord at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him," in every time of trouble.

I do not know a more precious verse in the Scriptures than my text: "Trust in the Lord at all times, ye people." Though at present you may not know whether you belong to the family of God, yet trust Him, you are of the people. Here hang, till He gives you better support. And when you find your poor bosom laden with cares and grief, whatever causes your distress, the Lord knows very well that if you keep it back, it will make you worse. Therefore do as the Lord says: "Pour out your heart before Me." Tell Me all your grief; make Me your Counsellor and Friend, and you shall find what a Counsellor I am; and I will remember to comfort you in the worst state that you can be in.

In health and in sickness, in life and in death, this will apply to Jesus: "He is a refuge for us." What could you wish for more? Go, then unto Him; doubt no more; cast away your doubts and fears; trust in Him. If you cannot with full assurance, do it with some assurance, with a little faith, and expect more. Remember, the Lord loves to increase what He has given, and to build you up in faith and holiness.

I would say a little more, but I find my strength begins to fail. I am glad and I am thankful that the Lord has held me up hitherto, blessed be His name. When I begin to totter, and when I experience infirmity, I am ashamed that I should ever entertain a doubt of Him. May these words be impressed upon my heart: "God is a refuge for me"; and may He fix it on all your hearts.

And now I conclude my subject. I came up to you trembling, but the Lord has carried me through, blessed be His name, and I look to Him to carry me home, for I have no feet of my own to walk with. But the Lord can hold me up till I have done my work, and then He will put an end to my labours. Thanks be to His name for calling me to preach out

of doors. It is the glory of a creature to publish the fame and salvation of God.

I must now speak a little by way of taking leave.

Lord, I beseech Thee to pour Thy blessing constantly upon this congregation; Thy power and glory let it be made manifest among them. Open the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, deaf and dead. Comfort the mourner. Strengthen the weak to go on their way. Build up Thy church on their most holy faith. May this house be filled with Thy presence. Bless every hearer that attends here from time to time; and may the Lord delight in them to bless them, and may they excel in His blessed service. May this ever be a house for God, kept from error, kept in union, going on their way, looking and longing for the coming of their dear Lord.

Bless all the ministers that labour here, occasionally and statedly. Fill their mouths with Thy truth. Warm their hearts with Thy love. Keep them evermore in the faith, zealously disposed to exalt the honour of the dear Redeemer, and to promote the salvation of sinners.

And may the Lord bless the Trustees. Lengthen out their days. We bless Thee that they have been faithful and true to their trust. Give them, Lord, the comforts of Thy Holy Spirit. Enable them to go forward yet for a while, and bless their labours; and may they see that the people honour them for what they have done. May there never be wanting faithful men to succeed them, nor faithful ministers to labour among them. And as one of the Trustees has been lately removed from them, the Lord direct them in the choice of another. Be gracious to their partners in life; impress their souls with Thy precious love; strengthen them, quicken them, and build them up. May the Lord delight in them, and water their souls from time to time, causing the seed of grace that has been sown in their bosom to bring forth fruit to life eternal.

The Lord remember all the children for good, causing them to receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation.

And now, Lord, I must take my leave of this chapel which I have long visited. O keep them continually in Thy fear and bless them abundantly with all spiritual blessings! May they evermore delight in the Lord, and the Lord delight in them to heal them.

I know not whether I shall ever return any more, nor is it needful for me to know; but this I know, if the Lord continues my life, and allows me some measure of strength, I shall crawl up again. In the meantime, think of a poor crawling creature when you are upon your knees, and put up a short petition to the Lord that He would bless me, pardon me, sanctify and prepare me for His kingdom and glory. Amen and Amen.

May the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and in the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

STOPPING THE WELLS

“And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them” (Gen. 26. 18).

Water in eastern countries is exceedingly precious, and one of the cruellest tricks that can be played is to stop up an enemy’s wells. (This was a feature of ancient warfare. See 2 Kings 3. 19, 25.) The result was death instead of life; barrenness instead of fruitfulness; poverty instead of riches. All prosperity was at an end.

We live in a day when ungodly Philistines have stopped up the wells. The Word of God sweetly speaks of “the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12. 3) and God’s people know their value. All the blessings that flow from Jesus, the smitten Rock, are wells of salvation; every revelation of Himself and His finished work. These wells can never be destroyed, but they can be covered over with earth, and stopped up. The result? Spiritual poverty, barrenness and death.

WE ARE CALLED TO DIG AGAIN THE WELLS THAT OUR GODLY FATHERS DIGGED. We do not want new wells. Isaac did not seek new wells; he digged again *the same wells*.

1. *In England today* there are many Philistines seeking to stop up the wells. Divine truths are covered up. And the result is England’s poverty, barrenness and death. May we seek grace to dig the same wells again, and to keep them unstopped.

God’s most holy Word is covered up. Ungodly men, religious and profane, stop it up. Its divine authority and inspiration are denied. Blessed be God, His Word can never be destroyed. “For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.” But O the attempts to stop it up! This is the secret of England’s decline – a dishonouring of the Word of God.

The holy commandments of God are covered up. Men account them out-of-date and old fashioned. The Lord says, “Thou shalt not ...” but men cover up His commandments, and so all manner of sin and immorality is legalised. God says, “Thou shalt remember ...” but the Philistines stop the well, and the Sabbath is desecrated.

Let us dig again the ancient wells. “Stand ye in the ways, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein.” The world seeks to dig *new* wells: social reform, environmental improvement, etc., with wonderful promises of a bright new world. The Lord has passed a striking judgment on these “new wells.” He calls them “broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2. 13). These “new wells” are empty, and what drop of water may be in is but cistern water, polluted.

“No news can suit a ruined race
But sovereign, free, eternal grace.”

All this world’s wells – philosophy, learning, honour, pleasure, fame – can never satisfy.

2. *Religious leaders* also are stopping up the wells. The vital truths of the gospel are denied. As a result death reigns in the professing churches. The revelation of divine truth is despised – the Fall, the virgin birth, the Godhead of Christ, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His second coming. We are solemnly called to dig again the wells which our fathers digged. It is only water that flows from the smitten Rock of Ages that can meet man’s deepest need.

“All other means my soul has tried,
All other streams are vain beside
What flows from Calvary.”

We are to dig again these same wells. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”

We also notice that Isaac “*called their names after the names by which his father had called them*” (verse 18). He did not try to think up new names in order to be more modern and up-to-date. WE ARE CALLED TO GIVE THE SAME NAMES TO THE OLD WELLS. Let us not be ashamed of being counted old-fashioned.

It is very obvious that many want to speak of sin today by new names. Pleasant-sounding words are used. What used to be called the vile sins of sodomy and homosexuality are now “gay.” A person living in adultery is “with a partner.” Petty theft has become common but it is only “walking off” with something or “helping oneself” to something. The rampant evil of gambling, which brings distress to thousands, is “having a flutter.” A person indulging in all manner of immorality is only “having a fling.” But the Word of God speaks of sin as it is – iniquity, evil, unrighteousness. The Word of God does not cover up. It is not afraid to speak of sodomy, adultery, fornication, etc.; and of divine wrath resting on those who practise such things.

Satan glories in this covering up, these new names. Why? If there is no sin, if absolute values are denied, then there is no need of salvation; if no need of salvation, then no need of a Saviour; if no need of a Saviour, then no Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.” All is aimed at the glorious Person of the Son of God.

Many want a new, a different presentation of the gospel. They say, “It is no use speaking of regeneration, reconciliation, redemption, to the generation of 2006. Think up new names.” Did ever natural man understand what regeneration, reconciliation and redemption mean? Did the illiterate masses to whom Whitefield preached? But he used such terms as these; and under the blessing of the Holy Ghost, his hearers soon understood them! The gospel is not to be watered down by new names.

Sometimes people say the language in our chapels is old fashioned; but we try to keep closely to biblical terms. We prefer to speak of the Lord’s supper to “the eucharist.” We have pastors or ministers, not deans, and sub-deans, and canons, and archdeacons, etc. We speak of sinners being “called by God’s grace” (the term used more than any other in the epistles) rather than such expressions as “becoming a Christian.” People may smile about our speaking of “Zion” (there is so much in our hymns!) But what of the dozens of glorious references to “Zion” in holy Scripture. Let us not be ashamed of Scripture language – calling the old wells by the old names!

Many today glory in new translations of the Bible. They say, “Use more modern language, and people will read the Bible more. There will be more blessing.” With what results? The wells are stopped up. Let us be clear. The root of the matter is not that people cannot understand the Word. It is rebellion in the heart against the Author of the Word. No longed-for revival is apparent either from the new wells or the new names or the new translations! Let us be content to call the wells by the same names as Abraham our father called them. The vital need is the pouring out of the Spirit from on high.

3. We need to beware of stopping up the wells *in our chapels*.

What a solemn accountability is laid on *gospel ministers*! May we ever be concerned lest we stop up the wells. If we do not speak sufficiently of Christ and Him crucified, if we speak too much of inferior things, we are guilty of stopping up the wells. We need at times to trace out the pathway, and at times to speak of evidences, and to speak of providence; but “Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, sweet well of love.” Paul says, “I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

We read of “a fountain *opened* for sin and for uncleanness.” The Canticles speak of “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” But, “In that day there shall be a fountain *opened*.”

“This fountain unsealed stands open for all
That long to be healed, the great and the small.”

We are not to hedge it about with so many restrictions that sinners fear to come. Whilst not believing in indiscriminate offers, let us gladly declare that every guilty sinner who feels his need is welcome to the fountain of Jesus' blood. O may we beware of unthinkingly stopping up the wells!

“Fly, then, awakened sinner, fly,
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain's *opened* now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

We also need to be solemnly concerned that we preach a whole gospel. May no precious truth be left out, no solemn precept omitted. We hear little today of that precious well, *the covenant of grace*. We hear little either of *the holy fear of God*. Let us not forget that this also is one of the wells: “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life” (Prov. 14. 27). Water from salvation's wells cleanses as well as satisfies the thirst. The Philistines long to stop up this well, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

4. *Our hearers* need to beware of stopping up the wells. Where the Lord has caused His name to be recorded, there are wells of salvation. There are precious seasons when the Lord is gracious, the water freely flows, and sinners “with joy draw water from the wells of salvation.” But often there is a withholding. The wells are stopped. We read of some: “The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Unbelief delights to stop the wells. So does a wrong spirit, irreverence in the sanctuary, carnality, prayerlessness, prejudice – everything that grieves the Spirit of God. May there be a sober, gracious exercise in prayer in the hearts of the godly to keep the wells open, and may we beware of losing the spirit of hearing. Solemnly does the Lord speak of “a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord” – a famine of *hearing*.

5. In *many homes* the Philistines have stopped the wells. The family altar is no longer seen. Morning and evening reading and prayer are neglected; the children are deprived of this gracious influence. Let us dig again the wells that our fathers digged that the Philistines have stopped.

How true it is that in so many homes now, not only are the old wells stopped, but a polluted spring flows! Beware of bringing the world into your home. Beware of the poisonous influence of television, with its special danger to children. How carefully does the tender mother keep poison away from her children! May it be equally so with all that spiritually pollutes and slays.

6. But especially *personally* may we be kept from the Philistines. What of those who have known the preciousness of the streams of salvation? Are there not many Philistines in our hearts that block up the wells and hinder communion with Christ? Our work of faith is to dig again the wells, as enabled by the Holy Ghost; and digging is hard labour. "In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

"Daily I'd repent of sin,
Daily wash in Calvary's blood."

May the Holy Spirit enable us to keep short reckonings, bless us with repentance and a spirit of confession, lead us constantly to Christ. May God's people not be left to go on in any known sin or allow sin committed to harden in the conscience without being removed by the blood of Christ. May the wells be kept unstopped.

And what of the precious streams that flow from Calvary? May we know more of them. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." And may the prayer be often on our lips: "*May we with joy draw water from the wells of salvation.*"



DIVINE ENLARGEMENT AND SPIRITUAL OBEDIENCE

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

The Lord in His Word has given several commandments; and these commandments we perform when the Lord enlarges our heart. For instance,

1. The Lord commands us *to believe in the name of His dear Son*, as the Apostle John writes, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." But we cannot believe in the name of Jesus any more than we can make a world, until God enables. Believe in Jesus! receive Him by precious faith into my heart! feel the efficacy of His atoning blood in my conscience! bathe my blissful soul in the sweet enjoyment of His dying love! I do this? Before I can, of myself, do this, I must be able to say, "Let there be light, and there shall be light."

But when the Lord by His grace and Spirit enlarges the heart, when He drops His dew, unction and savour into the soul, when He draws near to it, and makes it draw near to Him, when this blessed Sun of Righteousness shines forth through the dark cloud and warms the cold dark soul, then it can no more *not* believe in Him than before it could

believe in Him. We can no more refuse to believe when faith comes into the heart than we can believe before faith does come.

When God enlarges the heart and draws forth the affections, then we run in the way of this commandment. We do not believe as a duty; we do not believe as a precept; nor do we believe even as a privilege. But we believe as a blessing. We believe as we see an object with our eyes. We open our eyes and we cannot but see. So when faith opens its eyes, it sees Jesus; nay, it cannot but see Him.

2. Another commandment is *to repent*. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." What! repent! Have the heart broken with contrition! feel godly sorrow! experience the flowings forth of grief towards a crucified Lord! Can I do this? It is utterly beyond my reach. I may shed crocodile tears. I may work myself up into fleshly excitement. I may fall upon my knees, lacerate my back, refuse to eat my meat and lie upon the ground. But to feel a broken heart, melted down into compunction and godly sorrow – the man that feels what an adamant he carries in his bosom knows well that it is the pure grace of God alone that can give him repentance.

I believe the Lord brings all His people to that spot of which Mr. Hart speaks – when the question was not whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether *I* will do this for the Lord, but whether the Lord in mercy and grace will do this for *me*. The great *I* sinks then into absolute insignificance; and the creature is brought down to its true spot – abasement and helplessness.

But when the Lord enlarges the heart, with this enlargement is there not the grace of penitence? Is there not the tearful eye, the convulsive sob, the inward grief of soul? Is there not real gospel repentance and sorrow felt in a broken and tender heart? I am sure there is this.

3. God commands us *to love one another*. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13. 34). Can I of myself feel this love? I may pretend to do so; I may do as one of old did, who came to his brother with a very fraternal salutation, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and then smote him under the fifth rib with a sword. I may say, "Brother this," and "Sister that" – "how I love you!" – "what affection I feel for you!" I might, if God did not keep me honest, play this part of a varnished hypocrite. But I cannot feel, nor create this true love, without a special work of the Spirit on my soul.

But when He enlarges the heart and melts the soul at His footstool, He gives love to Himself; and with that love He gives love to His people, pure affection: not a feigned, but real desire for their spiritual welfare; not a few canting phrases, but a true feeling of brotherhood; not a mere expression of "brother" on the lip, but brotherly affection in the heart. When He enlarges the heart, we do not want to go amongst our brethren

to say, "Brother," or, "Sister"; we feel them in our very soul. When we are alone with God there is a tender affection flowing forth to them out of our heart, an embracing of them in our soul.

Nay more, we can forgive our enemies when the Lord enlarges our heart. If we can see them in the right spot, where we would see them, we can forgive them, though they have been most unkind to and cruelly treated us. I have felt that when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, anger, enmity, prejudice, bitterness, malevolence – those unclean birds, all take flight, and simplicity, tenderness, humility and love all live in the soul.

4. But the Lord commands us *to deny ourselves, take up the cross, put off the old man, and walk as becometh the gospel*. Can we do this? We cannot. We may affect a popish austerity; we may put on a hypocritical visage; we may look all sanctity and holiness; we may cleanse the outside of the cup and platter and put an extra coat of whitewash on the sepulchre. But as to that inward crucifixion, that inward deadness to the world, that inward putting off of the old man and putting on of the new which the Word of truth speaks of, we cannot attain to, except God the Spirit work in us both the will and the power.

But when God enlarges the heart, then there is no burden in God's ways; His precepts are not grievous; it is a pleasure to walk in them; and there is a sweet gratification in obeying them.

"*I will run in the way of Thy commandments.*" Not lag, nor loiter, not turn aside, not faint, not falter. "I will run" eagerly, actively, as a lover runs to his beloved bride – "I will run" cheerfully in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast enlarged my heart.

5. So with *the ordinances*, the ordinances of the Lord's house – baptism and the Lord's supper. These are not grievous; they are not burdensome when the Lord enlarges the heart. When we are narrowed up, shut up, contracted, these ordinances of the Lord's house are burdensome to us. But when the Lord enlarges our heart, there is no burden then; whatever be the precept, whatever be the ordinances, we can run in that way with cheerfulness, freedom and liberty.

6. So with respect to every *precept of the gospel*, whatever it be, we can run in the way of God's commandments when He enlarges our heart. There is no running in any other way. All other service is legality; all other obedience is but the froth and spawn of freewill, nothing but the mere natural obedience of the creature, not the spiritual obedience of the child of God.

But let us look at this. Is it our happiness, is it our pleasure when we cannot run the way of God's commands? Do we lay the inability upon God, or pack it upon the old man, and say, "It does not at all signify [matter]; I cannot obey them; but when God gives me the power, I shall"?

This is the very essence of antinomianism, the very spawn of licentiousness, the worst abuse of gospel grace.

The Christian is in one of these two spots for the most part; sometimes shut up, contracted, cold, dead, torpid. But this is his grief and misery. In this state of feeling, he cannot run the way of God's commandments. But is he pleased with being a loiterer? No; it is his grief and trouble that he cannot run in the way of God's commandments. This evidences the work of God the Spirit upon him; he would do it, but he cannot – the good that he would, he does not. But it is *the will* being on the side of God which proves the reality of grace; it is the heart and conscience being enlisted on the side of the Lord that proves God is at work on his soul.

On the other hand, the children of God are sometimes in this state. Their hearts are enlarged, their souls strengthened, and their feet are enabled to run the race that is set before them. This is their joy, their happiness and their delight.

WHO ARE THE SAVED?

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Question. But what kind of sinners shall then be saved?

Answer. Those of all these kinds that the Spirit of God shall bring [to] the Father by Jesus Christ; these, I say, and none but these, can be saved, because else the sinners might be saved without the Father, or without the Son, or without the Spirit.

Now, in all that I have said, I have not in the least suggested that any sinner is rejected because his sins, in the nature of them, are great; Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners. It is not, therefore, the greatness *of*, but the continuance *in*, sins that indeed damneth the sinner. But I always exclude him that hath sinned against the Holy Ghost. That it is not the greatness of sin that excludeth the sinner is evident:

1. From the words in Ephesians 2. 1, 2, 3 before the text, "By grace ye are saved," which give an account of what kind of sinners were here saved by grace, as namely, they that were dead in trespasses and sins, those that walked in these sins, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

2. It is evident also from the many sinners that we find to be saved, by the revealed will of God. For in the Word we have mention made of the salvation of great sinners, where their names and their sins stand recorded for our encouragement; as,

i. You read of Manasseh, who was an idolater, a witch, a persecutor, yea, a rebel against the word of God, sent unto him by the prophets; and yet this man was saved.

ii. You read of Mary Magdalene, in whom were seven devils; her condition was dreadful, yet she was saved.

iii. You read of the man that had a legion of devils in him. O how dreadful was his condition! and yet by grace he was saved.

iv. You read of them that murdered the Lord Jesus, and how they were converted and saved.

v. You read of the exorcists, how they closed with Christ, and were saved by grace.

vi. You read of Saul the persecutor, and how he was saved by grace.

Object. But, thou sayest, I am a backslider.

Answer. So was Noah, and yet he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So was Lot, and yet God saved him by grace. So was David, yet by grace he was forgiven his iniquities. So was Solomon, and a great one too; yet by grace his soul was saved. So was Peter, and that a dreadful one; yet by grace he was saved. Besides, for further encouragement, read Jer. 3; 33. 25, 26; 51. 5; Ezek. 36. 25; Hos. 14. 1-4; and stay thyself, and wonder at the riches of the grace of God.

Question. But how should we find out what sinners shall be saved? All, it seems, shall not. Besides, for aught can be gathered by what you have said, there is as bad saved as damned, set him that hath sinned the unpardonable sin aside.

Answer. True, there are as bad saved as damned; but to this question: They that are effectually called are saved. They that believe on the Son of God shall be saved. They that are sanctified and preserved in Christ shall be saved. They that take up their cross daily, and follow Christ, shall be saved.

Take a catalogue of them thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Be justified by the blood of Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Be reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and thou shalt be saved by His life. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

See some other scriptures. "He shall save the humble person." "Thou wilt save the afflicted people." "He shall save the children of the

needy.” “He ... shall save the souls of the needy.” “O Thou, my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee.” “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them.”

But, sinner, if thou wouldst indeed be saved, beware of these four things:

1. Beware of delaying repentance; delays are dangerous and damnable.

2. Beware of resting in the Word of the kingdom, without the spirit and power of the kingdom of the gospel; for the gospel coming in word only saves nobody, for the kingdom of God or the gospel, where it comes to salvation, is not in word but in power.

3. Take heed of living in a profession a life that is provoking to God; for that is the way to make Him cast thee away in His anger.

4. Take heed that thy inside and outside be alike, and both conformable to the Word of His grace; labour to be like the living creatures which thou mayest read of in the Book of the prophet Ezekiel, whose appearance and themselves were one (Ezek. 10. 22).

In all this, I have advertised you not to be content without the power and Spirit of God in your hearts, for without Him you partake of none of the grace of the Father or Son, but will certainly miss of the salvation of the soul.

LOOKING TO CHRIST IN TROUBLE

My dear J.— As regards your perplexities, I cannot but believe you have little to do but go on crying and falling before the Lord, if it may please Him to make you as clay in the Potter’s hand. Many sore perplexities has He brought me through in sensible darkness. I sometimes think this has been suffered to teach me these dispensations are His, not mine, more completely than I should otherwise have learnt. I know where the secret is — going on in the darkness, looking to the Lord alone; not so much looking to find light, as pleading the promise the blind shall be led in a way they knew not. I have proved that the taking away of our own strength is the dreadful part. We are willing that should be done to a certain extent, but want to see our strength is in the Lord before we lose all in ourselves.

I dare not say much, but I believe you will come out of the trial, perhaps when you least expect it. When the Lord hides His face, who then can behold Him? Though you are judged of your accuser, perhaps He does not condemn you. This is our mercy, for not one could escape:

we are all guilty of unbelief and ten thousand sins. I am sure it is worse than useless to look at our unbelief and shortcomings. If they were not incurable we could have no mercy from Christ. O for a single eye to look to Christ alone!

I believe I know enough to make me deeply feel for any who are made to taste the bitterness of soul desertion, and that too while in outward affliction.

“Are you tempted? So was He:
Deserted? He was too.”

There it was Jesus lay in a far greater degree. But you know what is said to those who are brought there: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” Look at that. It did please the Lord to bring me down there, into a place I never before knew; but as surely He brought me out again, not by a sudden deliverance, yet with might and with power. I believe the surest establishment is found through that path of trial. I do not think all are alike led into it, but if the Lord Himself lead us there, He will not leave us, but bring us through. Who knows but He will give you, not in a moment when you seem so much to need it, but as I think He has given me by slow and sure degrees, that measure of soul establishment that is found in realising that it is impossible for a sinner to perish who looks, as you have for years looked, for the mercy of Christ. May the Lord grant you this – the faith He owns and honours. It is worth all the affliction, it outweighs all manner of trial, it makes out of weakness more strong, it “vanquishes death and despair.”

Satan fills your mind with your perplexities, but perhaps to baffle him the Lord will let you feel your entanglement so great as at last to make you willing to go down into the sea itself, and there a pathway may await you. You may be sure it was a dreadful venture to the Israelites.

Perhaps the doctors’ wish to take away all thought of religion [in a case of mental affliction] is not so much to be feared as appears to you. First of all, mercifully, they cannot do it. The more that is crushed, the stronger it grows. Secondly, our minds are marvellous combinations of spiritual and natural. I am sure it does not always please God to carry on a continued uniform exercise. I really do believe He makes His people sometimes, after great spiritual exercise, lie down and sleep, and that almost literally, because He knows how weak the flesh is. He will safely preserve His own ark. So I hope you will endeavour not to be overburdened on that subject.

As to your dear boy, you must feel that nothing but the mercy of God can preserve him. It is a question whether in any other line he would not be equally exposed to temptation. What would not Jacob have

feared, had he known his son, a youth, was living in the court of the heathen Egyptian? Yet he was preserved.

September 4th, 1868,

Your affectionate Sister, H.E.B.

[Bernard Gilpin's daughter Annette, now Mrs. Benson]

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD UNMASKED

From John Berridge's only prose work, The Christian World Unmasked: Pray Come and Peep. This is an exceedingly quaint work, in the form of a dialogue between the doctor (Berridge himself) and the patient (an ungodly, self-righteous farmer); but it includes some deep divinity and gracious experimental teaching.

Pray, *Doctor*, who is this sorry fellow, this weary wretch, that comes to Jesus Christ with such a loaded pack upon his back? Some highwayman, no doubt, or some house-breaker, perhaps a murderer; at least a person excommunicated, who has been very naughty, and would not wear a white sheet.

Indeed, *Sir*, this sorry fellow is the Doctor himself, and everyone who comes aright to Jesus Christ. Did you never read the invitation which He makes to sinners? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11. 28). You are a sinner, *Sir*; and all men are sinners, and condemned by the law; but all men do not feel their condemnation, and therefore are not heavy laden with a guilty burden, nor labouring after rest. Yet such are invited; and only such are accepted. What right have you to come to Jesus Christ, unless you come in His appointed way?

If your wealthy neighbour should invite his poor parish widows to dine on Sundays at his house, this invitation would give you no right to dine, nor yet the vicar. You are not *poor widows*. And supposing you should borrow female clothing, put on a gown and petticoat, and call yourself a *poor widow*, this female dress would not procure a right to dine, but might expose you to a cudgel. Yet this is now become the genteel way of coming unto Jesus. Men borrow at a church the garb and language of a Christian, and say most sad things of themselves while they are upon their knees [i.e. from the Prayer Book], as if they were *poor sinners* truly, and yet would execrate a preacher who should say the same things in a pulpit which they uttered in a pew.

You have heard, no doubt, of beggars who tie a leg up when they go a begging, and then make a hideous lamentation of their lameness. Why, this is just your case, *Sir*. When you go to church a-praying, which is begging, you tie your righteous heart up, and then make woeful outcry

for *mercy on us miserable sinners* [from the Prayer Book]. O Sir, these tricks may pass awhile unnoticed; but Jesus Christ will apprehend such cheats at last, and give them their desert.

Would you know where God will cast a gracious eye? He tells you: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit" (Isa. 66. 2), poor in spirit, and bruised with a sense of his sinfulness.

And would you hear whom Jesus calls? His own lips inform you: "I am not come to call the righteous"; no; why should He? If He did they would not come in His way, for they have found a better. But I am come, He saith, *to call sinners*; sinners sensible of sin, and bruised with it; and to call them daily to *repentance*; not to patter over good confessions with a frozen lip, but to breathe them from a mourning heart (Luke 5. 32). St. Luke introduces the call with these words: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." And pray, Sir, who are the *whole*? Have any kept the *whole* law without offending in a single point? Not a man. Then all are condemned by the law, and have passed under its curse. Yet many think themselves *whole* or *nearly whole*, and therefore see no *need* or *little need* of Christ's atonement. Alas for such! When the stone they have rejected falls upon them, it will grind them into powder. But the *sick* need a physician; they feel that woeful sickness, the *plague of the heart* (1 Kings 8. 38), and lothe themselves in dust and ashes.

But we must take a little further notice of our young pilgrim before we drop him altogether. He was left disconsolate with raw back and weeping eyes, just flogged out of Moses' school, and seeking balm to heal his wounds but finding none. At length the invitation of Jesus reaches his ears, "Come unto Me, thou heavy laden soul, and I will give thee rest." He hears and wonders, listens and is pleased. A gleam of joy steals into his heart; a joy he never felt before, springing from a cheering hope and dawning prospect of deliverance. This kindles high esteem and kind affection for the Saviour, who appears all lovely in his sight, and often draws a heavenly tear from his eyes. The name of Jesus groweth musical, His love adorable, and His salvation above all things desirable.

The weeping sinner enters now upon a new world, and joins himself with the praying citizens of Zion. Jesus is welcomed as his King and Saviour, and receives hosannahs from him. He begins to understand what grace means, even mercy, rich mercy, freely shown to a lost and ruined sinner. No sermon suits him now but what directs his heart to Jesus, and sets the Saviour forth as Prophet, Priest and King to save His people. A full and free salvation captivates his heart; it is just the thing he wants, and therefore highly welcome. And whilst the tidings of this royal grace are sounding in his ears, he seems to give them credit; but when the book is laid aside, or sermon over, fresh doubts arise which must perplex him. His understanding is enlightened, but his heart retains

a *legal bias*, and a secret harping after merit still. Sometimes he fears the gospel-tidings are so good, they are not true; or if they may be true, they are too good for him. He likes and wants the promised grace, but staggers at the promise. A sense of guilt and his uncleanness so dismay him that he dares not bring a filthy, naked soul to Jesus to be washed and clothed by Him.

Sincere obedience often peeps again, and bids the pilgrim wash himself first, and Jesus Christ shall *rinse* him afterwards; bids him plant a fig leaf here and there, and make a patched frock of duty, and if it prove too scanty, Jesus Christ shall eke it out with His fine linen. This expedient pleases for a season, and to work he goes, hoping to make himself so fair and tight that Jesus Christ shall fall in love with him, and give him *rare commendation*, instead of *free pardon*. But though he wash himself in snow water, and make his hands exceeding clean, he is plunged in the ditch again, and his own clothes abhor him (Job 9. 30, 31). Thus he grows bewildered, and has lost the sight of grace, until he hears it preached afresh; and then he drops the snow-water, and hastens to the "fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13. 1). He stands upon the brink, but cannot enter, and longeth for a washing, but must wait the moving of the water. He views the fountain, and sees it fair and open; he views the promise, and sees it full and clear. "He that believeth shall be saved"; which makes him cry, "O that I could believe the promise! Jesus then would save me; but my heart staggers, and when my foot seems fixed upon the rock, a sudden gust of doubts blows me into the mire again."

Now he knows the meaning of St. Paul's words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16. 31), and he clearly understands that his want of pardon, peace and holiness is owing to his want of faith. If he could believe, Jesus Christ would fulfil His promise; it would be done according to his faith (Mat. 9. 28, 29; 15. 28; Luke 7. 50; 18. 42). Jesus Christ would save him from the *guilt* and *power* of sin.

This makes him feel his want of faith and want of power to give it. He had been nursed in a Christian land, and thought a mere assent to Scripture was sufficient ground to make him a believer; and he marvelled that some preachers made a mighty stir about this easy matter. But he finds this human faith will neither purify his heart, nor wash his conscience. It will not save from sin. And he feels that prayer is nothing, and procureth nothing, without divine faith. He sees a reason why the chosen twelve should say, "Lord, increase our faith," because it is the gift of God. Could they give themselves one grain, they might add another, yea a dozen grains, or twenty; and had no need to ask for that which they could give themselves.

GRACIOUS REVIVINGS

*A few jottings by Mrs. Mercy Sturgess of Barton-le-Clay,
Bedfordshire, written in November and December 1969*

Just a little of the blessing one has hoped she had from the Lord in the year 1969, from July to September. Well, it was at the end of June when I feel I had such a sight of one's sinful self, what I was by nature. I felt in a dreadful state. How it made me cry for mercy and I believe supplicate for the forgiveness of my sins! Though I had had it before in time past, that was lost sight of.

How I did try to plead with the Lord that day, before going to chapel on the Thursday evening, that the Lord would speak to me that night through His servant, our pastor! His text was in Acts 13. 38, 39, on forgiveness. It was a wonderful sermon to me, as he spoke all how I had felt, what a sinner, put in words. He then spoke of forgiveness and justification; felt much helped. I would humbly say I felt I had prayed it out of him, as enabled.

Then when I got to bed at night, I lay about two hours and the dear Lord came with such power; His felt presence, one cannot explain such love. How promises flowed in, the Father kissing the prodigal, saying, Put a ring on his finger, and the best robe, etc. How I said with a feeling heart, "My God, my Father, may I call Thee mine?" How I wept! Then of Joshua, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And ... I will clothe thee with change of raiment." "Let not your heart be troubled ... I go to prepare a place for you." How I wept tears of humility, so unworthy, why me? But felt,

"I'm blest, I'm blest, for ever blest,
My rags are gone, and I am dressed
In garments white as snow."

"He wept, He bled, He died for you."

The next day after this, I had not much mind for the things here. On Saturday I felt, could it really be for such as I? Was it real? But I did try to pray it might be confirmed on the Sabbath, and it was. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1. 30). I felt it.

On the following fortnight Thursday evening, text, 1 Samuel 2. 6-8. How good it was to me, what I had felt! I had Hannah's song and had been raised up.

The next Sunday Mr. Case was preaching and his text was Jabez' prayer. When he spoke of the "indeed blessing," what I was listening for, felt I had it, after many prayers and longings for it.

Then the next Sabbath pastor's text was Psalm 119. 174-176. I felt I lived.

The next Sunday was Ephesians 2. 19, 20. Felt comfortable but not so much feeling.

Then the next Sunday, August 3rd, was a special time. Text was Ephesians 1. 5-7. How I felt I was "accepted in the Beloved." When I came home at night, I said to my pastor, "Living tongues are dumb at best, we must die to speak of Christ." Words failed me. Then to my surprise and amazement he took Ephesians 1. 3, 4.

The next Sunday, August 10th, before the sermon his reading was Numbers 23, of Balaam. I said, "Is Thy servant going to tell me I am deceived inwardly?" I said, "O Lord, undeceive me if I am." But O what a powerful sermon it was to me, all "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"! I knew not how to contain myself and to hide it from others. Tears ran down my face. "Full with the blessing of the Lord." We closed with hymn 60.

When I came to walk home I hardly knew how to as it had taken my bodily strength. When home, I felt "my willing soul would stay, in such a frame as this, and sit and sing herself away to everlasting bliss." Those lines came to me afterwards: "I faint beneath the bliss." In the evening it was as good to me. Could not help speaking of it to pastor and others. We closed with hymn 680, which fitted. Felt a little like I had read of Joseph Tanner, he feared to live rather than die. How I feared myself to live and sin against so good a God! I felt to need prayer more, that I might be kept from pride and self-righteousness. I would be holy but knew I could not keep myself; I was so afraid of doing anything to cause Him to depart. But the blessing just came down. I could not but believe.

The next Thursday and Lord's day the text was Ephesians 3. 16-20. It was a good time. What a depth there is in it all! I could say, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." It was wonderful how the Lord led His servant into Ephesians as He did. It seemed for me. He would repeat just what I had felt or was feeling. Once I said to myself, "Lord, let him repeat about Joshua," and he did. No thanks to me, but I hope the Spirit's work.

The next text was Psalm 132. 1 and 8, in the morning. How I could go with all His servant said! Also in the evening from verses 13 and 14. The next Thursday evening he took verses 15 and 16, for Zion our little cause.

The following Sabbath, August 31st, his text was Joel 2. 25-27. In the week I had been thinking of them and had read them from verses 21 to 27. They were good to me in my young days, before I was baptized, that I should never be ashamed. But I felt now it was being more fulfilled. I felt one morning and I looked up and said, "Lord, I should

like to hear it preached from.” Then unexpectedly, that Sunday morning, he took them. How I felt what was said! The Lord had dealt wondrously with me, and that “I am the Lord your God,” that I should never be ashamed. I cannot explain myself as I would, or tell it all.

Monday, September 1st, Mr. Neville preached about Martha and the resurrection. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life.” He spoke of Him coming to a poor sinner in that power, which I felt He had to me. We then closed with hymn 11, which I felt sweet.

That night I went away for twelve days’ change, which had been arranged before. How I did feel to need to be kept, not to depart from the dear Lord, which I hope I was in a little measure! I had not the same power felt but enjoyed reading Ruth and Solomon’s Song. Then I returned home on Saturday.

The Sunday morning before the service I pleaded with the Lord not to let the services be in vain, not in form only. Then the words came: “At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.... and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed” (Ruth 2. 14). How humbled I felt, my spirit softened! I went to chapel with expectation. The text was Psalm 23. 1, 2. How good I felt it! The Lord my Shepherd; I had been made to lie down in green pastures and beside the still waters. I could go with all that was spoken; truly I was sufficed. We closed with hymn 1071, which softened my heart also. Blessed time! How I did say at these times, “Blessed Jesus, precious Jesus.”

For thirteen weeks I walked in peace and communion with the dear Lord. Good times I had before getting up in the morning, and often when I lay down at night alone. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?” I cannot praise Him as I would. It was like I felt going over again the days of my espousals when I was young. Not perhaps that ecstasy of joy but (how shall I put it?) that solid peace and rest in believing in an unchanging God. How I looked back at what I hope the Lord had done for me then, believed the promises!

But now I do not feel that power and feeling as I did. Though not quite left alone, I miss the presence of my Friend, but pray not to be left to unbelief, but to be kept near the dear Lord. Knowing what I am by nature if left in any measure, I would say as I felt it, “I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my All and in all.” None need despair since I have mercy found.

I did feel I have heard ministers pray at chapel that it might be heaven begun below. But O to realise it! What an awe and hallowedness felt! All this was after much searchings of heart after the death of my dear husband, much sowing in tears, as it is nearly four years ago; felt

the Lord appeared to him. I wanted that indeed blessing though I had some helps.

Once was after hearing comfortably at chapel. As I walked in home, those lines came to me, "In heaven my choicest treasure lies." What I felt for half an hour I cannot speak of! As I found the hymn and read it down, how I felt each verse and the next hymn. I did not want to speak to anyone. I was alone and said, "What is this world to me? this world is not my home."

After the death of my husband, the next Sunday after he was buried I did feel I wanted a taste below of what he was enjoying. But I had to wait eighteen months for this.

I feel I can say I did not lose really the sweetness of the blessing from June to September for twelve months. [This must have been added at a later date.]

JOHN BERRIDGE

From John Gadsby's Memoirs of Hymnwriters and Compilers

(Continued from page 122)

"The middle and latter end of the last century," says the Editor of the *Gospel Standard*, "was a remarkable period. A chain of ministers, commencing with Whitefield, and embracing in its links Toplady, Berridge, Newton, Romaine, Huntington and Hawker, extends itself down to our degenerate days. However differing in gifts, all these men were evidently taught by the same Spirit, and preached the same gospel. Toplady, like a lamp fed with spirit, flamed forth, blazed, and died, from shortness of wick, not from lack of supply. Newton, snatched from Afric's burning shore, and from worse than African servitude, united to much sound wisdom great tenderness of spirit and an experience of divine things which, if not very deep, was sound and varied. He knew much of his own heart, was singularly frank and sincere, had much sympathy with the tried and afflicted, and being gifted with an easy, fluent style, has left behind him many useful and excellent letters. Romaine was a burning and shining light, who lived the faith which he preached, and in the midst of the metropolis for half a century had but one theme, one subject, one object, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever. In many points widely differing, but united by the same faith to the same glorious Head of influence, life, light, liberty and love, was John Berridge. As all the lines of a circle radiate towards the centre, all necessarily meet in one point; so, however the servants of

Christ may differ in ability, gifts, time, place and usefulness, yet all meet in one point, the central Sun of the system – the crucified, risen, ascended and glorified Son of God. Romaine, poring over Hebrew roots in his study at Lambeth, and Berridge preaching from a horse-block at Potton, mingling smiles with tears, and the quaintest humour with the deepest pathos, were as different in natural disposition and constitution as can well be imagined. But each sighed and groaned under a body of sin and death, each dearly loved, and each highly exalted the dying Friend of sinners, each was honoured and blessed in his work, and each is now in the bosom of his Lord and God.”

As Berridge was deeply led into a knowledge of his own heart, he knew how to attack Satan in the strongholds of his hearers. On one occasion, when addressing his people, who were principally agriculturists, he said, “Have not some of you, when you have ploughed a furrow, looked back, and observing it well done, proudly said, There is not a man in the parish who can plough a better furrow than this?” A ploughman had actually expressed himself in such terms, and on hearing a further description of pride with its awful consequence, was savingly convinced of sin, and afterwards manifested a conversation and practice becoming the Christian character.

A man of more than the common size once went to hear him, and placed himself immediately before the pulpit with the full design of incommoding him, and rendering him confused; for that purpose he made various gesticulations, and uttered most contemptuous expressions. Berridge, not in the least intimidated, thought it proper to address him personally, which he did in so powerful a manner as to cause him to sink down in the pew, and to perspire through his great coat. As soon as he came out of the church, he acknowledged his intention, saying, “I came to confuse this good man, but God has made him the means of convincing me that I am a sinful, lost sinner.” The conviction thus produced proved saving and permanent. He lived an ornament to the gospel, and when he departed this life, he slept in Jesus.

At another time, while he was standing upon a table and preaching in the open air to a multitude of people, two men got under the table with the design of overturning it, but the Word so powerfully penetrated their hearts that they could not effect their purpose; and afterwards they desired to speak to him, when they declared, with expressions of grief and shame, what they had intended to do. Others came with their pockets filled with stones to throw at him while preaching, but finding the discourse they heard affecting their hearts, they gradually emptied their pockets of the stones they had put into them; and afterwards they also confessed to him the motive by which they were actuated respecting him, and requested that he would pray for them.

“O King of Glory,” said one eminent man, when a number of scoffers were present while Berridge was preaching, “break some of them in pieces; but let it be to the saving of their souls! I had but just spoken, when I heard a dreadful noise on the farther side of the congregation, and turning thither, saw one Thomas Skinner coming forward, the most horrible human figure I ever saw. His large wig and hair were coal black, his face distorted beyond all description. He roared incessantly, throwing and clapping his hands together with his whole force. Several were terrified, and hastened out of the way. I was glad to hear him after awhile pray aloud. Not a few of the triflers grew serious, while his kindred and acquaintance were very unwilling to believe even their own eyes and ears. They would fain have got him away; but he fell to the earth, crying, ‘My burden! my burden! I cannot bear it.’ Some of his brother scoffers were calling for horsewhips, till they saw him extended on his back at full length. They then said he was dead; and indeed, the only sign of life was the working of his breast, and the distortions of his face, while the veins of his neck were swelled, as if ready to burst. He was just before the chief captain of Satan’s forces; none was by nature more fitted for mockery, none could swear more heroically to whip out of the close all who were affected by the preaching.”

Mr. Berridge, soon after his connection with the Tabernacle in London, was visited by a lady, who came down in her carriage from London to Everton to solicit his hand in marriage, assuring him that the Lord had revealed it to her that she was to become his wife. He was not a little surprised at her application, and for such a purpose. He paused for a few moments, and then replied, “Madam, if the Lord has revealed it to you that you are to be my wife, surely He would also have revealed it to me that I was designed to be your husband; but as no such revelation has been made to me, I cannot comply with your wishes.”

Age and infirmities caused the good old man to be almost both blind and deaf before he died. “My ears are now so dull,” said he, “they are not fit for converse; and my eyes are so weak, I can read but little, and write less. Old Adam, who is the devil’s darling, sometimes whispers in my ears (and he can make me hear with a whisper), ‘What will you do, if you become both deaf and blind?’ I tell him, I must think the more, and pray the more, yea, and thank the Lord for eyes and ears enjoyed till I was seventy, and for the prospect of a better pair of eyes and ears when these are gone.” Mr. B. was once an unusually long time cleaning his spectacles while the people were waiting for him to rise. At length he said, “If you can see *without* spectacles, thank God for it. I thank Him that I can see even *with* them.”

The following lines were by Berridge and pasted on his clock:

“Here my master bids me stand,
 And mark the time with faithful hand;
 What is his will is my delight,
 To tell the hours by day, by night.
 Master, be wise, and learn of me,
 To serve thy God, as I serve thee.”

Most of the preceding account I have taken from periodicals, the *Gospel Magazine*, the *Evangelical Magazine* and the *Gospel Standard*, but I am indebted for much to the work by Mr. Whittingham already alluded to. This work contains many very interesting letters, with Zion’s Songs, etc. Those of my readers who can afford to do so will do well to purchase it.*

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEW

The Hills of Zion – a Pictorial History, by Alan Rayner; paperback; numerous coloured photographs; 166 pages; price £16 plus £1.50 postage and packing; published by the author, and obtainable from him at 115 Chester Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU4 9SH.

For those interested in our chapels this is a fascinating book; we do not think anything similar has been published before. For many years Mr. Alan Rayner, of Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, has collected chapel photographs. These are now published, in colour, one on each page, with underneath just a few details concerning the chapel’s past, and where the chapel is difficult to find, a few details of its whereabouts. Collecting these pictures has been a labour of love. At the end there are smaller, black and white photographs of chapels that are now closed or that no longer appear in our list.

For a minister of the gospel, it is most interesting to scan through the book and look at the chapels where he has preached over the years. It brings back many sacred memories.

To all lovers of our denomination, it is interesting to see what the chapels we have never visited are like or to have reminders of those we have – and perhaps some sacred memories.

This is not a specially spiritual book, but it reminds us of the need for prayer, especially at the present time.

“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
 While life or breath remains;
 There my best friends, my kindred dwell;
 There God my Saviour reigns.”

* Of course, it has now long been out of print, but occasionally appears in catalogues of second-hand books. The excellent modern biography by Nigel R. Pibworth, *The Gospel Pedlar*, published in 1987, is also out of print. There is a chapter on Berridge in the new book *Sing Aloud in Jesus’ Name*.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Dan. 5. 27).

Hear, O my soul, what God hath said,
And let thine ear retain the sound,
"In scales of justice thou art weighed,
And in the balance wanting found!"
Stern justice cries, "Thou art undone,
And where canst thou for safety run?"

To Jesus, Father, I will fly,
And in His full atonement trust,
Confess myself condemned to die,
And own the awful sentence just;
Cry out against my guilty head,
And Jesus' mighty merit plead.

Convinced I am that warmest prayers,
And kindest service I can pay,
And floods of penitential tears,
Will never wash my guilt away;
My every action is too light,
And death is due for want of weight.

But if no merit I can claim,
The blood of Jesus will prevail,
Alone prevail to save from blame,
And in my favour turn the scale;
Through faith in Him I stand complete,
Who undertook and paid my debt.

John Berridge (1716-1793)

What a mercy it is for our souls that there is a most gracious Lord in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that we might receive of His fulness and grace for grace! How blessedly suitable He is to every want and woe, and how the poor soul is ever looking unto, longing after, hanging upon, and cleaving to Him as all its salvation and all its desire!

J.C. Philpot

By the death of Christ we are greatly stirred up both to a caution against and a detestation of sin. For that must needs be deadly which could be healed no other ways than by the death of Christ. Who, therefore, seriously considering that his sins could be no other ways expiated than by the death of the Son of God Himself, would not tremble to tread as it were this most precious blood under foot by daily sinning?

Davenant

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2006

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

“STAND THEREFORE”

It seems remarkable that when the Lord describes the heavenly armour, He mentions the girdle before anything else. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6. 14). Why should this be so?

The purpose of the girdle was to fasten up long-flowing garments. Before anything of effort or importance (e.g. Israel on the Passover night), it was necessary to “gird up the loins” – otherwise you might trip, or stumble, or fall, certainly not stand. Hence the exhortation before breastplate, shield, sword, to “bind the golden girdle round thee” (as Hart expresses it).

So this expression of “girding up the loins” is often used in a figurative way in Scripture. For instance:

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately” (Luke 12. 35, 36).

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1. 13).

The golden girdle is truth. Apart from this there can be no “girding up the loins” and no “standing.” There must be a vital, personal acquaintance with the truth.

1. The truth “as in Jesus” (Eph. 4. 21). The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of our lost, fallen condition and our need of a Saviour, and then the glorious truths of the gospel: the Trinity; the Person of the Lord Jesus, God and Man; the covenant ordered in all things and sure; the riches of free grace; eternal election; the preciousness of atoning love and blood; the security of God’s people; the Person and work of the Holy Ghost – and a personal interest.

Apart from this golden girdle there can be no standing.

2. Truth in the heart and life through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Scripture speaks of truth being received “in the love of it” (2 Thess. 2. 10), of walking in the truth (2 John 4). We cannot stand without this. There are those things about us by nature which, like the long-flowing garments, would trail in the mire unless girt up by the golden girdle.

Only having our loins “girt about with truth” can the church of God, or the individual believer, stand today in this world of wickedness. The great need today in the church of God is what Luther called “Amen men,” men who will stand whatever the cost.

“Stand therefore.” We live in a day of compromise. People do not wish to stand – unless they personally are affected, their ease, their reputation. When England was guilty of the infamous slave trade, John Newton said no professing Christian really liked it or really approved of it – but they did not stand against it because it did not affect them personally. When taxes were raised, they were only too willing to stand!

So often today, when vital issues arise, the position taken is: “It is not my business”; “It is nothing to do with me”; “I feel it is right to keep out of it.” May the Lord give us singleness of eye for His glory, the spirit of Elijah: “the Lord God of Israel before whom I stand.” May we not be like Ephraim: “The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle” (Psa. 78. 9).

In all this we need a right spirit. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.” “Lord, help us by Thy grace to stand.” Stormy petrels, who love contention and conflict, are no help to the church of God.

“Stand therefore.” We need to stand for “the present truth” (2 Pet. 1. 12). Luther said that if we stand firmly for *every* truth except the one at present being assailed, God counts us unfaithful. Some are wonderfully faithful in standing against the errors of the Pope and Archbishop, writing about them, denouncing them, but they do not stand firmly in the local church against any deviation in faith or practice. This is not “standing.”

Some say they do not like trouble. No one does. Some seek to please both sides. Some (who should know better) say they do not understand. Some compromise. Some “look over their shoulder” to see what others think. Some say they do not wish to offend. “Stand therefore.”

But above all, the need to stand personally in the conflict. Satan is a mighty foe, too strong for us. So is the world, either opposing, persecuting or alluring. But what of indwelling sin, the conflict with self – evil self, proud self, self-righteous self? We can only stand as we are upheld. We do need the golden girdle. We do need to pray:

“Lord, help us by Thy grace to stand,
And every trial firm endure;
Preservèd by Thy sovereign hand,
And by Thy oath and covenant sure.”

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

“Bind thy golden girdle round thee,
Truth to keep thee firm and tight;
Never shall the foe confound thee,
While the truth maintains thy fight.”

ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

*Notes of a sermon preached by Mr. P.O. Laver, pastor at
Rotherfield, Sussex, on Lord's day, April 7th, 1940*

Text: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3. 6).

This is the only way in which you and I can find life and peace, as we are enabled to acknowledge Him in our paths and in our ways.

We may have to confess how adverse and how different His ways are from our ways, but it is the Lord's way which is right, and our way which is wrong. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,” but because it seems right unto a man, it is not to say it is right with the Lord; the end of that way is death. We can be blessed with life only as we are conformed to the mind and will and the sovereign and eternal purposes of God. It is a mercy to be brought to that point of submission before God, to pray, “Not my will, but Thine, be done.”

Now we will divide the words into two parts: in the first place we notice the counsel of wisdom; it is wisdom that speaketh and saith, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him.” Then in the second place, the gracious promise – you acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Now, in the first place, what is it to acknowledge God in our ways? It is to be a partaker of saving faith. To acknowledge God, you must have faith in God. The verse preceding the text says, “Trust in the Lord.” The meaning of that word “trust” is to have faith centered in God, a whole-hearted faith. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.” Now how do we get faith? First, in acknowledging Him we must believe that He is. Those who really acknowledge God have a well-grounded and firm belief in God. He is a real Person to them. Then, in the next place, they need faith to acknowledge Him in all their ways because their ways are so dark and so mysterious. The ways of the children of God and the servants of God, I feel sometimes, are for the most part through the sea and in the deep waters. Mr. Hart says in that blessed hymn of his,

“Could we see how all is right,
Where were room for credence?
But by faith, and not by sight,
Christians yield obedience.”

There is a vast difference between living faith, walking by faith, acknowledging Him by faith in experience, and talking about it, friends. I feel sometimes we do not half believe what we profess to believe.

Then we need faith, not only because the way is so mysterious, so dark, and so hedged up, but because it is so crooked. Only God can make the crooked things straight. The wise man says in Ecclesiastes, "Consider the work of God." The meaning of the word "consider" is to ponder over it, to meditate on it, to be thoughtful, consider seriously the work of God, "for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked?" Now when faith is enabled to acknowledge Him, the crooked is made straight. The things are crooked to sense and reason, but when faith is in exercise, it brings the crooked things to the Word of God, and to the mind and will and purpose of God, and crooked things are made straight, rough places are then made plain. You can feel,

"His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine;
Each opening leaf and every stroke
Fulfils some deep design."

"Acknowledge Him" by faith.

And then there is an acknowledging of Him in our ways in the exercise of faith by prayer and supplication. In the thirty-seventh Psalm the psalmist says, "Commit thy way unto the Lord." It is not every way that a person may be in that he can commit unto the Lord. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." We make mistakes sometimes. We think what we should like, and what we desire, and after we get that desire, we seek to bring God in second, saying, "Lord, let Thy approbation rest upon this." Now that is not the way, friends; you cannot thus commit your way unto the Lord.

The first thing must be an acknowledging of Him in the way. If you feel led of God to do a certain thing, to take a certain step (it may be in providence), yet when you have taken the step everything seems to go wrong, though you felt so powerfully the leadings of God in it, and you believe you took that step in the exercise of faith and prayer, now you can commit your way unto the Lord: "Lord, I really believe Thou didst bring me to this place; I had Thy Word supporting me in the step that I took, yet everything seems to go wrong, everything seems adverse to what we might expect; but I can commit my way unto Thee; I look to Thee to support me." Now that is committing thy way unto the Lord. You can acknowledge Him. "By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him." What have we to acknowledge about Him? First, if you acknowledge Him by faith, you will be able to acknowledge His presence. When God sent Moses to the land of Egypt

before Pharaoh, he was assured of this: "My presence shall go with thee." The Lord Jesus Christ, before He left His disciples to go back to heaven, gave them this word: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We know, friends, the Lord is omnipresent; He is everywhere at the same time; nothing can escape the presence of God. The Lord's presence with Moses was manifested by the signs that were wrought in the land of Egypt. My dear hearers, the ways that the Lord has dealt with you declare plainly that His presence is with you; and if you once acknowledge His presence, it will be a grief to you if His presence is withdrawn. There is no greater grief to the child of God than the withdrawing of the presence of Jesus Christ in his experience. We often sing, or try to,

"Sometimes He's pleased His face to hide,
To make me pray, or stain my pride."

It is a painful experience, friends, and if once you have had His presence, you will want it again; you will want that word fulfilled, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

Then there is an acknowledging of His power. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Acknowledge His power, His sovereignty. Eli did when death was about to visit his house. When he heard the message of young Samuel, he said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." But, friends, we can bless a giving God when He blesses on every hand; but can we bless a taking God? Job acknowledged Him, His sovereign power and His right, when he had lost everything except a transgressing wife and an afflicted body; and he said to her, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." I love that dear man, Job. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Then there is an acknowledging of Him in His wisdom. Not only has He the sovereign right to do as He will with me and mine, but the wisdom of His purposes I own. His wisdom is to be acknowledged in all things. It will be well for the nation if they acknowledge God, and for us to acknowledge Him in His wisdom, His truth and His grace and to be enabled to say,

"Righteous are the works of God;
All His ways are holy."

"Acknowledge Him."

Then see in which ways we have to acknowledge Him. Not in just one way, but "in *all* Thy ways," from the smallest thing to the greatest thing.

Nothing can take place by chance or by good fortune. One hymnwriter says, "The fictitious power of chance and fortune I defy." How necessary it is, and how beneficial it is to acknowledge Him in all thy ways! You can have no secret way before God, as every heart is naked to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Penetrating, piercing eyes!

My dear mother used to say to us boys, when we had done anything wrong and she had found us out, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." My dear young friends, when tempted to do wrong, we look to the right and to the left hand, but always remember to look up; there is One there who can see you when you cannot see Him.

He sees your secret ways, child of God, when you think your way is hid from the Lord. No one is hid from the Lord. I remember once, when working on the bench, I was so cast down and burdened that I felt out of the secret of effectual godliness; and as I was walking along at the time that word was made blessed to me: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord?" My dear hearer, Jonah had to acknowledge God in his ways when he was in the whale's belly, and he had to look again towards the Lord's holy temple from the belly of hell. He was cast into the depths out of the sight of all others, but not out of the Lord's sight; He saw him, and mercifully brought him to this: "Salvation is of the Lord." And the fish then vomited him out upon the dry land.

However much you may feel cast out of the sight of God, He has not cast you off. He will bring you to acknowledge Him in your secret ways.

Then there are the ways of our thoughts. The Lord is not in all the thoughts of the wicked, but He is in the thoughts of His people, and there is a book of remembrance written before Him for those who think upon His name. Do you acknowledge Him in your thoughts? Can you say, "The desire of our soul is to Thy name?" For this is true blessedness.

To acknowledge Him in all your ways includes the ways of your business, His gracious hand revealed in such marked providence towards you. Also, to have a clear conscience before God in regard to your personal dealings with your fellow mortals. But some may have a tendency to feel there is no need to bring business into the text, but it is here, my friends. Seek to "do justly, and to love mercy." A professing man once told me there was such a thing as a white lie in business; but no! Every lie is a lie, and as black as hell itself. Because the man round the corner gets a pound dishonestly, it is not for you to do the same. Though at the time you may seem to be at a disadvantage, you will not be disadvantaged when you can come into the closet and lay the matter of your business before Him, acknowledging Him in all your ways.

Again, acknowledge Him in all your ways of dress. There is a lot of pandering to worldly fashions today; cut and curled hair, polished nails, dresses that a Jezebel would almost be ashamed of. The Word of God plainly tells what the appearance of those professing godliness should be. The Bible is the “fashion book” for all God’s people to follow.

Then to acknowledge Him in all our ways is to be submissive to His holy will; however much our will may be opposed, our flesh hurt, to seek that conformity of heart, spirit and life, ever desiring to say, “Not my will, but Thine, be done.”

May the Lord bless us with an increase of grace and an exercise of faith to acknowledge Him in all our ways; for,

“He cannot do but what is just,
And must be righteous still.”

There I must leave the subject. The Lord bless these few words. Amen.

These notes have been sent to us from a reader in Holland. It will be observed that Mr. Laver does not deal with the second half of the text.

WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

SALVATION BY GRACE

By John Bunyan

First, then, we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the world began. The apostle saith that He “saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” This is the beginning of salvation, and according to this beginning all things concur and fall out in conclusion: “He hath saved us according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus.” God in thus saving may be said to save us by determining to make those means effectual for the blessed completing of our salvation; and hence we are said “to be chosen in Christ to salvation.” And again, that He hath in that choice given us that grace that shall complete our salvation. Yea, the text is very full: He “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

Second. As we may be said to be saved in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, so we may be said to be saved before we are converted, or called to Christ. And hence “saved” is put before

“called”; He “hath saved us, and called us.” He saith not, He hath called us, and saved us; but He puts saving before calling. So again, we are said to be “preserved in Jesus Christ, and called”; he saith not, called and preserved. And therefore God saith again, “I will pardon them whom I reserve” – that is, as Paul expounds it, those whom I have “elected and kept,” and this part of salvation is accomplished through the forbearance of God. God beareth with His own elect for Christ’s sake all the time of their unregeneracy, until the time comes which He hath appointed for their conversion. The sins that we stood guilty of before conversion, had the judgment due to them been executed upon us, we had not now been in the world to partake of a heavenly calling. But the judgment due to them hath been by the patience of God prevented, and we saved all the time of our ungodly and unconverted state, from that death, and those many hells, that for our sins we deserved at the hands of God.

And here lies the reason that long life is granted to the elect before conversion, and that all the sins they commit and all the judgments they deserve, cannot drive them out of the world before conversion. Manasseh, you know, was a great sinner, and for the trespass which he committed he was driven from his own land, and carried to Babylon; but kill him they could not, though his sins had deserved death ten thousand times. But what was the reason? Why, he was not yet called; God had chosen him in Christ, and laid up in him a stock of grace, which must be given to Manasseh before he dies; therefore Manasseh must be convinced, converted, and saved.

That legion of devils that was in the possessed, with all the sins which he had committed in the time of his unregeneracy, could not take away his life before his conversion. How many times was that poor creature, as we may easily conjecture, assaulted for his life by the devils that were in him, yet could they not kill him, yea, though his dwelling was near the seaside, and the devils had power to drive him too, yet could they not drive him further than the mountains that were by the seaside; yea, they could help him often to break his chains and fetters, and could also make him as mad as a bedlam. They could also prevail with him to separate from men, and cut himself with stones, but kill him they could not, drown him they could not; he was saved to be called; he was, notwithstanding all this, preserved in Christ and called.

As it is said of the young lad in the gospel, he was by the devil cast oft into the fire, and oft into the water, to destroy him, but it could not be; even so hath he served others, but they must be “saved to be called.” How many deaths have some been delivered from and saved out of before conversion! Some have fallen into rivers, some into wells, some into the sea, some into the hands of men; yea, they have been justly arraigned and condemned, as the thief upon the cross, but must not die

before they have been converted. They were preserved in Christ and called.

Called Christian, how many times have thy sins laid thee upon a sick-bed, and, to thine and others' thinking, at the very mouth of the grave? Yet God said concerning thee, Let him live, for he is not yet converted. Behold, therefore, that the elect are saved before they are called. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins," hath preserved us in Christ, and called us.

Now this "saving" of us arises from six causes.

1. God hath chosen us unto salvation, and therefore will not frustrate His own purposes.

2. God hath given us to Christ; and His gift, as well as His calling, is without repentance.

3. Christ hath purchased us with His blood.

4. They are, by God, counted in Christ before they are converted.

5. They are ordained before conversion to eternal life; yea, to be called, to be justified, to be glorified, and therefore all this must come upon them.

6. For all this, He hath also appointed them their portion and measure of grace, and that before the world began; therefore, that they may partake of all these privileges, they are saved and called, preserved in Christ and called.

Third. To be saved is to be brought to, and helped to lay hold on, Jesus Christ by faith. And this is called saving by grace *through faith*. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

1. They must be brought unto Christ, yea, drawn unto Him; for "no man," saith Christ, "can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Men, even the elect, have too many infirmities to come to Christ without help from heaven; inviting will not do. "As they called them, so they went from them," therefore He "drew them with cords."

2. As they must be brought to, so they must be helped to lay hold on Christ by faith; for as coming to Christ, so faith is not in our own power; therefore we are said to be raised up with Him "through the faith of the operation of God." And again, we are said to believe, "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

Now we are said to be saved by faith, because by faith we lay hold of, venture upon, and put on Jesus Christ for life. For life, I say, because God, having made Him the Saviour, hath given Him life to communicate to sinners, and the life that He communicates to them is the merit of His flesh and blood, which whoso eateth and drinketh by faith hath eternal

life, because that flesh and blood hath merit in it sufficient to obtain the favour of God. Yea, it hath done so [since] that day it was offered through the eternal Spirit a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to Him; wherefore God imputeth the righteousness of Christ to him that believeth in Him, by which righteousness he is personally justified, and saved from that just judgment of the law that was due unto him.

“Saved by faith.” For although salvation beginneth in God’s purpose, and comes to us through Christ’s righteousness, yet is not faith exempted from having a hand in saving of us. Not that it meriteth aught, but is given by God to those which He saveth, that thereby they may embrace and put on that Christ by whose righteousness they must be saved. Wherefore this faith is that which here distinguisheth them that shall be saved from them that shall be damned. Hence it is said, “He that believeth not, shall be damned”; and hence again it is that the believers are called the children, the heirs, and the blessed with faithful Abraham; that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

And here let Christians warily distinguish betwixt the meritorious and the instrumental cause of their justification. Christ, with what He hath done and suffered, is the meritorious cause of our justification; therefore He is said to be made to us of God, “wisdom and righteousness”; and we are said to be “justified by His blood, and saved from wrath through Him,” for it was His life and blood that were the price of our redemption. “Redeemed,” says Peter, “not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” alluding to the redemption of money under the law, “but with the precious blood of Christ.” Thou art, therefore, as I have said, to make Christ Jesus the object of thy faith for justification; for by His righteousness thy sins must be covered from the sight of the justice of the law. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “For He shall save His people from their sins.”

Fourth. To be saved is to be preserved in the faith to the end. “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Not that perseverance is an accident in Christianity, or a thing performed by human industry; they that are saved “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

But perseverance is absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul, because he that falleth short of the state that they that are saved are possessed of, as saved, cannot arrive to that saved state. He that goeth to sea with a purpose to arrive at Spain, cannot arrive there if he be drowned by the way; wherefore perseverance is absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul, and therefore it is included in the complete saving of us: “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” Perseverance is here made absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul.

But, as I said, this part of salvation dependeth not upon human power, but upon Him that hath begun a good work in us. This part, therefore, of our salvation is great, and calleth for no less than the power of God for our help to perform it, as will be easily granted by all those that consider:

1. That all the power and policy, malice and rage, of the devils and hell itself are against us. Any man that understandeth this will conclude that to be saved is no small thing. The devil is called a god, a prince, a lion, a roaring lion; it is said that he hath death and the power of it, etc. But what can a poor creature, whose habitation is in flesh, do against a god, a prince, a roaring lion, and the power of death itself? Our perseverance, therefore, lieth in the power of God; "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

2. All the world is against him that shall be saved. But what is one poor creature to all the world, especially if you consider that with the world is terror, fear, power, majesty, laws, jails, gibbets, hangings, burnings, drownings, starvings, banishments and a thousand kinds of deaths?

3. Add to this, that all the corruptions that dwell in our flesh are against us, and that not only in their nature and being, but they lust against us, and war against us, to bring us into captivity to the law of sin and death.

4. All the delusions in the world are against them that shall be saved, many of which are so cunningly woven, so plausibly handled, so rarely [finely, nicely] polished with Scripture and reason, that it is ten thousand wonders that the elect are not swallowed up with them; and swallowed up they would be, were they not elect, and was not God Himself engaged, either by power to keep them from falling, or by grace to pardon if they fall, and to lift them up again.

5. Every fall of the saved is against the salvation of his soul; but a Christian once fallen riseth not but as helped by omnipotent power. "O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity," "but in Me is thy help," says God.

Christians, were you awake, here would be matter of wonder to you, to see a man assaulted with all the power of hell, and yet to come off a conqueror! Is it not a wonder to see a poor creature, who in himself is weaker than the moth, to stand against and overcome all devils, all the world, all his lusts and corruptions? Or if he fall, is it not a wonder to see him, when devils and guilt are upon him, to rise again, stand upon his feet again, walk with God again, and persevere after all this in the faith and holiness of the gospel? He that knows himself, wonders; he that knows temptation, wonders; he that knows what falls and guilt mean, wonders; indeed, perseverance is a wonderful thing, and is managed by the power of God; for He only "is able to keep you from falling, and to

present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Those of the children of Israel that went from Egypt, and entered the land of Canaan, how came they thither? Why, the text says, that "as an eagle spreadeth abroad her wings, so the Lord alone did lead them." And again, "He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." David also tells us that mercy and goodness should follow him all the days of his life, and so he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Fifth. To be saved calls for more than all this; he that is saved must, when this world can hold him no longer, have a safe-conduct to heaven, for that is the place where they that are saved must to the full enjoy their salvation. This heaven is called "the end of our faith," because it is that which faith looks at; as Peter says, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." And again, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." For, as I said, heaven is the place for the saved to enjoy their salvation in, with that perfect gladness that is not attainable here. Here we are saved by faith and hope of glory; but there, we that are saved shall enjoy the end of our faith and hope, even the salvation of our souls. There is "Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the firstborn"; there is the "innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect"; there is "God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"; there shall our soul have as much of heaven as it is capable of enjoying, and that without intermission; wherefore, when we come there we shall be saved indeed! But now for a poor creature to be brought hither, this is the life of the point. But how shall I come hither? There are heights and depths to hinder.

Suppose the poor Christian is now upon a sick-bed, beset with a thousand fears, and ten thousand at the end of that; sick-bed fears! And they are sometimes dreadful ones; fears that are begotten by the review of the sin, perhaps, of forty years' profession; fears that are begotten by dreadful and fearful suggestions of the devil, the sight of death, and the grave, and it may be of hell itself; fears that are begotten by the withdrawing and silence of God and Christ, and by, it may be, the appearance of the devil himself. Some of these made David cry, "O spare me" a little, "that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more." "The sorrows of death," said he, "compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." These things, in another place, he calls the bands that the godly have in their death, and the plagues that others are not aware of. "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." But now, out of all these, the Lord will save His people. Not one sin, nor fear, nor devil shall hinder; nor the grave nor hell disappoint thee. But how must

this be? Why, thou must have a safe-conduct to heaven. What conduct? A conduct of angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

These angels, therefore, are not to fail them that are the saved, but must, as commissioned of God, come down from heaven to do this office for them; they must come, I say, and take the care and charge of our soul, to conduct it safely into Abraham's bosom. It is not our meanness in the world, nor our weakness of faith, that shall hinder this; nor shall the loathsomeness of our diseases make these delicate spirits shy of taking this charge upon them. Lazarus the beggar found this a truth; a beggar so despised of the rich glutton that he was not suffered to come within his gate; a beggar full of sores and noisome putrefaction; yet, behold, when he dies, the angels come from heaven to fetch him thither: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

True, sick-bed temptations are oftentimes the most violent, because then the devil plays his last game with us, he is never to assault us more; besides, perhaps God suffereth it thus to be, that the entering into heaven may be the sweeter, and ring of this salvation the louder! O it is a blessed thing for God to be our God and our Guide even unto death, and then for His angels to conduct us safely to glory; this is saving indeed. And He shall save Israel "out of all his troubles"; out of sick-bed troubles as well as others.

Sixth. To be saved, to be perfectly saved, calls for more than all this; the godly are not perfectly saved when their soul is possessed of heaven. True, their spirit is made perfect, and hath as much of heaven as at present it can hold, but man, consisting of body and soul, cannot be said to be perfectly saved so long as but part of him is in the heavens; his body is the price of the blood of Christ as well as his spirit; his body is the temple of God, and a member of the body, and of the flesh, and of the bones of Christ; he cannot, then, be completely saved until the time of the resurrection of the dead. Wherefore, when Christ shall come the second time, then will He save the body from all those things that at present make it incapable of the heavens. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

O what a great deal of good God hath put into this little word "saved"! We shall not see all the good that God hath put into this word "saved" until the Lord Jesus comes to raise the dead. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." But till it appears what we shall be, we cannot see the bottom of this word "saved." True, we have the earnest of what we shall be, we have the Spirit of God, "which is the earnest of our

inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” The possession is our body – it is called “a purchased possession,” because it is the price of blood; now the redemption of this purchased possession is the raising of it out of the grave, which raising is called the redemption of our body. And when this vile body is made like unto His glorious body, and this body and soul together possessed of the heavens, then shall we be every way saved.

There are three things from which this body must be saved:

1. There is that sinful filth and vileness that yet dwells in it, under which we groan earnestly all our days.

2. There is mortality, that subjecteth us to age, sickness, aches, pains, diseases and death.

3. And there is the grave and death itself, for death is the last enemy that is to be destroyed. “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

So then, when this comes to pass, then we shall be saved; then will salvation, in all the parts of it, meet together in our glory; then we shall be every way saved – saved in God’s decree, saved in Christ’s undertakings, saved by faith, saved in perseverance, saved in soul, and in body and soul together in the heavens, saved perfectly, everlastingly, gloriously.

THE WAY THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES COMFORT

By Dr. John Owen

We are taught to put a due valuation on the consolations of the Holy Ghost by the *matter of them* or that wherewith He comforts us. Now, this may be referred to two heads – the love of the Father and the grace of the Son. All the consolations of the Holy Ghost consist in His acquainting us with and communicating unto us the love of the Father and the grace of the Son; nor is there anything in the one or the other but He makes it a matter of consolation to us: so that, indeed, we have our communion with the Father in His love and the Son in His grace by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

1. He communicates to us and acquaints us with *the love of the Father*.

Having informed His disciples with that ground and foundation of their consolation which by the Comforter they should receive, our blessed Saviour shuts up all in this, “For the Father Himself loveth you”

(John 16. 27). This is that which the Comforter is given to acquaint us withal – even that God is the Father and that He loves us. In particular, that the Father, the first Person in the Trinity, considered so distinctly, loves us. On this account is He said so often to come forth from the Father because He comes in pursuit of His love and to acquaint the hearts of believers therewith, that they may be comforted and established. By persuading us of the eternal and unchangeable love of the Father, He fills us with consolation. And indeed, all the effects of the Holy Ghost before mentioned have their tendency this way. Whatever is desirable in it is thus communicated to us by the Holy Ghost.

A sense of this is able not only to relieve us, but to make us in every condition to rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious. It is not with an increase of corn and wine and oil, but with the shining of the countenance of God upon us that He comforts our souls (Psa. 4. 6, 7). “The world hateth me,” may such a soul as has the Spirit say, “but my Father loves me. Men despise me as a hypocrite, but my Father loves me as a child. I am poor in this world, but I have a rich inheritance in the love of my Father. I am straitened in all things, but there is bread enough in my Father’s house. I mourn in secret under the power of my lusts and sin, where no eyes see me, but the Father sees me and is full of compassion. With a sense of His kindness, which is better than life, I rejoice in tribulation, glory in affliction, triumph as a conqueror. Though I am killed all the day long, all my sorrows have a bottom that may be fathomed – my trials, bounds that may be compassed. But the breadth, and depth, and height of the love of the Father, who can express?” I might render glorious this way of the Spirit’s comforting us with the love of the Father by comparing it with all other causes and means of joy and consolation whatever and so discover their emptiness, its fulness – their nothingness, its being all.

2. Again: He does it by communicating to us and acquainting us with *the grace of Christ* – all the fruits of His purchase, all the desirableness of His Person, as we are interested in Him. The grace of Christ is referred to two heads – the grace of His Person and of His office and work. By both these does the Holy Ghost administer consolation to us (John 16. 14). He glorifies Christ by revealing His excellencies and desirableness to believers as the “Chiefest among ten thousand ... altogether lovely,” and then He shows them of the things of Christ – His love, grace, all the fruits of His death, suffering, resurrection and intercession, and with these supports their hearts and souls. And here, whatever is of refreshment in the pardon of sin, deliverance from the curse and wrath to come, in justification and adoption, with the innumerable privileges attending them in the hope of glory given unto us, comes in on this head of account.

THE TWO CROSSES

*From a sermon by James William Tobitt (1861-1928) of Hastings
on Hebrews 12. 3*

We will go to the root of the matter if the Lord shall help us; if we discover the malady, we may find the remedy. I believe it to be twofold: first, the pressure of the inward cross; secondly, the weight of the outward cross. Every believer has to carry to the end of his course these two crosses, and the weight of them often causes him to feel very fatigued, worn out, and sad at heart.

What is the inward cross? The weight of the old man. When God called us by His grace, He could easily, had it been His purpose and had it been for our benefit, effectually have delivered us from the weight of that cross, but He has not done so. You find the Apostle Paul, who was one of these racers [Heb. 12. 1, 2], at one time expressing his weariness because of the pressure of this cross: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That is the inward cross. The Lord has determined in much love and wisdom that His people should carry it because it is very beneficial. By it they learn feelingly from what they are saved, how vile they are, the preciousness of Christ, and the love of God the Father.

This cross is a continual burden to the Christian; when he would pray, then sinful thoughts will come, or distracting cares, or wicked imaginations. When he would read the Bible, there is a power pulling him back from that sacred exercise. Sometimes when he is sitting in God's house, he is worrying about a certain commercial matter he has to face in the week, or something that has been a trouble to him in the past. He has no power over his thoughts; they run helter skelter, north, south, east and west. He has to say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me" – "how to perform that which is good I find not."

That is the inward cross, and I do think many young Christians, and perhaps old ones too, have not a clear understanding in this matter. In the believer there are two distinct natures, one from heaven, the other from hell, diametrically opposed to each other, the one perfectly holy, the other utterly bad; the one cannot become sinful, the other cannot become good; and these two natures are continually striving for the mastery, continually fighting; and it is not to be wondered at that in this conflict the child of God oftentimes feels very fatigued, and thinks all his strength is gone. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

But I say, there is the outward cross. It pleases God, for the benefit and discipline of His people in the wilderness, oftentimes to touch them

in a very tender part concerning outside matters, in providential affairs. "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."

Why does the Lord put a cross upon the shoulders of the believer? I will tell you. It is to deaden the life of sense and to quicken the life of faith. The more the Israelites were afflicted in Egypt, "the more they multiplied and grew." We often become wearied under the pressure of this external cross, and in addition to our weariness, at times there are manifestations of every wicked rebellion and sinful complaining. O how our carnal nature desires a smoother path, a more pleasant course; but the Lord knows what is best, and it is well for you and me when we can say from the bottom of our heart, "Father, Thy will, not mine, be done."

We must expect a cross; in our sober moments we have blessed God for it. "If any man," the Saviour said, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We do want to follow Him, therefore let us take up the cross – not merely look at it, or shrink from it, but take it up, and we shall find in cross-bearing we have the sympathy of Jesus; He always carries the heaviest end of it. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "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." He is leading us forth by the right way, not only that we may go to a city of habitation, but have sweet converse with Him by the way.

I am sure I have proved in my little experience that the weight of the inward cross – the old man – and the outward cross – some temporal trouble – have kept open the way of communion, because in this experience we cannot do without Jesus, we are compelled to cry to Him. By all these exercises we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

OUR FIRST LOVE

By Archibald Alexander (1772-1851)

The prominent characteristic of every soul truly converted to Christianity is *love* to the Saviour. The faith which is the gift of God, and which is wrought in Christians by the Holy Spirit, always works by love. Love is, therefore, set down as the first and principal fruit of the Spirit. Now, there is something peculiar in the exercise of this first love of the young convert. Its exercise is fervent and tender – not founded, indeed, on such accurate views of the character of Christ as are afterwards acquired, and commonly less pure from mere natural

excitement than that of the mature Christian, but accompanied with more joy and exultation.

These joyful frames, so common in new converts, may be ascribed to several causes. The first is the recent transition of the soul from a conviction of condemnation, ruin and helplessness to a state of favour and reconciliation. When the views of the way of salvation are clear, and faith strong, there is commonly a joyful persuasion of safety and pardon; and even the hope of pardon after a dark season of distress and conscious condemnation is like life from the dead. This case is well illustrated by that of a criminal reprieved from death when under the gallows. His first feelings will be ecstatic, and though his safety is as certain years afterwards, he never will experience the same liveliness of joy.

Another thing which stamps a peculiarity on the first love of the Christian is the novelty of the objects and scenes which are now presented to his enlightened mind. All his lifetime he has been in darkness respecting the true nature of spiritual things; for, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But now the eyes of his understanding being opened, and the true light shining into them, everything appears new and attractive; and sometimes a divine glory is exhibited to the contemplation of the enlightened mind. This light is, therefore, called "marvellous" by an apostle, and the love which accompanies it partakes of its marvellous nature. "Whom," says the Apostle Peter, "having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1. 8).

Again, God deals with His children in the infancy of their spiritual life as mothers with their children while they are young. They nurse them with tender affection, and do everything in their power to render them comfortable. They furnish them with the sweetest nutriment, cherish them in their bosoms, carry them in their arms, and rock them in the cradle. But when they have been weaned and have grown strong, they are turned out to make ends meet for themselves. They must now learn to work and endure hardships, and are no longer cherished at the breast or dandled on the mother's knee.

Thus our heavenly Father, who exercises a warmer and more tender affection for His children than the kindest mother, is pleased to deal very tenderly with young converts, and often pours streams of divine comfort into their mouldable hearts. They are for a season led in smooth and pleasant paths; though dark clouds may occasionally come over them, and "weeping may endure for a night; yet joy cometh in the morning." In their prayers and other religious exercises they enjoy liberty of access to their heavenly Father; and much of their time is spent in grateful songs of praise for redeeming love and converting grace. The state of the soul

at this period is beautifully expressed by the poet in the hymn which begins:

“Sweet was the time when first I felt
The Saviour’s pardoning blood.”

Earthly things now have little or no attraction. The thoughts and feelings, the conversation and actions, are chiefly occupied with religion. These are indeed peaceful days, and will be often afterwards remembered with a mournful pleasure, when the scene is greatly changed; and especially when inbred corruption grows strong, when temptations vex the soul, and when the heart seems to have lost all tenderness; and when, instead of joy, darkness and trouble almost overwhelm the soul. Then is often uttered the exclamation of Job, “Oh that I were as in months past!” (Job 29. 2).

The union of the believer to Christ is, in Scripture, often compared to marriage; and the joy of the young convert is like the joy experienced in the day of espousals (Jer. 2. 2).

The early days of the true Christian may also be well illustrated by the feelings of the newly enlisted soldier. He rejoices in the “pomp and circumstance” of the military life, is animated by the sound of martial music, and by the sight of splendid banners, and the gorgeous costume of his officers; and leads a life of idleness, while his bounty money supplies him with such luxuries as he desires. But how different are the condition and feelings of the same person when he receives marching orders, and especially when he is led into battle, when all his energies are required, and his life is placed in imminent danger!

GEMS FROM THOMAS BROOKS

See Book Reviews, page 190

God looks that we should spread His gracious promises before Him, as Hezekiah did Sennacherib’s letter (Isa. 37. 14).

Paul, who learned his theology among the angels, and who had the Holy Ghost for his immediate teacher, tells us plainly that “he knew but in part” (1 Cor. 13. 9-11).

When the world frowns most, then God smiles most; when the world puts its iron chains upon the saints’ legs, then God puts His golden chains about the saints’ necks; when the world puts a bitter cup into one hand, then the Lord puts a cup of consolation into the other hand; when the world cries out, “Crucify them, crucify them,” then commonly they hear that sweet voice from heaven, “These are My beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased.”

Prayer is nothing but the turning of a man's inside outward before the Lord. The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of a man's soul into the bosom of God.

This little word Father, says Luther, lisped forth in prayer by a child of God, exceeds the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and all other famed orators in the world.

Ah, friends! Did you but love private prayer as well as you love the world, and delight in private prayer as much as you delight in the world, and were your hearts as much set upon closet prayer as they are set upon the world, you would never say you could not pray.

It is not so much from lack of ability to pray in secret that you do not pray in secret, as it is from lack of a will, a heart to pray in secret.

Princes lock up with their own hands in secret their most precious and costly jewels; and so does God His: "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure," or for His secret gem (Psa. 135. 4).

Scripture condemns all those that put off secret prayer till they are moved to it by the Spirit; for by this sad delusion many have been kept from secret prayer many weeks, many months; oh, that I might not say, many years! Though it be a very fit season to pray when the Spirit moves us to pray, yet it is not the only season to pray (Isa. 62. 1; Psa. 123. 1, 2; Gal. 4. 6).

Though all the sons of Jacob returned laden from Egypt with corn and money in their sacks, yet only Benjamin had the silver cup in the mouth of his sack. So though the men of the world have their corn and their money, etc., yet it is only God's Benjamins that have the silver cup, the grace cup, the cup of blessing, as the apostle calls it, for their portion (1 Cor. 10. 16).

Private prayer is so far from being a hindrance to a man's business, that it is the way of ways to bring down a blessing from heaven upon a man's business.

O sirs! Did Christ spend whole nights in private prayer for the salvation of your souls; and will you think it much to redeem an hour's time from your natural rest to seek and to serve Him in a corner, and to make sure the things of your everlasting peace?

One sigh and groan from a broken heart is better pleasing to God than all human eloquence.

Though God seldom comes at our time, yet He never fails to come at His own time: "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10. 37). The mercies of God are not styled the swift, but the "sure mercies of David."

An idle life and an holy heart are far enough asunder. By doing nothing, says the heathen man, men learn to do evil things. It is easy slipping out of an idle life into an evil and wicked life; yes, an idle life is of itself evil, for man was made to be active, not to be idle.

Idleness is the hour of temptation, and an idle person is the devil's tennis-ball, tossed by him at his pleasure.

And therefore shun sloth and idleness as you would shun a lion in the way, or poison in your meat, or coals in your bosom, or else you will never find time to wait upon God in your closets.

There cannot be a surer nor a greater character of a hypocrite than to make a great deal of stir about little things in religion, and in the meanwhile neglect the great and main things in religion.

I never knew any man hot and zealous about circumstantial, about the little things of religion, that was ever famous for closet prayer.

O that men would once learn to be contentedly ignorant, where God would not have them knowing! O that men were once so humble, as to account it no disparagement to them to acknowledge some depths in God, and in the blessed Scripture, which their shallow reason cannot fathom!

Christ, when He was on earth, very frequently, severely and sharply condemned curious inquirers, as is evident by John 21. 22 and Acts 1. 6, 7, and the great reason why our Saviour did so frequently check this humour of curiosity was because the great indulgers of it were too frequent neglecters of the more great, necessary and important points of religion.

The devil knows he is no loser, and the curious soul but a very little gainer, if he can but persuade him to spend most of his precious time in studying and poring over the most dark, mysterious and hidden things of God. He who affects to read the Revelation of John more than his plain epistles, or Daniel's prophecies more than David's Psalms, and is more busy about reconciling difficult Scriptures than he is about mortifying lusts, or that is set more upon vain speculations than upon things that make most for edification, he is not the man that is cut out for closet prayer.

Many have so much to do on earth that they have no time to look up to heaven. As much earth puts out the fire, so much worldly business puts out the fire of heavenly affections.

Many drive so great a trade in their shops that their private trade to heaven is quite laid by.

There is no cloud, nor curtain, nor moment of darkness, that can stand between the eyes of God and the ways of men.

Some may further object and say, God is very well acquainted with all our desires, necessities, straits, trials; and there is no moving of Him to bestow any favours upon us which He does not intend to bestow upon us, whether we pray in our closets or no; and therefore to what purpose do you press secret prayer so hard upon us?

Many a man had never found the way to his closet if God by bodily illnesses had not turned him out of his shop, his trade, his business, his all, etc.

O, do not take up in [be satisfied with] your closet prayers, or tears, or joys, or enlargements; but labour and long to enjoy that inward and close fellowship with God in your closets, as may leave such a choice and sweet savour of God, both upon your hearts and lives, as others may be forced to say, Surely these have been with Jesus (Acts 4. 13).

JOHN BERRIDGE

*From John Gadsby's Memoirs of Hymnwriters and Compilers
(Concluded from page 159)*

The following extracts from some of Berridge's letters will be found interesting:

To Lady Huntingdon, — 3rd, 1763: "O heart! heart! what art thou? A mass of fooleries and absurdities! The vainest, foolishhest, craftiest, wickedest thing in nature. And yet the Lord Jesus asks me for this heart, woos me for it, died to win it. O wonderful love! Adorable condescension!

"Take it, Lord, and let it be
Ever closed to all but Thee."

To Lady Huntingdon, December 26th, 1777: "I do not want a helper merely to stand up in my pulpit, but to ride round my district. And I fear my weekly circuits would not suit a London or a Bath divine, nor any

tender evangelist that is environed with prunella [clerical gown]. Long rides and miry roads in sharp weather! Cold houses to sit in with very moderate fuel, and three or four children roaring or rocking about you! Coarse food and meagre liquor; lumpy beds to lie on, and too short for the feet; stiff blankets, like boards, for a covering; and live cattle in plenty to feed upon you. Rise at five in the morning to preach at seven; breakfast on tea that smells very sickly; at eight mount a horse, with boots never cleaned, and then ride home, praising God for all mercies."

To Lady Huntingdon, April 26th, 1777: "I regard neither High Church nor Low Church, nor any church, but the church of Christ, which is not built with hands, nor circumscribed within peculiar walls, nor confined to a singular denomination. I cordially approve the doctrines and liturgy of the Church of England, and have cause to bless God for a church-house to preach in, and a church revenue to live upon. And I could wish the gospel might not only be preached in all the British churches, but established therein by Christ's Spirit, as well as by a national statute; but from the principles of the clergy and the leading men in the nation, which are growing continually more unscriptural and licentious, I do fear our defence is departing, and the glory is removing from our land. Perhaps, in less than a hundred years to come, the church lands maybe seized on to hedge up Government gaps, as the abbey lands were 250 years ago. But you say the Lord is sending many gospel labourers into the church. True, and with a view, I think, of calling His people out of it. Because, when such ministers are removed by death, or transported to another vineyard, I see no fresh gospel labourer succeed them, which obliges the forsaken flocks to fly to a meeting. And what else can they do? If they have tasted of manna and hunger for it, they cannot feed on heathen chaff, nor yet on legal crusts, though baked by some stanch [staunch?] pharisee quite up to perfection."

To Lady Huntingdon, December 30th, 1768: "A very heavy time have I had for the last three weeks; cloudy days and moonless nights. Only a little consolation fetched down now and then by a little dull prayer. At times I am ready to wish that sin and the devil were both dead, they make such a horrible racket within me and about me. Rather let me pray, Lord, Give me faith and patience; teach me to expect the cross daily, and help me to take it up cheerfully. Woefully weary I am of myself, but know not how to live and feast daily upon Jesus. A treasure He is indeed, but lies hid in a field, and I know not how to dig in the dark."

To Mr. Coats, April 22nd, 1761: "Why do you write to me with so much reverence, and make so many apologies for writing? Is this becoming language from one sinner to another sinner? Ought the dust of the earth to elevate his kindred ashes? Or should a frog croak out a

compliment to a toad? And need I this? If you love me, do not hurt me. I do not want to be taught well of myself; the devil would teach me this daily, and is so skilful a doctor in his own business that he needeth not a helping hand from God's own children. Before you write again to me, look into yourself, and if you find anything there that causeth something, then sit down and write to John Berridge as you would write to one Alexander Coats. I find you are got to your crutches. Well, thank God for a crutch to help a lame leg; this both showeth and helpeth your weakness. Truly, my friend, your cross is just the same with my own. I am not able to walk a step without a crutch, so lame I am. The wood of it comes from Calvary. My crutch is Christ, and a blessed crutch He is. O let me bear my whole weight upon Thee, whilst I am walking through this wilderness!"

To Lady Margaret Ingham, January 28th, 1766: "I am one of those strange folk who set up for journeymen without knowing their Master's business, and offer many precious wares to sell without understanding their full value. I have got a Master too, a most extraordinary Person, whom I am supposed to be well acquainted with, because He employs me as a riding pedlar to serve near fourteen shops in the country, besides my own parish; yet I know much less of my Master than I do of His wares. Often is my tongue describing Him as the fairest of men, whilst my heart is painting Him as the Witch of Endor; and many big words have I spoken to His credit; yea, and frequently beseeching people to trust Him with their *all*, whilst my own heart has been afraid to trust him with a groat."

To Mr. —, October 23rd, 1779: "Dear Sir, Your letter of July 2nd came duly to hand, but has waited a wearisome while for an answer. Indeed, I have been much, yet not too much, afflicted with my old disorder for some months, a nervous fever. We have been housekeepers every summer for forty years; and this fever-friend has kept me this summer twelve weeks at home, and forbids me all literary correspondence. As winter comes on, I begin to revive; and when the swallows march off, I begin to march out; as when the swallows return, I am obliged to keep in. 'Tis well we are not in our own keeping, nor at our own carving, since we so little know what is good for us. I do not love this fever-friend; yet he is certainly the best earthly companion I have. No lasting gain do I get but in a furnace. Comforts of every kind make me either light or lofty, and swell me, though unperceivably, with self-sufficiency. Indeed, so much dross, native and acquired, is found in my heart, that I have constant need of a furnace; and Jesus has selected a suitable furnace for me, not a hot and hasty one, which seems likely to harden and consume me, but one with a gentle and lingering heat, which melts my heart gradually, and lets out some of its dross. Though I cannot

love a furnace, nor bask in it like a salamander, yet the longer I live, the more I see of its need and its use. A believer seldom walks steadily and ornamentally, unless he is well furnaced. Without this his zeal is often scalding hot, his boldness attended with fierceness, or rather rashness, and his confidence at times more the result of animal spirit than the fruit of the Spirit; but a furnace consumes these excrescences, and when sweetly blown with grace, will make a Christian humble, watchful and mellow, very censorious of himself and full of compassion for others. May your congregation be increasing in numbers, and the power of the Lord be present to wound and to heal, to quicken, and comfort, and build."

As some of these extracts taken out by John Gadsby are not the best of Berridge's letters, we append the following beautiful letter on sanctification.

Dear and honoured Sir – I have just received your golden treasury by the hands of my dear brother of Yelling [Henry Venn], and thank you kindly for the pretty little valuable present.

In May I began to itinerate after a five years' discontinuance through illness, and kept on, though with much feebleness, for two months, when I was seized with a smart attack of my old complaint. I am now, as the world account, a scold miserable, but lying at Jesus' gate; and am reduced to a mere Sunday preacher: the Lord be praised that I am not wholly laid aside. What a fund of corruption is lodged in the human heart! Every stripe I receive, my Master's word tells me, I have procured for myself. Lord, I own it; sanctify the rod, and make the furnace purge away my dross. I trust the Lord has taught me to hate sin, and to hunger after righteousness; yet I am often seeking after holiness in such a manner as stiffens my heart, brings a dry and lean soul, and makes my eye lose the sight of Christ's salvation. This convinces me there is a mystery in the manner of obtaining sanctification that we are not soon acquainted with. We are apt to think of sanctification as a separate work from justification, following after it and wholly independent of it; whereas they seem to be connected works, and inseparable from each other, one resulting from the other.

The clearer sight we get of Christ, and the sweeter views we have of our adoption, the more our hearts are filled with love, joy, peace, and all the fruits of the Spirit, which is sanctification. When Jesus gives a clearer view of His dying love, He always accompanies that view with the graces of the Spirit. The heart is filled at the same time with pardon and holiness, with justification and sanctification. So that if we desire to be holy, we must seek to be happy in the Saviour's love, must seek a clear evidence of our adoption, and labour to keep it clear. As our views of Christ are more cloudy and discouraging, our bosoms will be more

barren of heavenly tempers. A man may be constitutionally meek as the lamb, constitutionally kind as the spaniel, constitutionally cheerful as the lark, and constitutionally modest as the owl, but these are not sanctification. No sweet, heavenly, humble tempers, no sanctifying graces are found but from the cross. Jesus says, He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath (or possesseth) eternal life; where He showeth how eternal life (which must comprise the whole of spiritual life) is obtained, viz. by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, i.e. by feeding on His atonement. Thus all divine life, and all the precious fruits of it, pardon, peace and holiness, spring from the cross.

And is not this intimated by St. John, when he says, One of the soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water? They did not follow one another, but came out together; the blood betokening pardon, the water sanctification. Carnal men make the water come out first, and the blood follow; they seek a little obedience first, and then hope to have the benefit of the blood. Professors often make the blood come first, and the water follow; i.e. seek first to be justified, and then to be sanctified. But I believe experienced Christians make the blood and water flow together; get holiness by clear views of the cross, and find eternal life by feeding on the Saviour's flesh and blood. Was not a lamb sacrificed every morning and evening in the Jewish temple? And was not this intended to show us that we must feed on Christ's atonement every day, and derive all our life, the life of peace and holiness from His death?

Upright people are often coming to me with complaints, and telling me that since they received pardon and have been seeking after sanctification (as a separate work), their hearts are become exceeding dry and barren. I ask them how they find their heart when Jesus shows His dying love. They tell me, full of peace and love and every heavenly temper. Then I answer, Jesus hereby shows you that holiness as well as pardon is to be had from the blood of His cross. Labour therefore to get your conscience sprinkled every day with the atoning blood, and sanctification will ensue of course; the blood and water flow together.

When Jesus only gives a smile, and seals some promise on the heart, though it be not the seal of pardon, it occasions a sweet transforming change in the soul. And all fancied sanctification which does not arise wholly from the blood of the cross is nothing better than Pharisaism, and if persisted in, will end in Pharisaism. For when sanctification is considered as a separate work from justification and wholly independent of it, by and by it is considered as a justifying work itself; and men profess and preach they are first to be justified by the blood of Christ, and then by their own obedience.

O, dear Sir, if we would be holy, we must get to the cross and dwell there; else notwithstanding all our labour and diligence, and fasting and

praying and good works, we shall be yet void of real sanctification, destitute of those humble, sweet and gracious tempers which accompany a clear view of the cross. But mere doctrinal knowledge will not give us this view; it only proceeds from a lively faith wrought in us by the Prince of life. A legal spirit helpeth forward our mistake in the matter of sanctification.

We would fain divide the water and the blood, fain would separate sanctification from justification, that we may make a merit of it. Whereas if they are inseparably connected, and both pardon and holiness spring from the blood of the cross, the root of merit is dug up thereby, and Christ is All in all.

Another thing confirms our mistake, which is, that all heavenly graces are called fruits of the Spirit. Hence we conclude that pardon must spring peculiarly from the blood of the cross, and holiness be a separate work of the Spirit. But though all gracious tempers are the Spirit's fruits, yet that fruit is bestowed at the foot of the cross; eternal life is found at Calvary by eating the Saviour's flesh and drinking His blood...

May the Lord Jesus bring and keep you and yours at the cross, to see and sing the wonders of redeeming love, till you are called up higher to sing eternal praise with all the saints. Grace, mercy and peace be with you, and with your much obliged and affectionate servant,
Everton, August 18th, 1773

J.B.

SPIRITUAL BEGINNINGS

By Mrs. Mercy Sturgess of Barton-le-Clay

The Lord help me, if His will, to write a few things for His honour. It has been on my mind for some time that I should write a little of my beginnings, as I hope, of a work of grace in my heart. As I have written of some of my later experience (see *May Gospel Standard*, pages 153-156) there must be a right beginning, which was very gentle, very small.

I can look back to when I was eight or nine years old. I felt there was a God, an elect people, a heaven and a hell. I had checks of conscience and could not do as I would or go where I would.

I lost my dear, godly mother when I was fifteen years old. Though she brought us children up very strictly, I loved her. The night before she died, she was telling us a few things of what the Lord had done for her. My eldest sister said to her, "You have been a good mother." She answered, "No thanks to me." O what a spirit she had, a right one! My heart went up to the Lord that I might have a double portion of that right

spirit. I felt it a hard thing to lose a mother when so young and that I should never be able to say, I would not have one thing altered, as I had read of some. But I could, in after years, when I hope Christ was revealed to me as my God.

Well, I went on with many fears that I was wrong; did it begin right? If I had gone out into the world and been brought back it would have been more clear. When young I used to like to read the *Little Gleaner*. I read, I think it was there, about the servant girl. The minister told her to pray, "Show me myself," and, "Show me Thyself," which I felt I did. Later on I lost a sister; she died in hospital. She was very distressed and said she was a lost sinner. But the Lord appeared and she wanted to say goodbye to us all. As I was coming away from hospital, I walked with her mother-in-law. She said to me, "You must feel lost before you are found." I felt I had not felt that, but afterwards I did. How the Word of God condemned me wherever I looked: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"! Broken all the ten commandments, a destitute sinner, leprous all over; much more could be said. I felt the Lord put His hand again the second time to the work. Before it was only men as trees walking (Mark 8. 24). I felt I had no hope until Jesus revealed Himself as my only hope. I was a little helped to come to Him and confess myself as a hell-deserving sinner. He was the only way, and I was then helped to believe in Him in a little measure by hearing preaching from John: "Herein is love," etc. Then in Romans 6. 14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you," etc. Then Isaiah 27. 13: "They shall come which were ready to perish." I then felt a good hope; Christ was precious. How I loved Him! He was mine. How good were Isaiah 40. 1, 2 and also Romans 8: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them," etc., and "no separation." My burden was gone.

Then came on the exercise of the ordinances of God's house for about twelve months. I felt it a very solemn step, many ups and downs. Did He die for me? Should I be kept in it – too young? But it became a very heavy exercise which I could not put off until I felt I had to speak. I felt I was walking in darkness by keeping back. So I was enabled to speak to my brother who was the deacon then, a time not to be forgotten. Next morning these lines came to me with feeling:

"He wept, He bled, He died for you;
What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?"

I said, "No more, Lord." Hymn 441.

The next Sabbath I felt very comfortable. The preaching came much my way. The next week I felt very blest and felt my name was in the book of life; Christ was mine and I was His. I had prayed for the last verse of hymn 471 to be fulfilled in me,

“Let me attest Thy power;
Let me Thy goodness prove,
Till my full soul can hold no more
Of everlasting love,”

which I felt He answered. I cannot speak of it as I would; it seemed too great for such as me. I felt to be “a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”

Later, when I was baptized, my brother said, “What is to be the first hymn?” I said, “One to praise the Three-One God in saving sinners.” He gave out hymn 405. When it came to that verse, “That worms of earth should ever be One with incarnate Deity!” I could not seem to sink low enough. I had felt I could not sit down at the Lord’s supper without feeling He was mine; it is so solemn. It was the Lord’s day. I was received into the church in the afternoon; I did not feel so much as I would. The next day I did not feel His presence. How I mourned His absence! I felt I could not live without Him. I said, “And to Thy glory take me in, for there I long to be.”

As time went on, portions of Scripture were good to me. I remember once looking up to the Lord and asking Him to give me a word I did not know was in the Bible, which I should then feel was from Him. The word was: “They shall walk with Me in white,” then the words in Daniel, “For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Thus I went on, very tried at times, and exercised also to do the right things in providence. And also as a church and people, in sending my brother out to preach and then having him as pastor. I felt it to be a right thing, and it proved to be food to my soul, if sometimes reproved. Thus I went on feeling my sinfulness and poverty.

I feel I must leave off as I have written of some of my later experience. This I feel to be written very poorly but hope it is real. May it be able to be read. I never thought I should be able to write this at 87 years old in September 1983. Sorry my spelling may not be good. ’Tis all of free grace, so *all* the glory Lord be Thine.

Mercy Sturgess

(I still have to mourn an absent God and have to prove no man can keep alive his own soul. I wonder how it will be at my end.)

OBITUARY

Reginald James Aldridge, formerly pastor at Ebenezer Chapel, Worthing, died suddenly on May 13th, aged 85.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Secret Key to Heaven – the Vital Importance of Private Prayer, by Thomas Brooks; paperback; 288 pages; price £6.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It is a long time since we read such a profitable book as *The Secret Key to Heaven* – howbeit it comes with a gentle reproof for our spiritual slothfulness and indolence.

The subject is the vital necessity in the Christian life for secret prayer. (“Closet prayer” is the term the author uses throughout, as his discourse is based on Matthew 6. 6: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”) So the sub-title is “The Vital Importance of Private Prayer.” Right at the beginning, in the preface, the author states: “The power of religion and godliness lives, thrives or dies, as closet prayer lives, thrives or dies. Godliness never rises to a higher pitch than when men keep closest to their closets.” He continues:

“Every man is that really which he is secretly. Never tell me how handsomely, how purely, how bravely, this or that man acts his part before others but tell me, if you can, how he acts his part before God in his closet; for the man is that certainly that he is secretly.”

Thomas Brooks would strongly have disagreed with the commonly repeated saying: “The prayer meeting is the barometer (or thermometer) of the church.” “No,” he would have emphatically replied, “secret prayer!”

This book, first published at the time of the great plague in 1665, is written in true Puritan style but Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) has been called “the most readable of the Puritans.” So this would be a good introduction for any who have heard of the Puritans’ works but are rather fearful about venturing to read them. There is nothing difficult or complicated here but plain, simple, gracious writing. People today may smile at the Puritans saying “nineteenthly” and “twentiethly” (as Brooks does) but this is to keep his points separate and make them clear.

The only section of the book which to us seems dated is the short section dealing with the problem that household servants and maids may have in finding time and also a private place for prayer. But even this shows the pastoral sympathy and care of the author – as in the seventeenth century there were many in this position.

Interestingly, Brooks at the outset states that he had never heard a sermon on the subject and had never come across a book written on the subject. Speaking to old, godly men and women, they said the same.

Thomas Brooks, as well as speaking of the great value of private prayer, deals with the difficulties that people have: wandering thoughts; the temptations of Satan; lack of ability in prayer; weakness and infirmity – and also Satan’s constant thrust: if God knows all your desires, if He will accomplish His purposes and do what is best, then why pray? The point is made very clear: we must not *trust* in our private prayers, or think there is anything meritorious in them. Our trust and our only plea must be Christ.

The book is enriched by numerous illustrations and by many short, apt, pithy sayings. These latter are so profitable that we have included some of them separately – not merely as an insight into *The Secret Key to Heaven* but because they are so helpful.

We feel it would be a good thing if every professed believer in our chapels were to read *The Secret Key to Heaven*. We are left with a solemn sense of the vital importance of all that Brooks says and a sense of our own failures in secret prayer. We have to look to the Holy Spirit for His divine enabling.

A Summary of Christian Doctrine, by Louis Berkhof; paperback; 166 pages; price £6.75; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* has long been known and esteemed as a compendium of divinity. His *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, first published in 1938, has been popular as a much shorter work, systematically arranged and subdivided.

Berkhof writes from a strongly Calvinistic standpoint, with a Dutch background. So his writings on common grace, church order, infant baptism are according to the Presbyterian model. All in all this is a most helpful work, especially when referring to some specific doctrine.

We are not familiar with the Scripture version used but it is very similar to the Authorized Version – no replacement of “Thee” by “you.”

Sermons by G.D. Buss; issued monthly and obtainable, free of charge, from Mr. M.W. Short, The Baker's Dozen, Lower Seagry, Chippenham, Wilts., SN15 5EP (donations welcome).

Our readers will be pleased to hear that the sermons of Mr. Gerald Buss, preached at the Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, are being published month by month. The first three are on the texts: Isaiah 41. 10, 1 Thessalonians 4. 16-18, and Mark 16. 3.

NO CONDEMNATION

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8. 33, 34)

A pilgrim to the heavenly land
 One night retired to rest,
 And many thoughts of that fair clime
 Passed through her anxious breast.
 “Shall I rest there at last,” she thought,
 “Amongst the Saviour's sheep?”
 And musing thus, 'twixt hope and fear,
 The pilgrim fell asleep.

She slept, she dreamed, and, lo, there came
 A stranger to her side;
 With lofty bearing there he stood,
 And in stern accents cried,

“Ho! pilgrim to the heavenly land,
 Tell me, for I must know,
 What title hast thou to that place
 Where none but holy go?”

“Thy works! thy works! Produce them all;
 Let’s weigh them one by one;
 Perchance thou hast a surplus store
 For brethren who have none.”
 “Alas!” the pilgrim stammered forth,
 “To heaven I cannot go.
 If thou demandest righteous deeds,
 I have not one to show.”

“No works! Aha! Come, then, your prayers;
 Let’s value them,” he said;
 Abashed, confounded, dumb with grief,
 Poor pilgrim hung her head.
 “I see, I see,” the stranger cried;
 “No title-deeds hast thou.
 What wilt thou answer at the last,
 If thou art speechless now?”

A pause – a sudden thought – and then,
 With triumph on her brow,
 The heaven-bound pilgrim boldly asked,
 “Accuser, who art thou?
 Thy charges are of no avail,
 For God has justified;
 Thou, too, art powerless to condemn,
 For Jesus Christ has died.”

Deep silence reigned; the stranger fled;
 The pilgrim saw no more;
 She felt a thrill of grateful joy,
 And then her dream was o’er.
 “O happy dreamer!” some may say;
 Yet happier far is she
 Who throughout waking hours can sing,
 “The Saviour died for me!”

Oakham, 1857

H.W.

GOSPEL STANDARD ANNUAL MEETINGS

If the Lord will, the sermons, prayer meeting address and a short report of the Annual Meetings will appear in July.
 Next year, the date of the Meetings is Friday, April 13th, 2007.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2006

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

HARD CAUSES

Sermon preached by Mr. G.L. TenBroeke of Sheboygan, U.S.A., at Westminster Chapel, London, on Friday evening, April 21st, 2006, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Societies Annual Meetings.

Text: “And the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it” (Deut. 1. 17).

We find Moses was commanded by God to write to the children of Israel and remind them of many things. To remind them of all that He had done for them. To remind them of the law He had given them. To remind them of all the way in which He had led them. To remind them of all the enemies that had come against them and which had been subdued by Him. What a wonderful thing when the Lord causes us to remember the way, all the way, in which the Lord God hath led us! It is a mercy if we have those things where we can say, the Lord *hath* led us by the right way. He hath ordered and directed all our ways. He hath shown that He is the God of Israel that doeth great things, wonderful things.

Moses reminds them also of the need that they have to look well to themselves and to those things that would spring up amongst them. We know that there are those times when the enemy would come in. We know that there are those things that spring up to trouble and to distress, such as perhaps you may have felt in past months and weeks. Yet, see here how the Lord has even a word for the people. Moses was commanded to speak to the judges.

It is a wonderful thing when God raises up men and places them in positions of authority, positions of honour. They have a great responsibility. Moses here tells them that they were to “hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between every man and his brother.” That will take great wisdom. That will take grace to do it in the fear of the Lord; to do it without partiality or prejudice, to do it as unto the Lord. And I hope, dear friends, that you have experienced something of that today. But may God give you such judges and leaders continually. May those leaders seek to follow this exhortation here given by Moses, the man of God. It is for the good of His people and for the blessing of Zion.

But notice also that when the Lord speaks that they should “judge righteously between every man and his brother,” He comes to something else – “and the stranger.” Have you ever felt the blessing of the Word of God in this? How many times the Lord comes down to those little ones: “*and the stranger.*” Have you been made a stranger at times? Do we know what it is to have been a stranger?

“I once was a stranger to grace and to God;
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
‘Jehovah Tsidkenu’ was nothing to me.”

A stranger! And some of us tonight can look back to that time when we have to say now, to our shame, we were strangers, and we were happy to be strangers, and we would have been content to remain strangers. But blessed be God for all-prevailing grace, sovereign grace, or as one dear hymnwriter put it:

“Ah! but for free and sovereign grace,
I still had lived estranged from God,
Till hell had proved the destined place
Of my deserved but dread abode.

“But O, amazed, I see the hand
That stopped me in my wild career;
A miracle of grace I stand;
The Lord has taught my heart to fear.”

Do not forget the stranger. Do not forget that little one; that one whom the world would not look to, whom men normally would not look to. But O, wonder of wonders, the eye of God looks on him. Now if there is one here tonight and you feel like that – dear friend, may the Lord give you to feel that He looks on such. He does not forget the stranger. He reminds Israel that they were “strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Then God speaks again through Moses. “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment.” You know, dear friends, this is something we cannot do of ourselves. Our carnal nature and our carnal heart and our very being make so many judgments in respect of persons. We have seen it time and time again. We have seen times when one speaks against another and condemns him or speaks light of him, saying he cannot understand how he could do a certain thing if he truly had the fear of God in his heart. Then, on the other hand, there may be another who seems to be walking far more worldly, and they can speak well of him. This is speaking and judging in respect of persons.

“Ye shall hear the small as well as the great.” You know, the natural way is to look upon those who are great. May we see something

of the Spirit of God here. He looks down to the small one. He will not despise him. He will not neglect him. "Ye shall hear the small as well as the great." Then this: "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." Why? "For the judgment is God's." O that we could come to this at all times – "the judgment is God's." He it is that will be the judge in the end.

And now we come to this word – *the cause*. When the children of Israel brought their causes, and they were sometimes very difficult causes, Moses spoke to these judges: "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me." I know that the text this evening refers to Moses, the man of God, and he was indeed a man of God. He was a mighty man, raised up of God for a special purpose. There was none like him, of whom we read that God spoke face to face. What a man he was, what a privileged man, what a favoured man! But while this in its original setting refers to Moses, let us look beyond Moses tonight and see Him of whom Moses was a type. "We would see Jesus." O to behold the Son of God, to behold one greater than Moses, greater than Solomon! (In our text He speaks this word in essence.) What a mercy if He may speak this word to our hearts! What a mercy if He may speak it to our souls, for we do want to hear His voice in it: "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it."

Now, with God's help this evening, I would endeavour to speak first of the counsel in this word. Second, to speak of the cause, and then last, to notice something of the charge which the Lord gives.

The counsel. We know the Lord is the God of counsel. It is one of those names He possesses. "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor." I hope this evening there are those here who desire to know that aspect of His name. It is one of those names which you want to run to and hide in, you want to flee to. "Be Thou my Counsellor ... my Guide." Be Thou my Wisdom. "Counsellor"; as we read, "Counsel is Mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength" (Prov. 8. 14). The Lord has counsel in this word before us.

First, regarding this counsel, we find there is caution in it. How the Lord cautions His people! How He cautions poor sinners! He knows there are many things that are too hard for them, that are difficult. They are things that will, as it were, press them right down. They are things that will overwhelm them, they are things that will bring them right down to their wits' end. He gives them this caution regarding these hard causes they have: do not try to bear them yourselves, do not try to manage them, do not try to figure them out.

This is His caution. It is as if He says unto them: I know what they are and I know what you are. I know how weak you are, I know how unable you are. What caution He gives! Do we not need this often?

Perhaps you have been trying to manage things. You have been trying to work it out. You have been trying, as it were, to scheme everything. Then you have to prove with Jonah, that the Lord blasted the gourd. He overthrew it. Perhaps for a time you seemed to be coping, you seemed to think you were getting on well, and then the Lord brought something else, some other hard cause in the way.

Now there is this caution to you and me this evening. In every hard cause, in every difficult thing, and sometimes, dear friends, it may not be a big thing, but rather some small thing which is very difficult. Sometimes those small things have a sharp thorn in them. They have something that is weighty. There are certain crosses that in essence appear to be small, but how heavy they are! So the Lord gives this sweet caution to the people: "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it."

Also there is direction. When the Lord speaks to His people, He directs and tells them what they *must* do. He gives them to understand where they must go and what they must do. It may be tonight someone here has such a matter, such a hard cause, which you have been trying to work out. Now the Lord will make you see the place where you are to go, where you are to bring it: "To Me." We are so slow to learn this; we have to re-learn it again and again. We look back to some times when we were sweetly helped, and we knew the Lord helped. It was the Lord who undertook. Yet we still tried to carry the next cause alone for a while. O the backwardness of our heart to come to Him, to lean upon Him, to trust in Him! O the wicked pride of our nature, which is continually springing up within us, hindering us! The Lord will direct poor souls in what they are to do with their cause, where they are to bring it: "To Me."

Then there is this, dear friends. He will show them His wisdom. It is in these things we discover a little of the all-wise God. We are reminded of the oft repeated couplet:

"He is too wise to err, and O,
Too good to be unkind."

That is easy to say when things seem to be going well, but when the Lord lays His hand upon us, when He afflicts, when He touches a loved one, when He takes one away perhaps, then what grace is needed to say it.

In my congregation at Sheboygan, many years ago one of our old friends, now gone, had her little boy of two taken from her. She was so overwrought. She told me that she went outside her house one night and raised her hand up and said, "Why did you take my little boy?" But the Lord broke her heart as she stepped back into the house full of guilt. As she came into her doorway, the words dropped in: "He is too wise to err." Now that is what He says in our text this evening. "The cause that

is too hard for you,” too hard for you to understand, too hard for you to comprehend, “bring it unto Me.” I know it. I understand. I know how it tries you. I know how you are afflicted under it. This is the counsel that He gives unto poor souls. Their great need is to learn of Him, to trust in Him. “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.”

Second, we look at *the cause*. What a word it is! It does not list anything specific, it does not itemize. It simply says, “*the cause*.” What is a cause today may not be a cause tomorrow. They are all included, they are all comprised, they are all taken up in this word *cause*. The cause of one here tonight may not be the cause of another. I know, in a sense, today there has been a general cause, but I am sure there are other causes that are different for each one. I am sure of one thing, that a living soul, one whom God has quickened into divine life, will have various causes, and great causes. “The cause that is too hard for thee.”

Now, in thinking of this word, “*the cause*,” the first thing we must remember – it is appointed. It has not come by chance. It has been by divine appointment. There is a purpose found in it. There is a purpose that God will work in it. He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” And by these things He brings poor sinners, He brings His people into these places so they will learn to come to Him, to seek Him. O these appointments – and wise appointments too! When God appoints something, it will come. “He causeth it to come.” The Lord will see to it. O to behold how He has ordered all these things in our lives!

It is a wonderful thing when a soul can rest in that. Are there some tonight who need this? The things which trouble you so, things which perplex you, things which seem so distressing, He has appointed them. “Ah,” you may say, “I think so-and-so is the cause of it. I think it has come because of this person or that person, or because of that situation.” Then we are looking too low. These are but second causes. May we ever be helped to look up to God who performeth all things that are appointed for us. That is where it comes: all things are appointed. O to believe that!

Then surely whatever the Lord appoints must be good in the end. A good God, a gracious God, cannot appoint that which would be ill. It may seem to be ill for a time. It may seem as with Jacob’s cause, “all these things are against me.” But the Lord will make them work for good. O this appointment that He has made!

Now secondly – regarding the causes. We must remember, dear friends, they are not hopeless. They may seem hopeless to you as to how to manage them, how you will come out of it. It may seem that there is no end to it, but it is not hopeless. That is what the Lord would have us to understand in this word: “The cause that is too hard for you.” You

may feel hopeless in it, you might despair under it. “Bring it unto Me.” There is nothing hopeless with the Lord. “He is able.” Do you have that sweet hope this evening and that sweet comfort that lies underneath? In all your struggles and temptations: “He is able.” Sweet to know and believe something of these things that God appoints! They are not hopeless.

“The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.” Why is it not hopeless? Because, dear friends, it is not impossible. It is for you and me and for any man to perform. That is one of the wonderful mysteries of almighty God. He brings poor sinners into the place where to them it is impossible, that they may prove that all things are possible with Him – all things. Some of you know in times past in your life that what seemed so impossible for you, the Lord made a way.

With Israel at the Red Sea, it was an impossible thing. They couldn’t go forward, they could not go backward. It did seem hopeless to them, but it was not for their God. He made a way through the sea. So, if you have one of these causes tonight, one of these hard things that you know not how to manage, and know not how it will go, you have to come to wait upon the Lord. Israel had to wait solely, they had to wait wholly upon their God. They had to wait until the waters were divided, and that may be where you are tonight. You have to wait for the waters to be divided. You have to wait for the stirring of the waters. You have to wait upon your God, wait till He shall perform it and bring it to pass. That sweet word: “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass”! O this cause that they have!

That cause, dear friend, may be like Jacob’s. Didn’t he have a cause! When he returned back to his homeland and back to his father’s house, how anxious he was to get there. How he anticipated that hour when he would see his father’s face. It had been so long. But he heard that Esau is coming. He had the word of the Lord to go back. He was in the will of the Lord, and now this – the cause. You may be in the will of the Lord in a matter. You may have moved and acted, you trust in good fear, by the commandment of the Lord in obedience to His gracious leading, and then the cause has come – Esau has appeared. There has been some unexpected trouble that arose. Now, what could dear Jacob do? He was full of fear. You remember how he began to plan. He sent his wives and children over the brook and “Jacob was left alone.” “And there wrestled a Man with him.”

Dear friends, that is what it will be. The Lord gives you a cause that He may come to wrestle with you. You may feel that is for God’s Jacobs, that it is for His great saints. But remember, Jacob was but a man. He too had his faults. He was full of sin and acknowledged it. “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.” His God had

come to wrestle with him. It may be tonight that is where you are, soul. If only your God would come. You wait for Him to come. You would tell Him all. You want to have that access, that opening. You want to tell Him that which is in your heart, that which lies deep. You want to tell Him that which burdens, that which troubles you so. What is it you want to tell him? Your unworthiness? You want to tell Him your sin, the wretchedness of your nature. There are so many things you would tell Him if you could get His ear. Ah, like Jacob, you need the Lord to come and wrestle with you. You need Jesus to come and enable you to wrestle with Him regarding your hard causes.

Or again, as dear Jehoshaphat, who had his hard cause. The dear man did not know what to do when he saw the enemy and all their hosts surrounding him, and he looked at his own little army. Well might his heart fail on this account. But blessed be God, his faith did not fail. No. "When all around his soul gave way," then he saw "the Lord was all his hope and stay." "Our eyes are upon Thee." That was his secret. The Lord sent the cause. He sent the army to bring Jehoshaphat to that very place where he would look up. His eye was made single. Is there one here tonight who has been looking everywhere else? You have been looking to men or earthly helps, but now you need to look up. That is where help is. That is where strength is. That is where a precious Jesus is. O for grace to look up!

When I say this, I do not speak as if it is something easy. I know too well, dear friends, where I am oftentimes, and how often I am looking too low. May God help us each to learn something of this precious word this evening – to look up "unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Do you really believe it? – "abundantly above all that we ask or think" – I like that word – even "think." There are many things that we think, that we do not venture to ask. Even "think." Your God is able. "The cause that is too hard for thee, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." So then again:

"It is the Lord, who *can* sustain
Beneath the heaviest load;
From whom assistance I obtain
To tread the thorny road."

But now, "The cause that is too hard for thee, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." We come with God's help to consider *the charge*. "Bring it." Often He speaks by way of sweet invitation, such as: "Come ye to the waters," whosoever thirsteth, or "If any man thirst, let him come." O the gracious invitations of His Word! Well, dear friends, here is a command. More than an invitation: it is a heavenly command. May God give us to hear it this evening. May He help us to obey. May He give us

strength. "Bring it." Bring it by prayer. Lay it at His feet. Cast it upon Him.

“‘Cast,’ He said, ‘on Me thy care;
’Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear;
I will all thy needs supply.’”

Cast it. "Bring it." You see, dear friends, this is the work of faith. Great faith; little faith; each one in its way will bring things to Jesus. They will bring their matters.

Now, when the Lord speaks this word, "Bring it unto Me," He speaks it for many reasons. First of all, the Lord causes them to bring it to Him, or tells them to bring it to Him, because He is able to manage it. Do you need that this evening hour? The Lord to manage things for you? To help you; not just to assist, but to take it all, to order it all. When we are in our right place, then we want the Lord to do everything. That is when the Lord is glorified in the hearts of His people. That is when He is magnified, when He helps poor sinners to come and leave it all to Him. That is the work of faith to trust in Him. Many speak of trusting Him, as if it is easily done. But trust is a very great thing. When God helps His people so to do, they will find the Lord will manage all things. He will make everything straight. "The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth." He brings the mountains down. He raises up the valleys. He does great things for us whereof we are glad. What about us this evening? I think of the denomination here, our little denomination, the causes of truth, the churches here. May it be that in all you have attended to, you will find the Lord can manage it. Leave it with Him, look singly there, trust there.

Then secondly, all those causes. Causes which are outward, providential; causes which are inward; causes in your soul, the burdens of sin, the workings of a wicked heart; O the many causes you may have! Bring it to Him; He will support. Are you one of those feeble worms who needs support? Are you one of those broken reeds? You know, a broken reed cannot stand by itself; it continually falls over. You may feel to be like that, so often falling over so that you have to cry out, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Lord, undertake, support. Poor Hezekiah thought he was sinking, didn't he? But the Lord was supporting him; the Lord was there to hear his cry when he turned his face to the wall. There the Lord appeared, the Lord supported and sustained. And he could come and say in the end: "Thou wast ready to save me." That was when he proved, like Peter on the water, the support of his God. He was supported when he came out of that boat and walked on the water for a time, wonderfully supported. But when he began to sink, he needed that support even more.

There may be some here this evening who feel to be in such a state, sinking, coming down lower. The Lord will support. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." It is a wonderful thing when we prove it! It is not pleasant to the flesh when we come to such places where we feel we shall sink to rise no more. But we prove that He is our stay, our support. Like the bride, we come up out of the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved. You know in that sense, dear friends, we shall never come up apart from that leaning. It is only when we are able to lean, that we really come up. Do we wonder why we are so often floundering, why we are so often making little progress? We feel it so much, especially in our day and age. O to lean more, and then to lean harder still! You can't lean too hard upon all-sufficient arms, those everlasting arms, those strong hands of His. How we need grace that we may truly lean there and find that He is all our support, our stay!

"The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." But then there is this in it: the Lord would have His people know that He can make all work together for good, what seems so ill to us, so grieving, so distressing. Why is it? Because of unbelief, the blindness of our hard hearts, our darkened minds by nature. If only we had those eyes to see how all is well.

"'Tis the right way though dark and rough;
Mysterious, yet 'tis plain enough;
And we, when faith is turned to sight
Will see that all God's ways were right."

What blessings attend it, when He makes things work for good. Have we not proved it in our lives, in some of those bitter things, the bitter waters of Marah, our great causes? When things that we looked not for came upon us and we thought surely that this would be the end? Yet the Lord turned it into a blessing. The Lord makes such things a blessing to the souls of His people. Though Satan at times uses those very troubles to harass, to distress, to bring us down, the Lord brings a blessing out of them. How wonderful is the way He does it! He is still a performing God.

"The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." When the Lord makes it a real blessing, the end result will be this: there will be a further revelation of Jesus Christ. He will be seen in new ways, seen in such precious ways. We will learn more of Him and see more beauty in Him. How wonderful then when God brings us into these places and sets these hard causes in our paths for His own honour and glory!

"Bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." Then there is this: when we see something of the perfect way of God in working these things, we come where Joseph did. He had a path with so many hard causes. The

dear man was tried from the beginning when he had his dreams. What enmity it brought, what reproach – wasn't that a hard cause? Then when he was sold into Egypt – wasn't that a hard cause? Brought down there, charged falsely – that was a harder cause. But O when God had finished all things, Joseph could speak to his brethren with such love to them still! I hope, dear friends, today, after all is said and done, there may be something of that spirit here. Joseph loved them dearly. He could say, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." And he would not have changed a thing. After having been away from his father for so long, having to suffer so, to be put into prison – he would not have changed a thing. He blessed his God, he praised Him for it. He saw then something more than just God's perfect way, for he saw Jesus Himself, who "made Himself of no reputation."

O, dear friends, is there something of that teaching for us in this way? To bring us to this place where we are emptied, stripped, made nothing. As we heard this morning in one of the prayers: that Christ might be All and in all. O sweet is that moment, that season, then! It may not often be long in our soul, in the sweet enjoyment of it, but it is precious when it is there. There is "none but Jesus." May God in His mercy help us in these things, in all our causes, to bring them unto Him, and He will hear them.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETIES

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Societies held
on Friday, April 21st, 2006, at Westminster Chapel, London*

MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. G.D. Buss (Pastor, Chippenham) read Job chapter 42 and spoke as follows:

I will direct your thoughts for a few moments to the tenth verse, and the first part of it: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Here we have a remarkable answer to prayer. Not just in what was prayed for Job's friends by Job, but also in that which followed. That which man could not do, that which Job could not do, that which the devil would not do, and that was turn Job's captivity.

Almighty God had given Satan a longer rein than usual, and had permitted Him to bring Job into great captivity. Mind you, not one bond that held Job came without God's permission. Whether it was the loss of his family, or his possessions, or of his health, or of the friends who thought they were doing right, or whether it was the hiding of God's face

– all aspects of that captivity were in the Lord’s hand. Satan was permitted to bind, but not without God’s permission, and as you know, many painful things came upon this good man. But one of the most grievous wounds that Job had to endure was that three good friends, godly friends, praying friends, were left to misunderstand Job and his condition and to misapply the truth. They caused many grievous wounds to Job. If it is from the world, we expect there to be wounds, but, friends, when it comes from God’s people, how much deeper they are and how much more grace is needed to bear them, and to walk in humility under such a cross as Job had to endure!

How careful we should be lest unwittingly we should be in Satan’s hand as a wound to one of God’s people! We may think we are speaking the truth. We may think we have Scripture on our side even, and apply it with our own carnal understanding and unwittingly be wounding and adding to the burdens of a child of God.

In all these things Job was brought into a most lonely spot where no man seemed to care for his soul, but then you see, the Lord’s time came to turn his captivity, but not before Job himself had been brought to that place where he himself was as guilty as these three friends had been in their own words. O when he came face to face with a thrice-holy God, what did he say? What every sinner will say when they come to God’s presence like that: “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” “For our God is a consuming fire.” Job felt it. And he fell at the feet of his God as a guilty sinner. He had said wrong things concerning his God, and at times he had been in his own spirit in this trial. He needed mercy, he needed forgiveness, he needed pardon, he needed the gospel. When he was brought to that place, then he was in a fit state, if you understand me aright, prepared by God Himself to pray for his friends, not to pray *against* his friends, but to pray *for* them. O to bring their need before his Creator, to bear before his Creator their guilt in a way of intercession! And we read, “The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.” That needed grace. They had wounded him. They had made his own spirit rise up, but O when he could pray for them with a sincere heart, with an unfeigned love, with God-given humility, then the Lord turned his captivity.

It is a wonderful thing when the Lord turns our captivity. Satan may bind with God’s permission, but when God unlocks, Satan cannot bind up again, nor can the world, nor can sinners and nor can saints. He who shuts and no man opens, also opens and no man shuts. And God turned the key of Job’s prison and opened the door and he went forth a freed man, a pardoned man, a chastened man, a sanctified man, a humbled man, a praying man, a praising man, a man who had proved what he himself had said a few chapters before: “But He knoweth the way that I

take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” The Lord turned his captivity.

But, friends, you know, we have a type of that in Samson in a sense. On one occasion you remember Samson was bound with those green withs ever so tightly; when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him he burst those bonds. Well, so it was with Job. As the sweet liberty of the Holy Spirit came into his heart, his captivity was turned, the bonds were broken. What a mercy!

As you know, we read in Psalm 126, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for *them*.” But Job could go to the next verse, “The Lord hath done great things for *us*; whereof *we* are glad.” But I am thankful that the dear psalmist went on, because you see, dear friends, there are those here this morning who still feel to be in captivity. The psalmist went on, “Turn again *our* captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

So what did Job learn when his captivity was turned? First of all, the Lord pardoned his sins. This was the important thing, the vital thing. Then also, He healed his body and put that matter right. Then He healed the breach between himself and other of God’s people. That was healed up by the gospel. And then, the Lord blessed him in providence. “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it,” was his privilege and his possession.

What about these three friends, though? What would you say about them? They were good friends. We must acknowledge that. For several days they sat in sympathetic silence, as they looked on the misery of their friend Job and what had come upon him. And secondly, we must say of them, I believe they were well-meaning. Yet they got into their own spirit. Yes, they were left to their own natural understanding of God’s dealings, and that can never be right, because “blind unbelief is sure to err,” not it *may* err, not it *might*, it “is *sure* to err, and scan His work in vain.” That is just what they were doing, scanning God’s work in vain. But you see now they needed humility. They needed the prayers of the very man whom they had been criticising, whom they had been coming against. They needed his prayers. So they needed humility. Job needed humility. And they united at the mercy seat, where there is that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

May that be our privilege in the prayer meeting this morning, that we may unite there in faith and hope and love, in repentance and in confession and supplication, and as at the end of this book, the unity is

restored, they were one heart, they were one mind in the Lord, and that is our desire, even this morning hour. So may God bless His Word and bless His truth and help the brethren in prayer.

I would just say that we are gathered here for confession and there is much need of that, for prayer and supplication. Let us not leave out thanksgiving. We do have much to thank God for and may we not be negligent in thanking Him.

“To Him every comfort I owe,
Above what the fiends have in hell.”

Do remember that. So I would ask the brethren to be brief as the Lord may help them, and to the point, but may we find at this morning hour that like Job’s prayer meeting, it had a good outcome. May God bless us in this.

Hymns 1, 394 and 1021 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. S. Mercer (Pastor, Eastbourne), Mr. R.K. Wheatley (Pastor, Cranbrook), Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham), Mr. Richard Field (Croydon), Mr. P. Woodhams (Pastor, Leatherhead), and Mr. D.J. Christian (Bethel, Luton). Mr. Buss closed with prayer and the benediction.

AFTERNOON MEETING

As the Business Meeting was exceedingly long, it is only possible to give a brief summary. Subscribers may obtain a full Report from the Secretary, Mr. H. Mercer.

After the singing of hymn 1139, Mr. G.D. Buss, Chairman of the Societies, read Zechariah chapter 4, and called on Mr. C.A. Wood (Tamworth Road, Croydon) to seek the Lord’s blessing on the meetings.

Hymn 974 was then sung.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the 134th Annual Meeting of the Aid Society and the 129th Annual Meeting of the Poor Relief Society, and made a few remarks on the conduct of the Meeting.

Aid and Poor Relief Societies

The Secretary, Mr. H. Mercer, introduced the Annual Report of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies (which was not read), providing information about the work of the Committee since the Annual Report was written.

Mr. R.C.T. Warboys (Oakington) then made a few suggestions on what he considered to be the scriptural way to choose the Committee. The Chairman promised consideration of what had been said.

Mr. G. Dearden (Manchester) asked if there should be a representative from the north on the Committee. The Chairman replied that the Committee is very prayerfully exercised about putting this matter right.

Mr. M.P. Hydon (Attleborough) proposed and Mr. J.W. Stevens (South Moreton) seconded that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Societies for 2005 be approved and adopted. This was carried nem con.

Bethesda

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then introduced the Annual Report of the Bethesda Fund (which was not read), speaking at some length on the reasons for the closure of the Tunbridge Wells Home.

Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton) made a few comments and suggestions, followed by Mr. H.G. Jempson (Pastor, Tunbridge Wells) who spoke against the closure of the Home. Mr. Scott replied in answer to some of the points Mr. Jempson had raised.

Mr. Jempson had made a proposition which was seconded by Mr. Lawson, that a meeting be arranged between subscribers of the Gospel Standard Societies and the Bethesda Committee, prayerfully to discuss the way forward for Bethesda as a whole. The Chairman explained that any vote would not be legally binding. On being put to the vote 32 subscribers voted in favour and 42 against, a number abstaining – so the motion was not carried.

Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Rotherfield) then made a brief statement about a meeting concerning the closure of the Tunbridge Wells Home which had been held in the south-east.

It was then proposed by Mr. J.L. Rosier (Pastor, Blackboys) and seconded by Mr. S.A. Hyde (Pastor, Shaw's Corner, Redhill) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2005 be approved and adopted. This was carried nem con.

Mr. D. Goodge (Lakenheath) asked a question about the independence of the Bethesda Fund Committee and its appointment, which the Chairman answered, and also about the organisation of the Annual General Meeting.

Election of the Societies Committee

It was proposed by Mr. J.L. Rosier (Pastor, Blackboys) and seconded by Mr. D.C.E. Wheatley (The Dicker) that as in the past, the retiring members of the Committee, who seek re-election, should be re-elected en bloc for this year only. This was carried by a substantial majority, there being three votes against.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott, Mr. J.A. Hart and Mr. D.J. Playfoot had resigned from the Committee, while Mr. J.E. Pack and Mr. T.J. Rosier were not

seeking re-election. Mr. Rosier spoke, explaining that it was necessary for him to retire for personal family reasons. He emphasised his love and union to the Committee.

It was then proposed by Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) and seconded by Mr. J.R. Rutt (Blackboys) that the retiring members, who seek re-election, should be elected, viz. Mr. G.D. Buss, Mr. D.J. Christian, Mr. J.H. Cottingham, Mr. R.D.G. Field and Mr. G.W. Hyde. This was carried by a substantial majority, there being two votes against.

The next resolution was for the approval of the appointment to the Committee of five new members, to be voted on individually. These were elected:

Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham) – proposed by Mr. M.G. Bailey (Tenterden), seconded by Mr. J.W. Stevens (South Moreton).

Mr. J.R. Broome (Trowbridge) – proposed by Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton), seconded by Mr. K.M. Price (Kendal).

Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) – proposed by Mr. M. Hyde (Tenterden), seconded by Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone).

Mr. D.W. Kerley (Swavesey) – proposed by Mr. J.L. Rosier (Pastor, Blackboys), seconded by Mr. R.C.T. Warboys (Oakington).

Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Rotherfield) – proposed by Mr. M.P. Hydon (Attleborough), seconded by Mr. F. Hayden (Shaw's Corner, Redhill).

The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of the Committee.

Loyal address to the Queen

It was agreed that the following loyal address be sent to the Queen on the occasion of her 80th birthday:

“The Gospel Standard Strict Baptist Societies assembled for their Annual Meetings at Westminster Chapel, London, on April 21st, 2006, send their loyal greetings to Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of her 80th birthday, and pray that God's blessing may rest upon her.”

New Funding Trustee

Mr. D.J. Christian (Bethel, Luton) was appointed a Funding Trustee following the retirement of Mr. J.A. Hart.

Before closing the Meeting, the Chairman reported greetings sent from our ministers in Australia and the U.S.A. and commented on the long service of the Editor of the Gospel Standard.

The Meeting closed with the singing of hymn 450 and prayer.

As there was no time left for Mr. G.L. TenBroeke to speak at the afternoon Meeting, it was agreed that he should preach in the evening.

HOPE IN TIMES OF DARKNESS

A letter by Samuel Rutherford (see page 223)

To the Lady Busbie [probably the mother-in-law of Rutherford's close friend, Robert Blair, the minister].

Mistress, Although not acquaint, yet because we are Father's children, I thought good to write unto you. Howbeit my first discourse and communing with you of Christ be in paper, yet I have cause, since I came hither, to have no paper thoughts of Him. For in my sad days He is become the flower of my joys, and I but lie here living upon His love, but cannot get so much of it as fain I would have; not because Christ's love is lordly, and looketh too high, but because I have a narrow vessel to receive His love, and I look too low.

But I give, under my own hand-write, to you a testimonial of Christ and His cross, that they are a sweet couple, and that Christ hath never yet been set in His own due chair of honour amongst us all. O I know not where to set Him! O for a high seat to that royal princely One! O that my poor, withered soul had once a running-over flood of that love to put sap into my dry root, and that that flood would spring out to the tongue and pen, to utter great things, to the high and due commendation of such a fair One!

O holy, holy, holy One! Alas, there are too many dumb tongues in the world, and dry hearts, seeing there is employment in Christ for them all, and ten thousand worlds of men and angels more, to set on high and exalt the greatest Prince of the kings of the earth! Woe is me that bits of living clay dare come out to rush hardheads with Him;* and that my unkind mother, this harlot-kirk, hath given her sweet half-marrow such a meeting. For this land hath given up with Christ, and the Lord is cutting Scotland in two halves, and sending the worst half, the harlot-sister, over to Rome's brothel-house, to get her fill of Egypt's love. I would my sufferings (nay, suppose I were burnt quick to ashes) might buy an agreement betwixt His fairest and sweetest love, and His gaddy (Jer. 2. 36) lewd wife. Fain would I give Christ His welcome-home to Scotland again, if He would return.

This is a black day, a day of clouds and darkness; for the roof-tree of the fair temple of my Lord Jesus is fallen, and Christ's back is towards Scotland. O thrice blessed are they who would hold Christ with their tears and prayers! I know ye will help to deal with Him; for He shall return again to this land. The next day shall be Christ's, and there shall

* Perhaps referring to Job 15. 26, though some have referred to a game wherein "*Hard-heads*," a small Scotch coin, was used. In his "Christ Dying and Drawing," he writes, "Is it wisdom to knock hard-heads with God?" So in sermon on Zech. 13. 7, 8. (Bonar's footnote)

be a fair green young garden for Christ in this land, and God's summer-dew shall lie on it all the night, and we shall sing again our new marriage-song to our Bridegroom, concerning His vineyard. But who knoweth whether we shall live and see it?

I hear the Lord hath taken pains to afflict and dress you, as a fruitful vine for Himself. Grow and be green, and cast out your branches, and bring forth fruit. Fat and green and fruitful may ye be in the true and sappy root. Grace, grace, free grace be your portion. Remember my bonds with prayers and praises.

Yours, in his sweet Lord Jesus,

Aberdeen, 1637

Samuel Rutherford

UNION WITH THE HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM

Dear W.,

I do hope that you will pardon me in taking the liberty of writing to you. But seeing you have been continually on my mind since we met last Lord's day, I feel I must send my love to you, and just refer you to a remark you made to me in the short space of time we had together after the evening service. Namely, your longing desire to be married to Jesus, the Heavenly Bridegroom of the church, and I do pray that the dear Lord will in His own time and way reveal His love with power to your never-dying soul.

This blessed and divine experience takes place within us when the Holy Spirit takes of the atonement and applies it with unction and power to our souls. And I believe God will do "the kinsman part" for you by the finished work without us and the work of grace begun in us and carried on. Our covenant-keeping God will bring all His chosen fold to know Him, and will finally bring them safe home to that home which Jesus has gone to prepare for all the vessels of mercy.

No doubt, as you may have noticed, that in my feeble attempts to speak in His great name, and of late, I have felt my feebleness and littleness in doing so, that after speaking I could almost wish that I could just leave the chapel without speaking to anyone, feeling so low in myself; also feeling ashamed of my nervousness which does affect at times both my body and speech.

Now I know that some almost have thought that I have held forth the doctrine of a sweet assurance perhaps too keen. But no! You know that when God was going to use David to be a deliverer for His people, they clothed him with Saul's armour but he felt he could not go in it, so he put it off and went forth in faith. So, dear friend, as you have been I

believe, brought to bow graciously at a throne of grace, both in private and before the people, acknowledging His goodness, confessing your sins, seeking grace to forsake them – I believe you will find mercy, for he that “confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” I know some say sometimes to others, “O you are asking too much!” Well, I do say, “Do not rest short of a manifested Jesus.” And those who have been enabled by faith, which works by love, to cast anchor here, before long their anchor will be cast within the veil. Dear John Kent writes in hymn 915, last verse:

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

I do hope that your dear partner and your children are well. May the Lord go before you and them in the way.

Do remember me kindly to your dear father-in-law and mother-in-law, also our aged friends Mr. and Mrs. Morlock, and any who love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I was sorry I did not get to speak to you again after saying goodbye to the friends from Dudley.

If I have taken too much liberty in writing, forgive. If not, when suitable, drop a line to your well wisher and praying friend,
Thornhill, September 6th, 1951

Er Grace

FREE GRACE

From Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) on Ephesians chapter 2

That our whole salvation is by grace, it is the greatest thing of all others, of the greatest moment for believers to know and to be acquainted with. The apostle, you see, cannot hold speaking out his whole sentence before he brings in this: as soon as ever he had said, “We are quickened by Christ,” he comes in with, “By grace ye are saved.” He would set the stamp of this seal with a treble impression upon their hearts. This is the great axiom, the great principle he would beget in all their hearts. And it is to advance the design of God, the glory of His grace, so you have it, verse 7. This is the sum and substance of the gospel, and it is the sum of the great design of God. For, as I said, a sovereignty of grace was set up; and what is the gospel? It is the laws and statutes this great Sovereign hath made, and grace will be sure to make such laws as shall advance itself.

Therefore you shall find that when a man doth step out of the way and road of free grace unto anything else, he is said to turn from God.

A man may step out of the way from truths to other errors, and not step out from God; but see what the expression is in Galatians 1. 6: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you" – it was because they did not hold the doctrine of free grace – "into the grace of Christ unto another gospel"; implying that it is a stepping aside from God. It was God's great design to advance grace, and therefore He calls their stepping aside from the doctrine thereof, a frustrating of the grace of God (Gal. 2. 21), which men do by mingling anything with it. It is a frustrating of the grace of God because it frustrateth the great design of God, for to frustrate is to make void a design. This was the great design of God, which He had in His heart. By mingling anything with it you frustrate the design of God, and you turn from Him, and not only turn from Him, but turn from Him to another gospel. For what is the gospel but the laws and statutes of the great King, free grace? Therefore it is called the gospel which bringeth salvation, as being the matter of it. And the gospel is said to have two that are the subject-matter of it: the one is Christ, therefore it is called the gospel of Christ, and the word of Christ; the other is grace, and therefore likewise the gospel is called the word of His grace, and the gospel of His grace. And the ministry which Paul had received, what was it? To testify the grace of God. And to divert from it the apostle interprets to be a turning to another gospel, and he pronounceth a curse to any that shall do it, even unto angels themselves.

How are Christians described, their persons, and the work of grace upon them? Read the New Testament; how are their persons expressed? "They which receive abundance of grace" (Rom. 5. 17). He might have said *believers*. No, but "they which receive abundance of grace," and he opposeth it to unbelievers and men condemned: they are free-grace receivers, you may well call them so. And so in Acts 15. 11 they are called such as believe through the grace of God. And then how is the work of God upon them described? How is the work of conversion described? "Since ... ye ... knew the grace of God" (Col. 1. 6).

Yea, he doth distinguish, as we use to distinguish upon the work of grace, in saying there is a counterfeit work and a true work; so he likewise by way of distinction calls it the knowledge of the grace of God in truth. "Since ... ye ... knew the grace of God in truth," saith he; for it is a hidden mystery to entertain it in the true notion of it, and therefore he makes it proper to a saving work. So in Ephesians 4. 21: "If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus." It is the greatest thing in the world to settle men's hearts in "the true grace of God," as the expression is (1 Pet. 5. 12), to have a right knowledge of it, as salvation is attributed to it, and to sever it from whatever is in a man's self, and yet to give that due to what is in a man that belongs to it.

My brethren, to trust perfectly in the grace that is brought to light in the revelation of Jesus Christ, to trust perfectly in it, not by halves, but fully, and to have the right art of doing it, and not to turn this grace into wantonness, to settle the gospel upon a right wheel, for it runs upon free grace, and yet to say that works and faith and holiness are required, to do this practically in a man's own spirit is the hardest thing in the world. Therefore the Apostle Peter saith, "I have written ... testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand"; that is, I have opened the gospel to you. But let me tell you, there is nothing the heart of man is apter to divert from. Galatians 1. 6: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ." Men are easily put by; for carnal reason comes, and that would mingle works and something in a man's self with it; and then self-love will come, and turn the grace of God into wantonness, and make a clean other gospel of it.

This very little sentence, "By grace ye are saved," is the main thing of the gospel.

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

From Thomas Brooks (see last month, page 190)

Sighs and groans

Some may object and say, "O but we cannot pray alone: we lack those gifts and endowments which others have. We are shut up and know not how to pour out our souls before God in a corner. We would willingly pray, but we lack the ability to pour out our souls before the Lord in secret, etc."

Solution 1. God's dearest children may sometimes be shut up; they may with Zechariah, for a time, be struck dumb, and not able to speak (Luke 1. 20): "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (Psa. 77. 4); "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Psa. 38. 9). God's dearest children have sometimes been so shut up that they have been able to say nothing, nor to do nothing [anything] but groan. A child of God may sometimes meet with such a blow from God, from conscience, from Scripture, from Satan, from the world, that may for a time so astonish him, that he may not be able to speak to others, nor speak to his own heart.

As the Holy Spirit is not always a teaching Spirit, nor always a leading Spirit, nor always a sealing Spirit, nor always a witnessing Spirit, nor always an assuring Spirit to any of the saints, so He is not always a supplicating Spirit in any of the saints. When He is grieved, vexed, quenched, provoked, He may suspend His gracious influences, and deny the soul His assistance; and what can a Christian then say or do? But,

2. Secondly, I answer, You cannot pray; but can you not sigh nor groan either? There may be the Spirit of adoption in sighs and groans, as well as in vocal prayer (Rom. 8. 26). The force, the virtue, the efficacy, the excellency of prayer does not consist in the number and flourish of words, but in the supernatural motions of the Spirit, in sighs, and groans, and pangs, and strong affections of heart, that are unspeakable and unutterable. Certainly, the very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of a man's soul before the Lord, though it be but in sighs, groans, and tears (1 Sam. 1. 13-18). One sigh and groan from a broken heart is better pleasing to God than all human eloquence.

A troubled conscience

There is no Christian but may sometimes have trouble in his conscience, and grief in his heart, and tears in his eyes, and fears and questionings in his soul, whether God be his Father, and whether Christ be his Redeemer, and whether mercy belongs to him, yes, whether any promise in the Book of God belongs to him?

Joy and comfort are those delicacies, those sweetmeats of heaven, that God does not every day feast His people with (Psa. 30. 6, 7); every day is not a wedding day, and every day is not a harvest day, and every day is not a summer's day. The fatted calf is not killed every day, nor the robe and the ring is not every day put on; every day is not a festival day nor a dancing day (Luke 15. 22, 23; Eccles. 3. 4; Rom. 12. 15).

As there is a time to sing, so there is a time to sigh; as there is a time to laugh, so there is a time to weep; and as there is a time to dance, so there is a time to mourn. All tears will never be wholly wiped from our eyes till all sin be quite taken out of our hearts.

The Comforter

The Comforter always abides with the saints, though He does not always actually comfort the saints (John 14. 16). The Spirit many times carries on His sanctifying work in the soul when He does not carry on His comforting work in the soul; the Spirit many times acts in a way of humiliation when He does not act in a way of consolation; the Spirit many times fills the soul with godly sorrow when He does not fill the soul with holy joy. The actings of the Spirit, as to His comforting work, are all of His own sovereign will and pleasure; and therefore He may abide in the soul when He does not actually comfort the soul.

The help of the Spirit

The apostle gives us a most special instance in Romans 8. 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

When we are to pray, there is in us sometimes an infirmity of ignorance, so that we know not what to pray for, either in regard of the

matter or the manner. And there is in us at other times an infirmity of pride and conceitedness, so that we cannot pray with that humility and lowliness of spirit as we should, spiritual pride having fly-blown our prayers. Sometimes there is in us an infirmity of deadness, dullness, drowsiness, etc., so that we cannot pray with that warmth, heat, life, spirit and fervency as we should, or as we would; and at other times there is in us an infirmity of unbelief and slavish fears, so that we cannot pray with that faith and holy boldness, as becomes children that draw near to a throne of grace, to a throne of mercy, etc.

But now the Spirit helps these infirmities by way of instruction, prompting and teaching us what to pray for, and how we should spell our lesson; and by telling us as it were within, what we should say, and how we should sigh and groan; and by rousing and quickening, and stirring of us up to prayer, and by His singular influence and choice assistance opening and enlarging our hearts in prayer; and by tuning the strings of our affections He prepares us and fits us for the work of supplication, and therefore every one that derides the spirit of prayer in the saints, saying, "These are the men and the women that pray by the Spirit!" blaspheme against the Holy Spirit; it being a main work of the Spirit to teach the saints to pray and to help them in prayer.

Now, all the saints having the Spirit, and the Spirit being a Spirit of prayer and supplication, there is no reason in the world why a saint should say, "I would pray in secret, but I cannot pray, I cannot pour out my soul nor my complaint before the Lord in a corner."

A common temptation

Some may further object and say, God is very well acquainted with all our desires, necessities, straits, trials; and there is no moving of Him to bestow any favours upon us which He does not intend to bestow upon us, whether we pray in our closets or no; and therefore to what purpose do you press secret prayer so hard upon us?

I answer, though prayer be not the ground, the cause of obtaining favours and mercies from God, yet it is the means, it is the silver channel, it is the golden pipe, through which the Lord is pleased to convey to His people all temporal, spiritual and eternal favours (Ezek. 36. 26-37). God promises to give them the cream, the choicest, the sweetest of all spiritual, eternal and temporal blessings; but mark, verse 37, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Though God be very prompt and ready to bestow upon His people the best and the greatest of blessings, yet He will by prayer be sought for the actual enjoyment of them. He that has no heart to pray for a mercy he needs, has no ground to believe that God will ever give him the mercy he needs. There is no receiving without asking, no finding without seeking, no opening without knocking.

The threefold promise annexed to the threefold precept in Matthew 7. 7 should encourage all Christians to be instant, fervent and constant in prayer. The proud beggar gets nothing of men, and the dumb sinner gets nothing of God. As there is no mercy too great for God to give, so there is no mercy too little for us to crave. Certainly that man has little worth in him that thinks any mercy not worth a seeking.

Finding a quiet place

Some may further object and say, I would drive a private trade with God, I would exercise myself in secret prayer, but I lack a convenient place to retire into; I lack a private corner in which to unburden my soul to my Father, etc.

To this objection I shall give these three short answers:

1. First, I suppose this objection concerns but a few Christians in our days. The God who has given a Christ to believers commonly gives them a convenient corner in which to enjoy private communion with Himself (Rom. 8. 32). Most Christians, I am afraid, do rather need a heart for private prayer than a convenient place for private prayer. What men set their hearts upon, they will find time and place to effect it, whether it be good or whether it be evil, whether it concerns temporals or spirituals, whether it concerns this world or another world, this life or a better life. If most men would but get better hearts, they would quickly find or make convenient places for private prayer.

He who has an inflamed love to God will certainly find out a corner to enjoy secret communion with God. True lovers will find out corners to enjoy one another in. How many men are there that can easily find out private places for their dogs to lie in, and their swine to sleep in, and their horses to stand in, and their oxen to feed in, etc., who cannot find out a private place to seek the face of God in! But did these men but love their God, or their souls, or private prayer, or eternity, as well or better than their beasts, they would not be such brutes but that they would quickly find out a hole, a corner, to wait upon the Lord in. But,

2. Secondly, I answer, if a Christian be on the top of a house with Peter, he may pray there; or if he be walking in the field with Isaac, he may pray there; or if he be on the mountain with Christ, he may pray there; or if he be behind the door with Paul, he may pray there; or if he be waiting at table with Nehemiah, he may secretly pray there; or if he be in a wood, he may pray there, as the primitive Christians in times of persecution did; or if he be behind a tree, he may pray there; or if he be by the seaside, he may pray there, as the apostles did.

It was a choice saying of Augustine, "Every saint is God's temple, and he that carries his temple around with him may go to prayer when he pleases." Some saints have never had so much of heaven brought down into their hearts as when they have been with God in a corner. O the

secret manifestations of divine love, the secret kisses, the secret embraces, the secret influences, the secret communion with God, that many a precious Christian has had in the most solitary places: it may be behind the door, or behind the wall, or behind the hedge, or behind the arbour, or behind the tree, or behind the rock, or behind the bush, etc. But,

3. Thirdly, and lastly, did you never in your unregenerate estate make use of all your wits, and parts, and utmost endeavours, to find out convenient seasons, and secret corners, and solitary places to sin in, and to dishonour your God in, and to undo your own and others souls in?

Yes! I remember with shame and blushing that it was so with me when I was dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the course of this world (Eph. 2. 1-3). O how much then does it concern you in your renewed, sanctified, and raised estate, to make use of all your wits, and faculties, and utmost endeavours, to find out the fittest seasons, and the most secret corners and solitary places you can to honour your God in, and to seek the welfare of your own and others' souls in! O that men were but as serious, studious and industrious, to find out convenient seasons, secret places to please and serve and glorify the Lord in as they have been serious, studious and industrious to find out convenient seasons, and secret places to displease and grieve the Spirit of the Lord in.

ANSWERS TO A TEMPTED SOUL

By John Bunyan

It is noticeable how closely Bunyan keeps to Scripture.

This doctrine, "By grace ye are saved," is the only remedy against despairing thoughts at the apprehension of our own unworthiness; as,

1. Thou criest out, O cursed man that I am! my sins will sink me into hell.

Answer. Hold, man; there is a God in heaven that is "the God of all grace." Yet thou art not the man of all sin. If God be the God of all grace, then if all the sins in the world were thine, yet the God of all grace can pardon, or else it should seem that sin is stronger in a man penitent, to damn, than the grace of God can be to save.

2. But my sins are of the worst sort – blasphemy, adultery, covetousness, murder, etc.

Answer. "All manner of sins and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," "wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto

the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

3. But I have a stout and rebellious heart, a heart that is far from good.

Answer. “Hearken unto Me,” saith God, “ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near My righteousness,” that is, the righteousness of Christ, by which stout-hearted sinners are justified, though ungodly.

4. But I have a heart as hard as any stone.

Answer. “A new heart also will I give you,” says God, “and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

5. But I am as blind as a beetle; I cannot understand anything of the gospel.

Answer. “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.”

6. But my heart will not be affected with the sufferings and blood of Christ.

Answer. “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

7. But though I see what is like to become of me if I find not Christ, yet my spirit, while I am thus, will be running after vanity, foolishness, uncleanness, wickedness.

Answer. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.”

8. But I cannot believe in Christ.

Answer. But God hath promised to make thee believe. “I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” And again, “There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust.”

9. But I cannot pray to God for mercy.

Answer. But God hath graciously promised a spirit of prayer – “Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.” “They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.”

10. But I cannot repent.

Answer. “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Thus might I enlarge, for the holy Bible is full of this exceeding grace of God. O these words, “I will,” and, “You shall”! They are the language of a gracious God; they are promises by which our God has engaged Himself to do that for poor sinners which would else be left undone for ever.



THE LAST DAYS OF SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

From the sketch of his life by Andrew Bonar (see page 223)

When Charles II was fully restored, and had begun to adopt arbitrary measures, Rutherford’s work, *Lex Rex*, was taken notice of by the Government; for, reasonable as are its principles in defence of the liberty of subjects, its spirit of freedom was intolerable to rulers who were, step by step, advancing to acts of cruelty and death. Indeed, it was so hateful to them that they burnt it in 1661, first at Edinburgh, by the hands of the hangman, and then some days after, by the hands of the infamous Sharpe [Bishop of St. Andrews], under the windows of its author’s College in St. Andrews. He was next deposed from all his offices and, last of all, was summoned to answer at next Parliament a charge of high treason. But the citation came too late. He was already on his deathbed, and on hearing of it, calmly remarked that he had got another summons before a superior Judge and judicatory, and sent the message, “I behove to answer my first summons; and, ere your day arrive, I will be where few kings and great folks come.”

We have no account of the nature of his last sickness, except that it was a lingering disease. He had a daughter who died a few weeks before himself. All that is told us of his deathbed is characteristic of the man. At one time he spoke much of “the white stone” and “the new name.” When he was on the threshold of glory, ready to receive the immortal crown, he said, “Now my tabernacle is weak, and I would think it a more glorious way of going home to lay down my life for the cause at the Cross of Edinburgh or St. Andrews; but I submit to my Master’s will.”

Some days before his death, after a fainting fit, he said, “Now I feel, I believe, I enjoy, I rejoice.” And turning to Mr. Blair [Robert Blair, minister], “I feed on manna: I have angels’ food. My eyes shall see my Redeemer. I know that He shall stand on earth at the latter day, and I

shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air.” When asked, “What think ye now of Christ?” he replied, “I shall live and adore Him. Glory, glory to my Creator and Redeemer for ever. Glory shineth in Immanuel’s land.” The same afternoon he said, “I shall sleep in Christ; and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with His likeness. O for arms to embrace Him!” Then he cried aloud, “O for a well-tuned harp!” This last expression he used more than once, as if already stretching out his hand to get his golden harp, and join the redeemed in their new song. He also said on another occasion, “I hear Him saying to me, ‘Come up hither.’”

His little daughter Agnes (the only survivor of six children), eleven years of age, stood by his bedside. He looked on her, and said, “I have left her upon the Lord.” Well might the man say so, who could so fully testify of his portion in the Lord as a goodly heritage.

To four of his brethren who came to see him, he said, “My Lord and Master is Chief of ten thousands of thousands. None is comparable to Him in heaven or in earth. Dear brethren, do all for *Him*. Pray for *Christ*. Preach for *Christ*. Do all for *Christ*; beware of men-pleasing. The Chief Shepherd will shortly appear.”

He often called Christ his “kingly King.” While he spoke even rapturously, “I shall shine! I shall see Him as He is! I shall see Him reign, and all His fair company with Him, and I shall have my large share” – he at the same time would protest, “I renounce all that ever He made me will or do as defiled or imperfect as coming from myself. I betake myself to Christ for sanctification as well as justification.” Repeating 1 Cor. 1. 30, he said, “I close with it! Let Him be so. He is my All and all.” “If He should slay me ten thousand times I will trust.” He spoke as if he knew the hour of his departure; not perhaps as Paul (2 Tim. 4. 6) or Peter (2 Pet. 1. 14), yet still in a manner that seems to indicate that the Lord draws very near His servants in that hour, and gives glimpses of what He is doing.

On the last day of his life, in the afternoon he said, “This night will close the door, and fasten my anchor within the veil, and I shall go away in a sleep by five o’clock in the morning.” And so it was. He entered Immanuel’s land at that very hour, and is now (as himself would have said) “sleeping in the bosom of the Almighty,” till the Lord come.

We may add his latest words. “There is nothing now between me and the resurrection but ‘This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.’” He interrupted one speaking in praise of his painfulness [steadfast labour] in the ministry, “I disclaim all. The port I would be in at is redemption and forgiveness of sin through His blood.” Two of his biographers record that his last words were, “Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land!” as if he had caught a glimpse of its mountain-tops.

LETTER TO A SCHOOLBOY AT ETON

It seems almost incredible that such a letter should be written to a boy still at school! The writer was Richard (later Sir Richard Hill), who became a Member of Parliament, the friend of Toplady, and author of The Deep Things of God. The schoolboy was his younger brother Rowland Hill (1744-1833), who became the well-known minister and hymnwriter. Richard was about twelve years older than Rowland.

My very dear brother, Though I have been in town upwards of three weeks, yet I have hitherto deferred writing that I might let you know when the works of Archbishop Leighton, which you desired Archer [the godly servant] to buy for you, were to be at Eton, where you may expect to have them by the next machine, ordered for you at Eton, carriage paid. The reason they could not be got sooner was owing to their being almost out of print. May you by the grace of God be enabled to relish, digest and practise the divine truths contained in the writings of this excellent prelate, than whom the Church of England never had a brighter ornament; but what I particularly admire in this Archbishop is that spirit of patience and resignation to the divine will under every dispensation, which breathes throughout all his compositions, and plainly discovers itself to have been the habitual temper of his renewed heart – a temper which is the very life and soul of Christianity, and which can alone bring true peace and comfort to the mind of the believer.

But then how is this disposition to be obtained, since false presumption is often mistaken for peace of conscience, and a stupid apathy and insensibility may make a person think he has attained a true gospel resignation, when in reality he knows not what it means? If we may believe the Scriptures, it is faith which brings peace and resignation to the soul – “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”; and again, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.” The conscience being first awakened by the Holy Spirit to see its own defilement, and afterwards pacified by an application of the blood of sprinkling, attains a sweet composure and resting upon the faithfulness of the Redeemer and the all-sufficiency of His undertaking, and is assured that all things shall work together for good to those who love God and are called after His purpose. This consideration makes it the desire of the Christian’s heart that the will of God may be done in him and by him; and therefore under the most distressing circumstances or sharpest sufferings, he can say, “Lord, Thou knowest what is good for me better than I do for myself, therefore, ‘Not my will, but Thine, be done.’”

Moreover, the soul thus brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel sees an amiableness and excellency in Christ Jesus

which before he knew nothing of. Once he could look upon the blessed Redeemer as having no form nor comeliness in Him that he should desire Him, but now he sees Him to be altogether lovely, the Chief among ten thousand, full of grace and truth. Having now obtained the precious faith of God's elect, Jesus is become precious to his soul; for to them that believe, He is precious, says Peter.

Time was when this poor, perishing world and its riches, honours and pleasures ran away with his affections, but the bent of his heart being now changed, he pants only after the unsearchable riches of Christ, the honour which cometh from God, and those pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore. Time was when his own will was his rule, and the commandments, ordinances and people of God were all irksome to him; but now, being born from above, and passed from death unto life, it is the desire of his heart to be guided by the Word and Spirit of God. He counts His commandments no longer grievous, but a light and easy yoke; he says of the ordinances, It is good for me to be here, and his delight is in the saints of the earth and all that excel in virtue.

These things, my dear brother, I am well assured you know by happy experience; and most certain it is that flesh and blood hath not revealed them unto you, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; and human nature can rise no higher than its own source, which is earthly, sensual, devilish; but the anointing which you have received of God abideth in you, and shall lead you into all truth. "Nature," says good Bishop Cowper, "is stark blind to the things of grace, since these only can be apprehended by divine illumination, nor can be taught by any other teacher than by the Spirit of God."

But though it has pleased the Lord to show you in some measure the mysteries of His kingdom, yet remember that you are but a babe in Christ, and know but in part. Therefore be frequent and earnest in prayer for fresh supplies of knowledge, faith, grace and strength; and you have all possible encouragement to be so, since in Christ all fulness dwells, and out of that fulness we receive grace for grace. Learn, then, to guard against self-dependency, and to live more upon Christ; see that He be made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Resign yourself to Him in all His offices, as a Prophet, Priest and King – a Prophet to teach you, a Priest to make atonement for you, a King to reign over you and in you. View Him in His pastoral office, in the character of the good Shepherd, the Shepherd that gave His life for the sheep. Consider His watchfulness and tender care for His dear, chosen flock, that little flock to whom it is His good pleasure to give the kingdom, having redeemed them by His blood out of every tongue, and

kindred, and people, having promised them eternal life, and betrothed them to Himself in faithfulness, that they might never perish, and none might pluck them out of His hands.

Consider, my dear brother, how that when you, as a poor, helpless sheep, were gone astray, this dear Shepherd sought you and brought you back. Remember how, when wandering further and further from His fold, He made you hear His voice and follow Him, carrying you as a lamb in His bosom, and gently leading you whilst you were with young (Isa. 40. 11). O think of this love, which passeth knowledge, and may it fill your heart with praise, and your tongue with thanksgiving. Let it constrain you to live to Him who died for you, and to grow daily more and more in conformity to His blessed image, that so you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and by well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who would falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

But remember that it is not sufficient that you set yourself against outward sins; you must be watchful against *heart sins*, those sins that are most woven in you by nature and constitution. Therefore try and examine yourself what manner of spirit you are of. Take the psalmist's advice: commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still; fear not to know the worst of your case at all times, since this is the only way to mend it, whilst self-ignorance and self-conceit have shipwrecked their thousands. Let pride, peevishness and self-will be brought forth, lamented, mortified; and instead of these, seek to put on all the tempers and dispositions of the meek and lowly Jesus, with all the several lovely graces of His spirit.

Bear patiently with the perverseness and oddities of those who are under the dominion of fallen nature, and therefore objects of pity, not of revenge; condescend to the lowest offices for the lowest people, when you can thereby render the least service either to their souls or bodies. Become all things to all men, so far as you can consistently with your holy profession, yet take care that you abuse not your liberty for a cloak to sin, for sin in the least degree allowed or consented to will damp the comforts, deaden the graces, and hinder your progress in the divine life.

See, then, that you be watchful against the first risings of sin. Dally not with so dangerous an enemy and, though it will plead hard to be spared, give it no quarter, but clothe yourself with the whole armour of God, and fight like a true Christian soldier in the strength and under the banner of the great Captain of your salvation, till Satan be bruised under your feet, and death be swallowed up in victory.

I shall add one word more, and I have done. Be diligent in your studies. However human learning may prove a snare to such as are vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds, yet in a gracious heart it is very desirable; and if it is your prayer and endeavour that whatsoever

attainments you make in profane literature may be subservient to the nobler end of rendering you instrumental to the good of souls and useful to the church of Christ, there is no fear of your being hurt by those detestable maxims and principles with which the most admired classical authors abound; but rather will they be the means of discovering to you the blindness and depravity of human nature, and the necessity of seeking that only true wisdom that cometh from above, and without which all other wisdom will prove in the end to be only refined folly.

And now, with my sincere prayers that if it be the will of God ever to call you to the work of the ministry, you may be fitted and prepared by His grace and Holy Spirit for that most important office, and by your steady attachment to our most excellent church, in a season wherein there is so dreadful a departure from the doctrines of her homilies, articles and common prayer, may prove yourself a faithful labourer in the vineyard of our blessed Lord, I conclude myself, your most affectionate brother, both by grace and nature,

Richard Hill

P.S. Pray remember me in love to our dear brother, to whom you may either read or show this letter, which I desire you will keep, as I hope it may hereafter, as well as at present, be of some use to you.

BOOK REVIEW

Letters of Samuel Rutherford; hardback; 744 pages; price £18.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

In former years some have contended that Rutherford's *Letters* are the nearest thing to inspiration outside Scripture. It is a delight, therefore, to find that there has been a call for yet a further republication of this excellent book.

This is the classic edition as edited by Andrew Bonar in the last century. There is an interesting sketch of Samuel Rutherford's life with black and white illustrations of the scenes connected with his ministry. Altogether there are 345 letters, introduced by notes on the person to whom Rutherford is writing, and a brief summary of the subject matter of each letter. At the end there is an index of persons and places referred to and an index of subjects dealt with, and a glossary of old Scottish words which are now obsolete.

Altogether this is a lovely production. We are reminded of the story of the man who left a scented petal in one of his books, and when, some time later, he took it up, every page was sweetly perfumed. We can say that of Rutherford's *Letters*: every page is sweetly perfumed with the Saviour, whose name is "as ointment poured forth."

The book is enriched by the inclusion of the well-loved poem by Mrs. Ann Ross Cousins, "The sands of time are sinking," with its refrain, "Glory, glory

dwelleth in Immanuel's land." This is based on Rutherford's last words and some of the expressions in his letters.

An English traveller to Scotland in the seventeenth century gave his impressions of three godly ministers he heard. Of Samuel Rutherford he wrote: "I heard a little fair man, and he showed me the loveliness of Christ." This would make a good sub-title for *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford* – "The Loveliness of Christ."

We hope the blessing of the Lord will rest on the republication of this Christian classic.

Of necessity a number of books are held over for review.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN DEATH

Isaiah 43. 2

Jesus, hold Thou my hand!
My Saviour, be Thou near,
And let the accents of Thy voice
Break on my listening ear.

The chilly night is dark,
The river flows between
My pathway and the golden gates
Of yonder glittering scene.

I cannot go alone:
I fear to breast the wave,
Without the presence of my Lord,
Omnipotent to save.

"My child! there's nought to fear,
I trod that way before;
The mighty floods o'erwhelmed My soul,
I heard the tempest roar.

"But now the storm is hushed,
A blood-stained pathway lies
Straight through the channel of the deep,
And leads to yonder skies.

"The parted waters stand
Erect on either side:
The sunshine of My smile is there,
No ill can *thee* betide."

Enough! O Lord, enough!
I'll trust myself to Thee,
O death, where is thy bitter sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?

William Pennefather (1816-1873)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2006

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

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*A Sabbath School Anniversary sermon preached at Lakenheath,
Suffolk, on February 25th, 1981. (Reprinted by special request.)*

Text: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa. 40. 11).

This is one of the tenderest, kindest verses in the whole of the Word of God. Can you think of a scripture which is more gentle, more kind, more tender? It speaks of the dear Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and the blessed way that He deals with His sheep, with His lambs. He is never unkind; He corrects them, He leads them, He will not allow them to wander astray, but He never speaks an unkind word, and never does an unkind action. There is not a more gentle, kind, tender word in the whole Bible than this.

But, beloved friends, does it not seem strange to you whereabouts in the Bible we find it? You know, the Bible is a book of a right order; there is no verse out of place. When we look at this beautiful verse at first, when we think of it: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd,” it seems as if it should belong to Psalm 23 or John chapter 10. But it does not; the Holy Spirit has not put it in Psalm 23; He has not put it in John chapter 10. He has put it in Isaiah 40. What is the subject of Isaiah 40? The greatness, the power, the majesty of the Lord. It is the great chapter of the Old Testament concerning the greatness of God, how great, how mighty He is. He is on the throne, He lives, He reigns. Now, this is the theme of Isaiah 40: the greatness of God, His might, His power. “He” – “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd” – this great, this mighty God. This Shepherd who is so kind, so tender, so gentle, is the great, the mighty God.

So this verse is not out of its place, is it? It rightly belongs to Isaiah 40 – the greatness of the Shepherd. He is so kind, so tender, but O His mighty power, His omnipotence! He sits on the circle of the earth and the inhabitants before Him are as grasshoppers. “He” – “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” He holds the waters – that is, the mighty oceans – He holds them in the hollow of His hand. “He” – “He shall

feed His flock like a shepherd.” He metes out the heavens with His span. The very nations of the earth before Him are as a drop of a bucket – something that does not matter – and as the small dust of the balance – that speck of dust on the scales that does not alter the weight. “He” – “*He* shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” Always remember that the Bible is a book of a right order.

When I was a little boy, the old preachers often used to say, “The key to the text is the context.” What they meant was, if you want to understand the meaning of a text, look what goes before, look what comes after. The key to the text is the context. Well, when we look at the context here, at first it seems so strange. We read in the text about this kind Shepherd, and then we read the context and it is about the greatness of God. But the verse is not out of place. It is this great God, so mighty, so powerful, who is the Good Shepherd; the identical Person, one and the same Person.

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” What a beautiful figure this is, the shepherd and His sheep! And the emphasis is, “His flock.” How kindly He speaks to them, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”! “His flock”; they belong to Christ. Whenever you see a sheep, or a lamb, always remember that it belongs to someone. You are travelling down a country lane, and you perhaps see a rabbit, or a hare, or a weasel, or a mouse. They are wild. You may see an owl flying across a lane; it does not belong to anyone. But whenever you see a sheep, it has an owner, it belongs to someone. That sheep may wander for many, many miles, but it still belongs to someone. “My sheep,” says Christ. “I know My sheep, and am known of Mine.”

“His flock.” These sheep belong to Christ. They are His by eternal choice; they are His as He loves them with an everlasting love; they are His by eternal union. They are His by purchase, by redemption; He gave His life for them. “I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” Was ever love like this? They are His by calling. He seeks the lost sheep out till He finds it, and when He finds it He brings it back to the fold with rejoicing. “His flock.” They are His eternally, and He says, “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “His flock” – they belong to Christ. They are His now, and they shall be His eternally.

“His flock.” You know, we should love to belong to Christ’s flock (should we not?) but are we willing to be sheep? What I mean is this. Are we willing to be sheep? Sheep are foolish. Are we willing to confess that we are foolish, or do we think we know everything? Are we willing to be sheep? Sheep are always wandering. Are we willing to confess how prone we are to wander. “All we like sheep have gone

astray.” We are transgressors. Sheep are so helpless; but are we willing to confess how weak, how helpless we are, unable to save ourselves, unable to keep ourselves? We want to belong to Christ’s flock, but O are we willing to be sheep – weak, helpless, foolish, prone to wander? But, you know, sheep have one great virtue. I have never yet seen a sheep attacking anyone, have you? I have never seen a sheep tearing another sheep in pieces. Are we willing to be sheep? Or do we want to be found among Christ’s fold at last, but now in this gospel day we are rather like foxes, little foxes spoiling the vines, ravening wolves, rather than sheep? We want to be in heaven at last, but are we willing to be sheep?

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” Well, if you belong to this flock, Christ has found you, and He usually finds His sheep by His Word, the power of His Word. It may be the Word preached, it may be the Word read, or it may be just the power of the Word without the letter of the Word. Let me put it in this way, very, very simply. Many years ago there was an Eastern shepherd, and times became so hard that he had to sell his sheep. He just kept two (two favourite sheep), and then the time came when he was so poor that he had to sell these two beloved sheep that he so dearly loved. But very shortly afterwards he received sufficient money to pay for his two special sheep, to buy them back, so off he went as quickly as he could to the sheep market, and there in the sheep market there were thousands of sheep. Now he enquired: “I want my two sheep back.” He was told, “You can have your own two if you can find them,” but they said, “We cannot find them out of all this great multitude of sheep.” But he said, “I will find them if I can buy them.” So he paid his money for both those sheep; they were his, he bought them back, he had redeemed them (to use a Bible word).

Now, how did he find them out of that great multitude? He went just a little distance from the sheep-fold, took out his shepherd’s pipe and began to play a special note on his sheep pipe. Do you know what happened? Out of that great multitude of sheep, there was one here and one there, and they came out. *They came out.* They were irresistibly drawn by the shepherd’s pipe. They knew it. They recognised the sound. And as he walked away from the sheep market, playing on his shepherd’s pipe, two sheep followed him. They were rightly his; he had bought them, he had paid for them, and now he called them out. Now that is exactly what Christ does with His flock. He bought them – “the price, His own heart’s blood.” He died for them on the cross at Calvary. And then the appointed time comes and, like that shepherd, He calls them out. Redemption – calling; those for whom He died are called out.

“There is a period known to God,
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,

Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold and enter in."

Do you believe it?

"The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose but call by grace."

Now, have those effectual calls reached your heart and mine, calling us out from the world, calling us to feel our need, our guilt, irresistibly calling us to follow after Christ?

"His flock." Now, here we are told that He will feed them. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." If you are a sheep in Christ's fold, then you will have an appetite, you will be hungry. You will not be like a goat that can eat anything, and will eat anything. You have an appetite now, a different appetite. You hunger not for the world, the pleasures of the world, the sins of the world, the lusts of the world, the riches of the world, the things you once hungered for. You have a new hunger. You hunger for the blessings of the gospel, you hunger after the Word of God, you hunger after the Lord Jesus Himself. There is an aching void within your heart that the world can never satisfy, but Christ can. Now tell me, have you got a space in your heart that nothing but Christ can satisfy? Now that is the hungering. Grace will bring you to hunger after the blessings of the gospel, and this is the promise to hungry souls: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." He shall do it.

He appoints His ministers as under-shepherds; He appoints the house of God, the preaching of the gospel, as the place where they are fed; and their language is something like this (I wonder if it is the language of anyone here this afternoon): "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside?" You know that Christ has a flock, you know He feeds them; you want to be one of them, you want to be there when Christ feeds them.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." In Psalm 23 we read: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters." That is how Christ, that is where Christ feeds His flock – in the green pastures. I take it that all the precious doctrines of the gospel are so many green pastures to feed the sheep of Christ's fold. The wonderful doctrine of the covenant of grace, the wonderful doctrine of the Person of Christ, the wonderful doctrine of redemption, the wonderful doctrine of Christ's righteousness, the wonderful revelation of Christ's intercession in heaven, the many exceeding great and precious promises He has made, the sacred truth of the eternal safety of His people. These and all the other doctrines are the precious pastures where the Good Shepherd leads His flock and feeds them. Tell me, are you a

hungry soul, and have you ever been led into the green pastures to find rest there, and to feed there?

To be fed simply means this: to have those holy hungerings of our soul satisfied. If you are hungry, there is only one thing will satisfy you; that is to feed. To go to bed and have a good night's rest, that will not satisfy you. For someone to give you £500, that will not satisfy you. If you are hungry, there is only one way you can be satisfied, and that is by feeding; and no one can do it for you. If someone goes in a house and eats a meal for you, that would not satisfy you. It is personal and it is intense, and nothing will do until you partake. It is just like that with your soul and with the gospel. It is, "Give me Christ, or else I die."

"He shall feed His flock." He has made such wonderful promises concerning His house. He says, "I will abundantly bless the provision of My house, I will satisfy My poor with bread." "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." They are green; not brown, not arid, not dry, not withered. They are green. The sheep of Christ have been feeding in these pastures ever since Adam fell, but they are not out of date, they are not antique. They are ever fresh, they are ever new, they still satisfy. We do not want a different gospel, or a different salvation. *Green pastures.* "He leadeth me beside the still waters," the still waters of His eternal love.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." There is another thing here, friends. When we read this expression, "feeding the flock," in Scripture, we have not just to limit it to the actual feeding. If we read of a shepherd feeding his flock, it does mean that he feeds them, he finds pasture for them, but it means much more as well. It means that he leads them, that he guides them. It means that he loves them, that he protects them. It means that he defends them, that he rules over them. That is why so often in the Bible you read of a king feeding his people. You see, in Bible days the people lived very close to the soil; they were a rural people, and they knew what a shepherd did for his flock. So old Jacob said, "The God which fed me all my life long." He meant that God had fed him, but he meant all these other things as well, God supplying all his needs.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." What a Shepherd, and what a flock, and what a mercy to belong to them, to be loved, guided, led, defended, and then heaven at last! "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm." So all in Christ's fold, all His flock, are not sheep. Some of them are lambs. Who are the lambs? Now I want to speak very carefully and scripturally here. I feel there is much misunderstanding

who the lambs of Christ's fold are. People often speak of them as if they were children, that children are lambs. Now that is not according to Scripture. They may be, and they may not be. Following out the analogy of the shepherd and his flock, meaning Christ and His people, *a lamb is one who is new-born in the fold*. It may be a child new-born in the fold, or it may be an aged man over ninety years old. If the Lord begins a work of grace in an aged man, then that man is a lamb in Christ's fold. It is nothing to do with your age chronologically, or the year you were born. The lambs in Christ's fold are those who have been recently born again of the Spirit, who are new-born in the fold.

"The lambs." Wonderful season when it is spring-time in the church, when it is the lambing time, when we see the lambs appear!

"Ye lambs of Christ's fold, ye weaklings in faith,
Who long to lay hold on life by His death."

Are there any lambs here this afternoon? Are any of you children lambs in Christ's fold, or is it you older ones who are lambs in Christ's fold?

That question in the Book of Samuel: "What mean these bleatings of the lambs?" I know all about that word in its context and what it means there; but, spiritually, what mean the bleatings of the lambs? – because when a lamb is born in the fold it begins to bleat. What are the bleatings of the lambs? One of the bleatings is this: "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is the bleating of a lamb. Another is: "Give me Christ, or else I die." That is the bleating of a lamb. Another is: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want." That is the bleating of a lamb. Another is: "Other refuge have I none, Hangs my helpless soul on Thee." That is the bleating of a lamb. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." That is the bleating of a lamb. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." That is the bleating of a lamb. Now, are there any bleatings of the lambs here this afternoon? "What mean these bleatings of the lambs?" Well, they mean that here is a sinner new-born into the fold of Christ; here is a sinner who belongs to the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep. "The lambs." And, you see, the Lord Jesus has a special, loving, tender care for the lambs.

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." I feel that sometimes the lambs in Christ's fold look at the sheep and say, "I am not like that." Well, that is true; you are not. They are sheep, and you are lambs. Perhaps you read the life of a very godly man, and you say, "I am not like that." No, you are not. He was a sheep, you are a lamb. You read an obituary of someone who has died, and you say, "I am not like that." Well, you are not; that is the account of a

sheep, and you are a lamb. So you say, "I must be out of the secret." Now that is where you make a mistake. To use a different figure: it is first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn – in that order. And to use *this* figure, it is first a lamb, then a sheep. You are not to measure whether you possess grace or not by looking at others, because if you are a lamb you will not be like a sheep, and if you have grace in the blade you will not be like one who has grace in the ear, but it is to come to the Word of God, and the testimony of Christ. Do I belong to Him? Am I taught by His Spirit? Do I know these bleatings as a sinner seeking mercy?

Now, He has a special regard for these lambs. The figure to me seems to be this. The shepherd is leading forth his flock and here is a little lamb which cannot keep up with the rest. What does he do? Does he chase after it, and beat it with his shepherd's rod? No. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm," and you read through Isaiah 40 and see what an arm it is. The arm that holds all nature up, *that* arm; a mighty hand, an outstretched arm.

If He "shall gather the lambs with His arm," He shall gather them out of the world. He will not leave them there. He shall gather them out of a state of unconcern. He shall gather them out of their self-righteousness. He shall gather them to Himself, for "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." It is a wonderful experience to be carried. Have there ever been times in your life when you knew what it was to be carried? You could not go on yourself, you were so weak and helpless, but you know what it is to be borne up and to be carried along. The world tells you to bear up; the gospel bears you up. To be carried in the arms of Christ! "He shall carry them in His bosom." That is, they lie near His heart. There is not a more sacred spot on earth than "in His bosom." "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." No wolf, no fox, no roaring lion, can touch you there. You are safe, you are secure in the bosom of Christ. Satan cannot reach you there. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." What sublime language!

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead" – *gently lead* – "those that are with young." That is, those with an inward burden. That poor ewe, so heavy with that inward burden, cannot keep up with the rest of the flock. "He shall gently lead those that are with young." This has been a precious word to me over the years when I have carried an inward burden, to be sweetly assured of the Lord's gentle leading.

“He shall gently lead those that are with young.” Is there anyone here this afternoon with an inward burden? What is it? Is it your soul, and your sins, and eternity? Is it Satan’s temptation? Is it a sense of your guilt? Is it because you do not feel as you would feel? “He shall gently lead those that are with young.” But, what is your burden, that heavy burden, that inward burden you carry, and perhaps you dare not tell anyone of it? What is your burden? The Good Shepherd knows all about it; He knows the way you take. Now, tell me, what is your burden? “Cast *thy* burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” What is your burden? Is it some bodily affliction? Is it the pain you feel? Is it the fear of the unknown way? Is it a perplexity you have? Is it something in the church of God? Is it something in your family, in your business? Is it something in your relationships with other people?

“He shall gently lead those that are with young.” How precious these gentle leadings! Satan drives; the Lord Jesus does not drive – He leads. That means He goes before. Beware of getting in front of Him; that will never do. But He *gently* leads. Sometimes in the beginning of a work of grace it is gentle leading. Now, there are a lot of people in our chapels who like something dramatic; some dream, or waking up in the middle of the night and some verse of a hymn suddenly comes. People glory in something sensational. Sometimes the Lord’s leadings are very gentle, and I find this, that many of these who are gently led are very blessedly established in the truth, while some who glory in sensationalism turn back. The point is to be real, to be led by Christ.

“He shall gently lead those that are with young.” Our hymnwriter very beautifully speaks of these gentle leadings. He says:

“He led me on, with placid pace,
To Jesus as my hiding place.”

“He shall gently lead those that are with young.” Sometimes in providence you need these gentle leadings. You have this burden, “Lord, what shall I do?” You have a choice to make, a decision to take: “Lord, what shall I do?” and it is an inward burden to you. Now, “He shall gently lead,” but do not go before Him. If Christ is not first, He will not be second. You cannot start off in some venture, and then bid the Lord come into it half-way. He never will. He leads, He goes before. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before.”

“He shall gently lead.” It is to have Christ with you. In your gentle leadings seek that your spirit is right. You may have a powerful word – it may come from God, it may come from Satan. Satan can quote Scripture. But seek that your conscience might be very tender in the fear of God, and then if you begin to move in a wrong way it will jar on your conscience, and you will know that is wrong. If you begin to move in a

right way, you will have God's smile, and you will know that is right. If you deviate from the way again, there will be the smarting of your conscience. Now, seek that tender spirit.

"He shall gently lead those that are with young." Some have that inward burden concerning the day of their death, but He will gently lead. When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before right down into Jordan. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." He does not tell you the way to heaven, and leave you to find the way there yourself. He does not just give you a map – a good map – and say, "This is the way." He leads you. That means that He is there, that He is with you. "He shall gently lead those that are with young," and sometimes it is in a very strange way, a very mysterious way, but it is a right way, and it ends in heaven.

"He shall gently lead those that are with young." I understand that the meaning of this clause can also be: "those that have young." The figure is not just of a sheep about to give birth, but a sheep that has lambs. "He will gently lead those that are with young," in the sense that they have young. So it is a precious promise to a parent. You are concerned about your children; you seek to pray for them. You ask that the Lord will bless them; you seek grace to deal with them. Now, it is a promise to parents. "He shall gently lead those that are with young." It is a promise to Sabbath School teachers. These young that you have, and you try to speak to them, and are concerned about them. Now, He will gently lead you, gently lead you in your meditation, in your preparation for the Sabbath School; gently lead you as to what you are to say, and what you are not to say; gently lead you in your prayers for them; gently lead you in the example that you give them, the life you live before them. It is an exceeding precious promise; and, of course, it embraces a preacher of the gospel, and especially a pastor. "He shall gently lead those that are with young."

Two observations and then I close. The first is: Do you notice this word keeps coming in – *He*? It is not what the sheep are doing, or the lambs, or the ewes great with young. It is *He*; it is Christ. *He* shall feed His flock, *He* shall gather the lambs, *He* shall carry them, and *He* shall gently lead. *He*, Christ. "That in all things *He* might have the pre-eminence."

And the other thing. In this verse you have different cases, different concerns, different spots and places, different experiences, and yet the precious thing is that the Good Shepherd completely understands them. If you are in *that* place, He knows you are there, and if you are in *this* place He knows you are there. He completely, entirely understands where you are. He never yet misunderstood a case. What does Isaiah 40, verse 11, teach? That He suits His blessing exactly to the case. His

flock He feeds. The lambs He carries. The ewes great with young He gently leads. O the suitability of the Lord's kind, loving, gracious dealings with His people! "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

WHAT IS FAITH?

One thing is clear – faith is vital. The holy Scriptures make this plain. To mention but two passages:

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11. 6).

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14. 23).

What then is faith? And who is the believer (the one blessed with faith) to whom are promised such blessings as justification and eternal life?

Many are the mistakes that are made. Some are fatal.

Over the years some have contended that faith is no more than merely a belief of the letter of truth. That is, to believe in the Trinity; that Jesus is the Son of God; that He died, rose again and ascended; that His precious blood cleanses from all sin – and all the other fundamental truths of the gospel.

This is good as far as it goes – but it is not saving faith. In former years it was known as a "Sandemanian" faith because it was held by a small sect known as the Sandemanians. Godly preachers of the past spoke against it, contending that it was no better than the faith of devils. The devils believe all this, but it does them no good. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jas. 2. 19).

But this is not just a point of church history. There is much of this kind of faith about today. Often we speak of "easy-believism."

What is wrong with it? and where lies its deficiency? *It lacks the vital element of trust.* True faith trusts the Saviour entirely for salvation. Moreover, this false faith has no sanctifying effect, whereas true faith "purifies the heart" (Acts 15. 9), "works by love" (Gal. 5. 6), "overcomes the world" (1 John 5. 4).

May we be saved from a mere nominal faith which will never take us to heaven.

But there is another wrong view that has appeared, no doubt in seeking to flee from a nominal faith. That is, the confusion of *faith* with

the *assurance of faith*. And this brings many humble, fearing souls into bondage and distress as, not possessing the sweet assurance of faith, Satan tells them that they are destitute of faith altogether. But what a narrow line there is here!

Real faith, however weak, differs from nominal faith. It *looks* to Christ, and to Christ alone, in humble dependence as the sin-bitten Israelites looked to the serpent of brass lifted up. It is the gift of God, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

True faith ventures on Christ, comes to Him under a sense of need.

“Lo! glad I come; and Thou, blest Lamb,
O take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love may I receive.”

True believing is a coming, and true coming is believing.

Real faith *hangs* upon Christ.

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

How beautifully this was foreshadowed in the faithful Israelite who, feeling his need, brought the lamb, and laid his hand on the head of that dying lamb! “And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1. 4). As if he saw substitution: *he* deserved to die, but the innocent lamb dies; and there he lays his hand upon its head, identifying with it, and placing his whole dependence there.

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

The old catechisms and confessions of faith clearly saw the nature of faith. The old Particular Baptist catechism (Keach’s) answered the question “What is faith?”:

“Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation.”

William Gadsby’s catechism stated:

“Faith is a grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the sinner believes in God as He is revealed in His Word; and whereby He beholds and receives Jesus Christ as a Saviour.”

This is saving faith. However weak, it will take a sinner to heaven. Strong faith has more comfort, consolation and joy, but weak faith will take a sinner to heaven – because the merit is not in the faith (strong or weak) but in faith’s glorious Object, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Toplady wrote: “Assurance is the jewel upon the finger of faith.”

But sometimes, with a desire to warn against a mere nominal faith, ministers have set forth the glorious assurance of faith as if it *is* faith in itself (implying that anything less is not faith). For instance, an eminently gracious minister could speak of faith as:

“A believing with the heart that He is my Christ, and that the blessed Father is my Father, and that the blessed Spirit witnesses to the truth in the heart; and thus, being enabled to claim relationship to the blessed Jehovah, we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and with holy pleasure can say, ‘This God is my God for ever and ever.’”

This is a beautiful passage, but surely this is more than faith – it is faith in the full assurance. This is something to be desired, to be prayed for, to be sought after. The old Strict Baptists (especially John M’Kenzie) spoke much of “the sealing of the Spirit.” How blessed are those who are favoured with this! But many a poor, cast-down, tempted soul has ventured with a “who can tell?” – so fearful lest he should be deceived – but the very language of his heart:

“My hope, my only hope’s in Thee;
O God, be merciful to me!”

This sinner will surely get to heaven – but Satan will tell him again and again that because he has little assurance he has no faith at all and is wrong altogether.

“How precious is the faith
That God to Zion gives!
It triumphs over sin and death,
And in Jehovah lives.”

“Since ’tis Thy work alone,
And that divinely free,
Come, Holy Spirit, and make known
The power of faith in me.”

May the Lord Himself remove the stumblingblocks. May we be saved from a mere notional faith. May we possess that true faith, “the faith of God’s elect,” which will take us to heaven at last, and which desires and glories in “none but Jesus.” May we seek after the full, sweet assurance of faith with all its blessings and blessedness.



The great delight that parents take in the secret lisps and whisperings of their children cannot be compared to the delight which Christ takes in the secret prayers of His people.

Thomas Brooks

OF A LIVING AND A DEAD FAITH

By John Newton (1725-1807)

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2. 26).

Whoever has read the Scriptures with attention must have observed several passages which, at first view, and till thoroughly examined and compared, appear hard to reconcile to each other. No instance of this sort is more remarkable than the seeming difference of judgment between Paul and James on the point of justification. Paul having said, “That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” produces the example of Abraham to confirm his assertion. James (in the chapter before us), from the example of the same Abraham, draws a conclusion which seems directly to contradict this: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Can any two opinions be more opposite in appearance? How then can both be true; or how can we believe both writers infallible in their doctrine, and influenced by the unerring Spirit of God? Must we cleave to the one, and reject the other? And if so, how shall we know which is the real truth?

We may confidently answer that the apostles are both right; their doctrine is equally from God, and does not clash in any particular. The darkness and difficulty is in the apprehensions of men, and not in the Word of God. Yet a difficulty there is, and I hope I shall not detain you unprofitably at this time by endeavouring to clear it, and afterwards to press upon you the words of my text as a proper inference from the whole.

When men who are strangers to Christian experience, and who trust more to their own sagacity and learning than to the Word and Spirit of God, attempt to resolve cases of this sort, they make strange work. And it is no wonder; for how can anyone explain what he does not understand? It would tire you if I should relate a tenth part of the conjectures of learned men upon this very subject. I shall mention one or two as a specimen. A writer of some eminence in the world confesses the difficulty I have noticed in its full strength. He allows and affirms that it is not only hard, but impossible, to reconcile the apostles to each other; and concludes that since it is impossible to hold both their sentiments, we must abide by him who wrote the last. This, from many arguments his learning furnished him with, he thinks to have been James. Accordingly, he gives up the other, and his doctrine of faith without works, to shift for themselves. He supposes that Paul, in the heat of his argument, carried the matter a little too far, and that James wrote afterwards to correct him.

But to show you (excuse a familiar expression) how doctors differ, and at the same time to warn even true believers against hastily judging beyond the line of their experience, I would observe that the great servant of God, Luther, soon after he began to preach the gospel, made a mistake no less bold and presuming on the other side of the question. He had felt the power of Paul's doctrine in his own soul, and would have defied an angel that should have dared to oppose it. Therefore when his adversaries pressed him with the authority of James, not having at that time light to give a more solid answer, he ventured to deny the authenticity of the whole Epistle, and rashly insisted, both in his sermons and books, that James never wrote it. But Luther, though mistaken in this point, was under the Lord's teaching; he went on from strength to strength, increasing in knowledge and grace; and when his judgment was better informed, he publicly retracted his former unguarded assertion.

Leaving, therefore, the authority of men, let us betake ourselves to the Word of God, and humbly seek the light of His Spirit, who is promised to guide His people in their sincere inquiries after truth.

Now, if you consider the scope and design of our apostles, and take in the context, I hope this seeming opposition will be soon removed. Paul is evidently treating on the great point of a sinner's justification in the sight of God; he shows that it cannot be of the law, because by the law all men were already condemned, and because then boasting could not be excluded; but that it was freely by grace, through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus.

His reasoning will appear to greater advantage by perusing the whole passage than by producing a few detached sentences. After he had summed up the evidence with respect both to Jews and Gentiles and pronounced his verdict, that every mouth must be stopped, and that the whole world stood guilty before God, he proceeds thus:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

And because the Jews had a high opinion of Abraham, he proceeds in the next chapter to show that Abraham was justified in the same way. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The circumstance in Abraham's life referred to is when he believed the promise of God, that though he was then childless, he should be the father of many nations; and that particularly from him should proceed the Messiah, the promised Seed, in whom both he himself and all the families of the earth should be blessed.

James expressly treats of those who rested in a notion which they called faith, and accounted sufficient for their salvation, though it had no influence upon their hearts, tempers and conduct. He shows that their hope is vain, because such a faith as this the devils have. And he proves, by the example of Abraham, that his faith was very different from theirs, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience, the offering up his only son:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can (this) faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled" – confirmed – "which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

It is exceedingly plain that he had not the same thing in view which Paul had; for the incident to which he here refers happened a great many years after Abraham had been declared justified in the sight of God.

The sum is: the one declares that nothing renders us acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that such a faith, when true and genuine, is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work. The one speaks of the justification of our persons – this is by faith only; the other of the justification of our profession – this is by faith not alone, but working by love, and producing obedience.

THE FAITH OF DEVILS

By Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778)

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2. 19).

One grand motive which induced James to write this Epistle was to stifle and repress a most dangerous error which, even in the apostolic times, began to gain ground among too many reputed followers of Christ. This error was that a mere naked assent to the truths of Christianity, considered as a doctrinal system, without having the heart affected and without having the life sanctified, would be sufficient evidence of their salvation, and prove them children of God.

Against this most dangerous delusion, the blessed Apostle James drew his pen. And the principal drift of this Epistle is not to counteract Paul (for all the divine writers speak one uniform, harmonious language), but merely to show the delusion which the Gnostics, who were the Antinomians of that age, were under, seeking to prove that mere head knowledge is requisite to stamp us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Hence we find the apostle at the fourteenth verse asking, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” Observe with what caution James expresses himself. He does not say, “What will it profit a man to *have* faith without works?” for he knew that to be impossible. But the words are, What will it profit a man to *say* that he hath faith, without works? There is a vast difference between believing, and *saying* we believe. The man who professes himself a believer must offer something more solid than his own *ipse dixit* [dogmatic statement], than a mere verbal profession, if he wishes to be credited by those to whom that profession is made.

Were I to affirm that I am possessed of a neat hundred thousand per annum, not one of you would believe me. And why? Because I have nothing to show for it. I have no writings to produce as my authentic vouchers. By the same rule, when a man comes to you or me and says, “I have faith,” it is very natural for us to ask, “Where are your works?” If thou hast faith, thou hast it to thyself before God. Faith is a hidden principle until rendered visible by a holy life and conversation.

What does it profit a man barely to *say* that he has faith? It profits a man much to *have* faith, for if he *has* faith, he will also have a life correspondent to the holiness of that leading grace. Indeed, a man can never be holy till he has faith. To them, says Christ, who are sanctified by faith that is in Me.

There is no such thing as real holiness without faith; and there is no such thing as true faith without holiness. These two always go together; and none but a visionary self-deceiver, or an intentional hypocrite, would ever wish to put them asunder. Can faith, that is, can a bare profession of faith, save him, or prove him to be in a saved state? Far from it. Profession will only sink us deeper into condemnation at last, unless God give us to feel and to possess those graces to which our lips lay claim.

Here, a Pharisee may step in and ask, "But will not works save us?" Indeed they will not. "Will not faith and works together save us?" No. Faith is the evidence, not the cause of salvation, just as works are the evidences, not the cause of faith.

* * *

Let us consider in what respects does the faith of devils differ from the evangelical faith of the saints, or from that faith which is of the operation of God? (Col. 2. 12).

Much, every way: but, chiefly, in these:

1. The faith of the devils is only a mere assent of the understanding, unaccompanied by any cordial consent of the will and affections to the truth: a faith without regard to Christ, or any concern for the glory of God. They discern the traces of infinite wisdom shining in the gospel plan, but they feel nothing of Christ's suitableness and loveliness. They speculatively see, but it is only to hate and blaspheme (and, if it were possible, to counteract) the covenant-designs of the Trinity respecting the salvation of sinners.

Sorry I am to observe that we have some professors among ourselves who are for shutting out all feelings of grace for Christian experience. I dare do no such thing. On the contrary, I am persuaded that if a cold, dry assent to the written word be that faith which is connected with salvation, all the devils in hell are, and must be, children of God. But I cannot bring myself to have so good an opinion of Satan and his legions. Nor, consequently, can I suppose that faith to be saving which has nothing to do with spiritual feelings.

If once the feeling or inward perception of God's Spirit, as a convincer of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16. 8) were to be excluded from faith, there would presently be an end of all vital religion, and the power of godliness would take its flight from that day forward. What is conviction of sin? It is no conviction to me, unless I feel myself convinced of my sinfulness and inability. What is conviction of Christ's righteousness? No conviction at all to me, unless I feel the necessity and value of that righteousness. What are the comforts of the Holy Spirit? No comforts at all to me, except I feel them. Unfelt consolation is a contradiction in terms.

Hence we are taught to pray that, by the light of the same Holy Spirit who taught and illumined the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, we too may have a right judgment in all things pertaining to God, and be enabled evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort. But how can we rejoice in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, unless we feel and perceive His visitations? Where is the enthusiasm of believing that the blessed Spirit of God can make my soul feel no less vividly than the impressions of outward objects can make my soul perceive, through the organs of sensation? For in the seventeenth article [of the Church of England] upon election, or predestination unto life, the church roundly affirms that the godly consideration of our election and predestination in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and to such as feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ. May we feel these workings more and more, mortifying the deeds of the flesh, and drawing up our minds to high and heavenly things!

2. The faith of the devils is a faith without repentance. Though they saw something of the glory of God before they fell, yet they do not repent of having fallen. My meaning is, they do not repent of having offended God; though the fear of punishment, resulting from self-love, may make them wish they had not sinned.

3. Theirs is a faith without love. Their language to the Almighty is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Whereas the cry of those who are endued with the faith of God's elect (Tit. 1. 1) is, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Psa. 42. 1).

4. The faith of devils is an Antinomian faith, a faith without holiness, a faith without good works, whereas the faith of God's people is a faith inseparably connected with holiness and infallibly productive of practical obedience. Whoever has Paul's faith will and must have James' works.

5. The faith of devils is a faith without desire. But that faith which the Holy Ghost works in the hearts of His people causes them earnestly to desire the favour, the presence and the image of God in Christ. Nothing will satisfy a renewed soul, but communion with God and conformity to Him.

6. The faith of devils is a faith without reliance. Though they know the mercy of God to be immense, and though they see the merits of Jesus Christ to be all-sufficient, yet they have not one grain of reliance, nor wish they to rely, either upon the one or upon the other. Whereas they who believe through grace (Acts 18. 27) are enabled in some degree to trust the goodness, the covenant and the promise of God; to trust the blood, and obedience, and mediation of Christ; to trust the grace, the power and faithfulness of the Holy Ghost. They trust a little, and wish

they could trust more. They build a little, and wish they could build higher and deeper on the merits of Christ. They not only give their assent to the history of His obedience and sufferings, but rely upon them and take shelter under them, as the sole procuring cause of pardon and salvation.

7. While the devils believe against their wills, and wish they were not forced to believe so much, the saints believe with their hearts unto justification, and are ever crying, "Lord, increase our faith!"

8. The faith of the infernal spirits does not look to the influences of the Holy Ghost, whereas that faith which the Holy Ghost inspires, as it comes from Him, so it leads to Him, and causes the soul to see, and to feel, and to rejoice, that all its strength, all its holiness, and all its happiness are treasured up in the faithful hands of that holy, blessed and adorable Comforter.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL

*From a sermon preached by J.C. Philpot on July 14th, 1867, from
Ephesians 4. 22-24*

The precepts of the gospel are as much a substantial, integral part of divine revelation as the doctrines of the gospel or the promises of the gospel. We cry out loudly and not unjustly against men who slight, neglect or ignore the doctrines of the gospel; but do not we, or at least some of us who profess and preach the doctrines of grace, err nearly as much in another direction, in slighting, neglecting or ignoring the precepts of the gospel? There is, however, I willingly admit, this distinction between them and us, at least such of us as do neglect inculcating the precepts of the gospel, that they slight, neglect and ignore the doctrines of the gospel from ignorance of them or enmity towards them; if we, or any of us, slight, neglect or ignore the precepts of the gospel, it is either from a misconception of their nature, or from want of ability to handle them aright.

I feel bound to offer this explanation, for I cannot bring myself to think that any true minister of Jesus Christ would willingly and wilfully set himself against the precepts of the gospel, or pass them wholly by in the ministry of the Word as if they were inconsistent with the grand doctrines of the gospel, or not necessary or proper to be preached; for to do so would seem to imply that the veil of ignorance and unbelief was still upon his heart, or that he was not called to the work of the ministry. But a man will practically ignore what he would not positively deny, and be guilty of neglect through misconception or human frailty, where he is not guilty of decided enmity or thorough ignorance.

Thus, some ministers seem to think that it is *legal* to bring forward the precepts of the New Testament; that the very nature of a precept, as requiring something to be done, savours of the covenant of works, and is connected with a “Do and live” system; and that, therefore, to enforce obedience to the precepts of the gospel is virtually to enforce the demands of the law. They therefore declaim against all such preaching as obscuring, if not marring, gospel doctrines, by adding to them the obligation of legal precepts. But may you not make doctrines legal and promises legal, as well as precepts? Are there not hundreds of ministers who legalise gospel doctrines, by twining around them man’s ability to believe in Him of whom they testify; or pervert gospel promises by handling them as if they were conditional and dependent for their fulfilment upon our obedience? There is, no doubt, a way in which you may so handle the precepts of the gospel as to give them a legal sound, and so turn gospel into law.

But if a man so handle gospel precepts and legalise them, the fault is not in the precepts themselves as revealed in the Word, which are not legal, but pure gospel, aye, as pure as the doctrines on which they are based, and the promises by which they are accompanied, but in the men of a legal spirit who legalise them. If we do not know the sweet and blessed connections which the precepts of the New Testament have with the glorious truths of the everlasting gospel; if we have never seen or felt their inward sweetness; if we have never entered into the holy wisdom which shines through them and the kind, gracious directions conveyed by them; if they have never been a lamp unto our feet or a light to our path; if by them we have never been held back from evil, or never strengthened and encouraged to do that which is good; if we have never desired to be found walking in them for the glory of God and the comfort of our own souls, we need not wonder that we have found them what men call “legal.”

But there is another objection made to them, viz., that they are inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, and therefore are what is termed *bondaging*. But perhaps what you call “bondaging” may be the lashings of a guilty conscience, and what you call the liberty of the gospel may really be a spirit of licentiousness. There must be liberty in the precept as well as liberty in the promise; for you cannot take a part of the gospel and say: “Here is liberty”; and then take another part of it and say: “Here is bondage.” If once you admit that there are precepts in the gospel – and this you cannot well deny, when some of the epistles are well nigh half filled with them – and that the gospel is throughout a gospel of liberty, you must surely allow that there is as much liberty in gospel precepts as in gospel doctrines. David at least did not think that there was any bondage in the precepts, for his words are: “I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts” (Psa. 119. 45). Do you not see how he

connects together liberty and obedience? In fact, there is no walking at liberty if we neither seek the precepts nor do them; for what is the chief cause of that bondage of spirit which we often feel? Is it not generally because we have in some way or other acted contrary to the precepts of the gospel? This disobedience makes God hide His face from us; and that brings on doubt, fear and bondage.

But let me bring forward a little illustration to show how the precepts of the gospel are compatible with the sweetest liberty. If you were going abroad, say to Paris, at the present time; and suppose that a kind father, when he put into your hand a sum of money to pay your expenses, were at the same time to give you some directions as to the journey, and mingle with them some warnings and admonitions to take care of yourself in that abandoned city, should you think that these kind cautions and admonitions came from a different heart or hand than that which supplied you with the means of going, or interfered with your liberty of movement when you arrived there? Would you not see in them the same love and kindness which gave you the money, and would you not view them as meant to keep you from being entangled in snares into which you might otherwise fall? You would not think that they were meant to bring you into bondage, but to keep you from being entangled in such things as might bring bondage upon you. It is in this way, then, we are to view the precepts of the gospel as a part of the liberty of the gospel – a liberty *from* sin, not a liberty *to* sin.

But there is a class of men who slight, ignore and neglect the precepts of the gospel from other motives and under other influences. The men whom I have been speaking of do it unwittingly; the men I am now to speak of do it wittingly. Perhaps they are living in sin: how, then, can they preach the precepts? The sly drunkard, how can he say: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”? (Eph. 5. 18). A man up to his neck in the world, can he say: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world”? (1 John 2. 15). The man scheming and speculating, full of business, with no thought but for mammon, can he consistently urge any precept that bids him, “Come out” of the world, “and be ye separate ... and touch not the unclean thing”? (2 Cor. 6. 17).

Again, in a congregation, there will often be influential members, such as rich deacons and other persons of wealth and property, on whose support the cause very much rests, and who largely contribute, directly or indirectly, to the minister’s maintenance. He, perhaps, is very poor, is burdened with a large family, has few popular gifts or acceptance out of the circle of his own people, and he knows that his very living, humanly speaking, depends upon the way in which he stands with these influential members. Now, what is the consequence if a man is not endowed with a spiritual knowledge of the truth, and is not delivered

from the fear of man? Why, simply this: that he does not feel himself able to bring forward and urge the precepts of the gospel, lest they cut too close, lest his insisting upon practical godliness and the fruits of the Spirit, as manifested in the life and conversation, should offend the rich Mr. So-and-so, who likes well enough gospel doctrine on the Sunday, but never practises gospel precepts on the Monday or any other day; or the influential Mr. So-and-so, who is very fond of hearing the doctrine of election preached, but does not wish to hear enforced the precept of liberality, separation from the world, a life of faith and prayer, walking in the fear of God all the day long, and renouncing every practice, open or secret, inconsistent with the doctrine that is according to godliness.

THE TRINITY IN SALVATION

By John Bunyan

Verily, sirs, it is necessary that you know these things distinctly – to wit, the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost; for it is not the grace of one, but of all these three, that saveth him that shall be saved indeed.

The Father's grace saveth no man without the grace of the Son; neither doth the Father and the Son save any without the grace of the Spirit; for as the Father loves, the Son must die, and the Spirit must sanctify, or no soul must be saved.

Some think that the love of the Father, without the blood of the Son, will save them, but they are deceived; for “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Some think that the love of the Father and blood of the Son will do, without the holiness of the Spirit of God; but they are deceived also; for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”; and again, “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

There is a third sort, that think the holiness of the Spirit is sufficient of itself; but they (if they had it) are deceived also; for it must be the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Spirit, jointly, that must save them.

But yet, as these Three do put forth grace jointly and truly in the salvation of a sinner, so they put it forth after a diverse manner. The Father designs us for heaven, the Son redeems from sin and death, and the Spirit makes us meet for heaven; not by electing – that is the work of the Father; not by dying, that is the work of the Son; but by His revealing Christ and applying Christ to our souls, by shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts, by sanctifying of our souls, and taking possession of us as an earnest of our possession of heaven.

ONE MEDIATOR – CHRIST

From Thomas Brooks. (See Book Review, June, page 190)

My advice and counsel is this, Be sure that you offer all your closet prayers in Christ's name, and in His alone. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it" (John 14. 13, 14). "That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you" (John 15. 16). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you" (John 16. 23, 24, 26).

O sirs! this is your privilege as well as your comfort, that you never deal with God but by a mediator. When you appear before God, Jesus Christ appears with you, and He appears for you; when you *invoke*, then He *advocates*; when you put up your petitions, then He makes intercession for you. Christ gives you a commission to put His name upon all your requests; and whatsoever prayer comes up with this name upon it, He will procure it an answer. In the state of innocency, man might worship God without a mediator; but since sin has made so wide a breach between God and man, God will accept no worship from man but what is offered up by the hand of a mediator. Now this mediator is Christ alone. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2. 5). One Mediator, not of redemption only, as the papists grant, but of intercession also, which they deny.

The papists make saints and angels co-mediators with Christ; but in this, as in other things, they fight against clear Scripture light. The apostle plainly tells us that the office of intercession pertains to Christ, as part of His mediation (Heb. 7. 25); and it is certain that we need no other master of requests in heaven, but the Man Christ Jesus, who being so near to the Father, and so dear to the Father, and so much in with the Father, can doubtless carry anything with the Father that makes for His glory and our good. This was typified in the law. The high priest alone did enter into the sanctuary, and carry the names of the children of Israel before the Lord, whilst all the people stood outside; this pointed out Christ's mediation (Exod. 28. 21).

In Leviticus 16. 13, 14, you read of two things: first, of the cloud of incense that covered the mercy seat; secondly, of the blood of the bullock that was sprinkled before the mercy seat. Now that blood typified Christ's satisfaction, and the cloud of incense His intercession.

Some of the learned think that Christ intercedes only by virtue of

His merits; others, that it is done only with His mouth. I conjecture it may be done both ways, the rather because Christ has a tongue, as also a whole body, but glorified, in heaven; and is it likely that that mouth which pleaded so much for us on earth should be altogether silent for us in heaven?

There is no coming to the Father, but by the Son (John 14. 6). Christ is the true Jacob's ladder by which we must ascend to heaven. Joseph, you know, commanded his brethren, that as ever they looked for any good from him, or to see his face with joy, that they should be sure to bring their brother Benjamin along with them. O sirs! as ever you would be prevalent with God, as ever you would have sweet, choice and comfortable returns from heaven to all your closet prayers, be sure that you bring your elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the arms of your faith; be sure that you treat and trade with God only in the name of the Lord Jesus.

It is a notable saying that Luther has on Psalm 130, "Often and willingly," he says, "do I inculcate this, that you should shut your eyes, and your ears, and say you know no God out of Christ." O sweet name of Christ! When you go to closet prayer, look that you pray not in your own names, but in the name of Christ; and that you believe and hope not in your own names, but in the name of Christ; and that you look not to speed in your own names, but in the name of Christ: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). Whatever we do, we are to do it by the authority of Christ, and through the assistance of Christ, and in the name of Christ, and for the sake and glory of Christ. Christ's name is so precious and powerful with the Father, that it will carry any suit, obtain any request at His hands. Jesus, in the Chinese language, signifies the rising sun. When a man writes the name of Jesus upon his closet prayers, then he shall be sure to speed. Though God will not give a man a drop, a sip, a crumb, a crust, for his own sake, yet for Jesus' sake He will give the best, the choicest and the greatest blessings that heaven affords; that name is still mighty and powerful, prevalent and precious before the Lord.

The prayers that were offered up with the incense upon the altar were pleasing (Rev. 8. 3); and came up with acceptance (8. 4). Joseph's brothers were kindly treated for Benjamin's sake. O sirs! all our duties and services are accepted of the Father, not for their own sakes, nor for our sakes, but for Christ's sake. There are no prayers that are either heard, owned, accepted, regarded or rewarded, but such as Christ puts His hand to. If Christ does not mingle His blood with our sacrifices, our services, they will be lost, and never ascend as incense before the Lord. No coin is current that does not have Caesar's stamp upon it; and no prayers will be received in heaven that do not have the stamp of Christ upon them. There is nothing more pleasing to our heavenly Father, than

to use the mediation of His Son. Such shall be sure to find most favour, and to speed best in the court of heaven, who present themselves before the Father with Christ in their arms.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Goodly Heritage, by J.A. Watts and G.D. Buss; hardback; 80 pages; price £4 plus 88p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3DD and agents.

For many years our friend and oldest deacon, Mr. John Watts, has been burdened about our Articles of Faith – believing that their value has not been properly appreciated, and that they have often been misunderstood. Over the years he has made notes and written down his observations, which recently have come to light and the Gospel Standard Trust have felt a desire that they should be published. So with the help of Mr. Gerald Buss this work has now appeared.

The sub-title of *A Goodly Heritage* is “An Insight into the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith.” The comments are most helpful and enlightening, especially for our young people, and will also help to serve as an answer to those who disagree. Perhaps our articles on the believer’s rule of conduct and the method of preaching the gospel to the unconverted have been misunderstood more than any of the others, so this brief explanation will, we hope, answer many questions. Mr. Watts makes it abundantly clear that the vital foundation for our beliefs is holy Scripture and that “the goodly heritage” is not the Articles in themselves but the glorious truths contained in them. “The supremacy of holy Scripture is always paramount.”

An explanation is given of the origin of our Articles and it is made clear that we believe we are the true descendants of the founders under God of the Particular Baptist denomination – Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin and Benjamin Keach. At the end there are suggestions for further reading.

The authors’ own assessment of *A Goodly Heritage* is: “It has not been written as a theological treatise but is intended for the ‘ordinary’ reader in the hope that it will arouse more interest in the precious doctrines which form the basis of church fellowship.” This is a day when so many people think it does not really matter *what* we believe, but sound doctrine is vital.

As it was felt that the subject-matter is of such great importance, the book has been beautifully produced as a hardback with a lovely cover picture of Luther nailing his ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Oliver Cromwell, by J.R. Broome; paperback; 31 pages; price £2.75 plus 37p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3DD.

This is a lovely little booklet. It is not a life of Cromwell but an appreciation of his godly character, quoting extensively from his letters and speeches.

The opening sentence is: "Cromwell was, and still is, a man whose name arouses much contention." How true! Many have reviled him as a hypocrite. But Mr. Broome emphasises the extremely valid point that surely in his private letters to his immediate family the real Cromwell appears. And some of these letters are very gracious. Thomas Carlyle did a wonderful service when in 1845 he published Cromwell's letters, which helped to answer many of the false charges.

The charges of cruelty at the siege of Drogheda and of damaging churches and cathedrals are ably dealt with by Mr. Broome.

References are given and there is an excellent list of sources at the end. On the front cover is a coloured portrait of Oliver Cromwell. The book is nicely produced.

Stand Fast. Some Polemical Writings of J.K. Popham; with Introduction by J.R. Broome; 72 pages; paperback; price £3.50 plus 50p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3DD.

This is an interesting book containing five of Mr. Popham's booklets written in defence of the gospel. They are reproduced in five chapters; chapter one being, "Moody and Sankey's Errors versus The Scriptures of Truth," published in 1875; chapter two entitled, "Divine Sovereignty," on the subject of the relationship between divine sovereignty and man's responsibility, published in 1886; chapter three: "Preaching the Gospel to the Unconverted," published in 1908; chapter four entitled, "The New Theology Versus the Holy Scriptures," being an answer to the errors propagated by R.J. Campbell, published in 1907; chapter five: "The Keswick Convention in the Light of the Doctrines of Grace," published in 1930.

Mr. Broome states in his Introduction (on page 5) that the reprint of these polemical writings had a purpose as it speaks, in the words of Scripture, recalling the past manifestations of the Lord in our midst: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen" (Rev. 2. 5). He further writes on page 7 on the condition today: "The outward bulwarks in divine doctrine are being disregarded. Universal charity of which he [Mr. Popham] spoke is prevalent in the nation and denomination. Every effort is made to smooth over differences and blend truth and error." This is a sad indictment and only the power of the Holy Spirit can maintain and build up His church (Psa. 85. 5, 6).

There is one small discrepancy on the back cover (copied from the back cover of *Valiant for Truth*) which states that Mr. Popham was Editor of the *Gospel Standard* from 1907-1937. He in fact became Editor on the death of Mr. Feazey in June 1905 and resigned his editorship due to age and infirmity in June 1935.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

The Love of God – As Displayed in the Life, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, by I.A. Sadler; 84 pages; paperback; price £3 plus 70p postage; published by the author, and obtainable from 1 Payne Close, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 3FX.

This is not a treatise based on one text of Scripture. The author says in the Preface, "This book can only touch upon such an immense subject." He has, however, tried to set forth the scriptural teaching on this subject, contending that the love of God is not only free, but pure and holy. In doing so he has quoted extensively from the Authorised King James Version of the Holy Bible presenting his subject in six chapters entitled: 1. The Pure and Holy Love of God; 2. Jesus, the Light of the World; 3. Gethsemane; 4. Greater Love Hath No Man Than This; 5. The Crucifixion; 6. The Risen and Glorified Redeemer.

The book is well written in an easy, flowing, conversational style, and the chapters are divided into paragraphs with appropriate headings. Several suitable well-known hymns are included to amplify the subject, with six hymns written by Hallgrímur Pétursson (translated by A. Gook). The book has been particularly dedicated to African brethren but is suitable reading for any believer wishing to know more of this subject.

We commend this book to our readers with the author's stated prayerful desire that Jesus may be exalted and readers blessed in their souls by the Holy Spirit revealing the glorious love of God.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Four Little Words, edited by Alexander McPherson; hardback; 96 pages; price £6.95 plus postage; published by Free Presbyterian Publications, and obtainable from 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

This interesting book for children and young people consists of over thirty short stories that originally appeared in the Free Presbyterian *Young People's Magazine*. It was formerly published in 1986 under the title *Pages from the Past*. The editor, Alexander McPherson, a Free Presbyterian minister, was the author of the missionary biography *James Fraser*. We hope *Four Little Words* will prove profitable to young readers in our congregations.

The title itself, *Four Little Words*, is taken from the heading of the first article. The "four words" are, "Thou God seest me," and the story concerns a young boy, about to do wrong, being arrested by the power of these words.

Gleanings from Paul: The Prayers of the Apostle, by A.W. Pink; hardback; 490 pages; price £16; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is another book on prayer, but very different – the prayers of the Apostle Paul. The author believed that this is a most important part of Scripture and yet one which has been very much neglected.

Paul's prayers are all taken from the epistles (there are none in the Acts of the Apostles). There are thirty-three of them altogether, a chapter devoted to each, and appearing in the order in which they appear in the Bible. They are given such titles as "Prayer Concerning Tribulation" (2 Cor. 1. 3-5), "Prayer for Understanding" (Eph. 1. 18), "Prayer for Inner Strength" (Eph. 3. 14-16), and "Prayer of Doxology" (Eph. 3. 20-21). The introduction – on prayer itself, Paul as a man of prayer, the prayers of ministers, etc. – is of special interest and value. In dealing with the various prayers, the author does not limit himself rigidly to the words of each prayer but deals with most of the great truths of divine revelation in the context.

Recently, in reviewing the *Life of A.W. Pink*, we spoke unfavourably about his exclusiveness and readiness to separate from godly people who disagreed with him. Yet we said at that time that some of his writings are excellent. *Gleanings from Paul* is an essentially spiritual book which those who fear the name of the Lord will find profitable.

History of the English Calvinistic Baptists: 1771-1892, by Robert W. Oliver; hardback; 410 pages; price £16.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This must be one of the most important books on Baptist history to be written in recent times – described by Dr. Michael Haykin as “a masterful work.” With the greatest of interest we read it.

It is a pleasure to read a book by an author who thoroughly understands his subject, who is accurate on all his facts, who has minutely researched his subject, and who writes in an easy and attractive style.

One point for which Dr. Oliver strongly contends is the importance from every point of view of the Strict and Particular Baptist community that emerged in the nineteenth century – a people of godliness and grace who knew much of the blessing of the Lord. This is in complete contradiction of former well-known Baptist historians like W.T. Whitley and A.C. Underwood (and more modern writers) who counted this group of churches as nothing but “a stagnant backwater.”

Dr. Oliver particularly deals with the three great controversies in which the Particular Baptists were involved during the hundred and more years under consideration:

1. How the gospel should be preached to the unconverted.
2. The position of the law in the life of the believer.
3. Strict or open communion.

We would disagree with the author’s position on all three of these issues. However, Dr. Oliver never writes in a vitriolic way and usually writes most amiably of those with whom he would not agree, realising their value. This is very much appreciated, and different from many. Thus, even in the advertisement, Gadsby is mentioned as “a theological giant” and emphasis is made that Dr. Gill was a warm, spiritual writer, never dry or arid.

On Huntington, the author is too severe. Whatever else, his followers the “Huntingtonians” had a high reputation for godliness in life and conduct. Certainly too much credit is given to Andrew Fuller. Whether he is agreed with (or, as with us, disagreed with), he has always seemed to us one of the most confused and self-contradictory theologians we have ever read. We also feel the following statements were unnecessary:

“Undoubtedly many members of these churches [Gospel Standard] maintained high standards of personal godliness, but they succeeded in establishing a cloistered society which, like monastic communities of the early church, rejected an ungodly world, but did little to challenge and change it” (page 311).

And:

“They [Gospel Standard churches after 1872] found themselves under a Hyper-Calvinistic yoke more rigorous than anything ever seen among the Particular Baptist churches of England” (page 335).

It is a pity such comments appear, but these are not typical of the book where the value and godliness of these “Hyper-Calvinists” (so called) is clearly appreciated.

It is interesting to notice that up till the 1830s almost all the Particular Baptist churches still practised Strict Communion.

Strictly speaking the title of the book is misleading. It is *not* a “History of the English Calvinistic Baptists: 1771-1892”! It begins with an interesting chapter on John Gill, followed by accounts of Benjamin Beddome, the elder Ryland, Robert Hall (senior) and Abraham Booth. But many of the outstanding happenings and men of the time are missing. The book is based on Dr. Oliver’s doctoral thesis: “The Emergence of a Strict and Particular Baptist Community among the English Calvinistic Baptists from 1770 to 1850”; and really this is the subject of the book – not a general history.

There are three appendices. We cannot understand the significance of Appendix C (a letter written by Dr. J.H. Philpot in 1931). We always understood, rightly or wrongly, that Philpot’s son, though admiring his father, adopted agnostic views.

We have tried to give a fair appraisal of this important book from our point of view. We very much enjoyed reading it. We appreciated its style and spirit. We regret that there was much in it with which we do not agree as the author’s opinions differ from our own.



Prayer uncloses the bountiful hand of God, opens the door of mercy, retains Christ on the throne of the affections, and covers every rival and usurper with shame and confusion of face. It is the believer’s Royal Exchange, where he may take his cares, burdens, snares and troubles – his vexations, temptations, doubts and fears – his misgivings of heart, sorrows of mind, hardness of heart and ingratitude – together with his faintness, unbelief, spiritual jealousy and rebellion; also all his disorders – the leprosy of sin, the evil within, the plague of his heart, or the plague of his head; with deaf ears, blind eyes, feeble knees, languid hands, halting feet and a stiff neck. He may there take all his oppositions, persecutions, false charges, slanderous accusations, vile reproaches, and there get rid of and leave them all.

Our Saviour compared His followers to “exchangers” (Matt. 25. 27); and such they are, for in return for these troubles they receive from their heavenly Banker, numberless deliverances, blessings and mercies; many refreshings, renewings, revivals and restorations; large returns of comfort, peace, love and joy; together with fresh discoveries, love-tokens, wholesome truths, profound mysteries, glorious glimpses, bright prospects, terrestrial [celestial?] views, undoubted evidences, infallible proofs, heavenly lessons, confirming visits, conspicuous deliverances, earnest, pledges and foretastes, reviving cordials – valuable banknotes in “exceeding great and precious promises,” payable this *very day*, and *every day through life*, and even to millions of ages after date, signed, sealed and delivered by Jehovah Himself, the “God that cannot lie.”

Huntington

RESURRECTION

Lives Joseph, who so long ago I thought had died?
 Spake Jacob, old and grey – is he exalted high?
 Then I'm well satisfied, then I'll proceed
 And see his great estate, and die content indeed.

Lives Jesus, who in truth unto the tomb was borne?
 Is He thence risen now, when three whole days have gone?
 Hath He all power received in heaven and earth below?
 Then am I comforted: and I will Godwards go
 To see His high estate: I'll die in peace at last
 And with my Lord be heir of glory's joys so vast.

Jakobus Revius (1586-1658)
 translated from Dutch

OBITUARY

Peter Henry Sayers, member of the church at Tamworth Road, Croydon, for twenty-nine years, passed away on September 1st, 2005, aged 76.

Extracts taken from his testimony given before the church prior to the baptism of himself and his wife, and from his own writings:

I was born of godly parents, but my mother died when I was five years old. I was cared for by my grandparents and an aunt. When I was seven years old a very worldly boy of the same age told me that if I continued to swear I would never go to heaven. My godly grandfather told me that whatever happened I was not to steal, but I did and some years later I lost a great treasure, giving me prayerfully to realise that as you sow so shall you reap. I was leading a wicked life. When I was eleven my father married again and I went to live with them. I was very unhappy and determined to drown myself in the large, deep pond at the back of the house. The Lord saved me from doing that. Like Job I wished I had never been born.

Part of my walk home from school was passing fields, woods and a zoo. One day when about six or seven years old, I noticed a rough-looking man pushing a bicycle on the opposite side of the road. This man kept the same pace as me for about three quarters of a mile. Then he smiled at me and called me to come across the road to him; he then insisted on me following him into the woods. As we got further into the wood I became petrified and begged him to let me return to the path by the road. At the time there were several of my school friends about a quarter of a mile behind me, but I was not aware of their presence. Eventually I told the man that I could not tell my mother as she was dead. Upon that he allowed me to run back to the road. Police were notified. Again God's hand had preserved me from this evil man. I went to work when fourteen years old and fell down a lift shaft, where again my life was spared.

When I was released from the Forces I met my wife to be. I attended night school and followed the world in everything. I sought to change, but suffered a

time of sore temptation. I experienced what Legion among the tombs went into. I knew that only the power of God could save me. But the time came when I myself was clothed and in my right mind; the Lord had taken away His rod.

The turning point was that now I had a longing for the house of God. I was made redundant, but a door was remarkably opened in Croydon and I desired to be with the Lord's people. I obtained comfort from blind Bartimaeus that Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.

“Though the vile tempter's hellish rage
Will, with his darts, thy soul engage,
God through the fight shall thee sustain
Nor shalt thou seek His face in vain.”

My desire was that God would create in me a clean heart, and I longed for a heart to praise the Lord.

“O for a heart to praise the Lord,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that's sprinkled with the blood
So freely shed for me.”

I heard Mr. Samuel Curtis preach and he said that he knew a woman who had for many years been tried providentially, but now she was so tried spiritually that those heavenly things meant more to her than the things of time. I believe this made a deep impression on my mind at that time and I hoped that one day the Lord would do this for me.

Unless anyone understands the power of sin and the devil, then they will not understand the man in the tombs named Legion, for no one can deliver himself. I can truly say, “The more I stoved against sin's power, I sinned and stumbled yet the more.”

There was also a time when Mr. Wood asked the Lord that if there was a sinner here that needed it, that the Lord would bring him down. Recently, I did not feel the word was for me, but at the time I did and the Lord brought me down (and I needed it) so that I almost dreaded every day. Then to break my pride He brought me lower into very hard things in business, a pulling down, taking away.

I believe the Lord has chastised me (one of His children, as I hope) both in business and providential matters in order to break my stubborn will.

Then there seemed to be a drawing closer to the things of God, and a casual interest developed into a real desire to be numbered among the people of God.

Mr. Wood spoke about the Shepherd and I felt the Lord was leading me. Many times the service was blessed to me – especially Hymn 1036 (“Seek ye My face, the Saviour cries”).

Shortly after this, for several days I felt such a peace of mind from the Lord that the words,

“Peace, perfect peace in this dark world of sin;
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within,”

were foremost in my mind, and I found myself saying the first line out loud in the office.

I was helped when Mr. Wood preached from, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I felt if I was accepted by the church that hymn 1100 expressed my testimony:

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admired its trifles too
But grace has set me free."

His pastor writes: He and his wife were baptized together on Thursday, July 28th, 1976, and he was appointed deacon in January 1993. He was deeply exercised in his choice of hymns for the services, often giving expression of his spiritual desires for true repentance, and to be prepared for eternity. He prayed much for the spirit of Jesus.

He suffered much physical affliction in his latter years and was admitted to hospital many times. More than once he testified: "I was brought low, and He helped me." These afflictions were sanctified and he proved the Lord to be with him, his hope firmly fixed upon Christ. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21. 7).

These words were made very precious as our friend drew nearer to the end of his life:

"With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted with His love:
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

The funeral took place on September 9th, 2005. His pastor took the service at Tamworth Road, Croydon. The interment was in Bandon Hill Cemetery, Wallington.

C.A.W.

From the intimate conjunction that is between Christ and the church, it is just and equal in the sight of God. God decreed, according to the rules of His eternal righteousness, that what He did and suffered in the discharge of His office, should be esteemed, reckoned and imputed unto us, as unto all the fruits and benefits of it, as if we had done and suffered the same things ourselves.

Owen

For what greater secret can God impart to His people than that of opening the covenant of grace to them in its freeness, fulness, sureness, sweetness, suitableness, everlastingness, and in sealing up His good pleasure, and all the spiritual and eternal blessings of the covenant to them?

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2006

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

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

*Sermon preached by J.K. Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on August 12th, 1906*

Text: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5. 1).

It has been, and is now, my fervent desire to bring forward again this marvellous, this glorious, divine doctrine of justification. Its importance to us can never be overstated; for it goes to the very root of all our everlasting interests. It matters not what else we are; if not justified before God, we are condemned. We may have much religion without being justified; and we may feel to have none, and yet be justified.

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. It is His glory to cast behind His back into the depths of the sea all the sins of His people. There are two creations in particular that the Scriptures speak of. First, the creation of man, and this was in righteousness; that is, He made man in His own image. Second, the creation of righteousness for sinners, whereby many are made righteous. This comes from heaven. Of it God speaks: "Let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it" (Isa. 45. 8). The first creation needed but the word, "Let there be." The second needed that God Himself in the Second Person of the Trinity should come down to earth, assume our nature, be made under our law, and obeying it, become the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This is wonderful. My friends, we are interested in the righteousness of Christ, or we are not. If we are, when blessed with quickening grace we are concerned about it. Till it is made out to us, we can have no solid satisfaction about our state and standing for eternity. When the heavens are commanded to drop down righteousness, and the earth to open and receive it, its influence on the heart is wonderful.

In the verses before the text, Abraham was promised a Seed, the same promise being enlarged to him that was given to Adam in Eden. The line in which Christ was to come was now made known and promised to him. And "what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed

God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Hence that stumbling mystery: “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4. 3, 5). We find in the case of the leper [under the law], the scrutiny made again and again of his case was not to find out what good parts there were, but narrowly to examine the bad. This points out that when God would pronounce a man clean, He makes a close scrutiny of every hair apparently affected. And if He is dealing with you, you will not find out ever so many good places, but be all over bad.

Justification from first to last is *the act of God*, “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” from all eternity (Eph. 1. 9). In that is involved the coming, work, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is said that He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Now, sinner, that great act of the Father when He gave His only begotten Son to die, and that great act of Christ when He came to do the will of His Father, both were to provide a righteousness, an absolutely perfect righteousness, to be put to the account of sinners. When Christ was raised from the dead, He was “justified in the Spirit” openly, and declared to be the Son of God with power. And He had that justification in Himself before He expired, when He cried, “It is finished.” No imputed sin or guilt remained on His soul, but the darkness was past, wrath was finished, the curse ended; and His holy soul no longer suffered, but left the body, and went to paradise. But this justification was not known openly; the disciples knew it not; for they feared they were deceived, until He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Then He was justified in their eyes, and declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection (Rom. 1. 4). Though they had not the New Testament Scriptures to bear witness to Him, the Holy Spirit manifested Him as the Son of God; and ever since He has continued to be shown to spiritual Israel.

By His death sin was removed in one day. All His people stood then in that state of justification in the estimation of the law and the judgment of the Father; and their sin remained no more, neither on them, nor on Him. The Trinity were concerned in that great act of justification. All the blackness of His people’s nature, the vileness of their hearts, sins which are done by them in all states, all their bitter enmity, Jesus fully, perfectly, absolutely atoned for, and left nothing to be done.

Therefore,

1. I will notice, justification is a *state* belonging to the people of God, long before it is an experience or feeling. All must be in a state of justification or condemnation in God’s sight, as interested in Christ or otherwise. Think of God’s holy eye looking on the church and beholding

no spot in her. Think of her who was born in her natural head and father Adam, who sinned in him and in her own person, yet whose sins shall never rise in judgment against her, because Jesus took them on Himself, the Father imputing them to Him; and so they are taken away. This is the truth of the matter. He “was raised again for our justification.” This doctrine, therefore, goes to the root and foundation of all our interests for eternity. A man may be interested in it, and none know it. Who would have judged Saul of Tarsus to have been a justified person? But God made it manifest by the work of grace in him. And he who can talk freely about justification as a doctrine, a state, an act of God, may not be justified, and be quite content to live in sin.

2. There is such a thing, then, as an *experience* of it. When a man is really a sinner experimentally, he is fitted for that gift of God, justification. It is for sinners who are unrighteous when tried, and know themselves so. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” – that is, in the man’s sense of it.

Now because justification is a legal term, I will speak of it in experience as belonging to a law suit entered into by the Lord God against a sinner. If we never have direct dealings with God here below in our hearts and consciences, we cannot know Him. But we shall have distinct dealings with Him hereafter, if not here, when He pronounces openly the sentence of banishment. Now when the Lord will have a sinner before Him wearing that beautiful robe Jesus wrought, does He take it to the sinner in his corruption, and put it on him, leaving him as he is? No, He descends on Sinai, and summons him to the foot of that mount; and there are thunders and lightnings, and the law given out with more or less power, which make him wither. He knows he can never comply with God’s commands. Knowing God’s character, the sinner knows his own. If He is holy, we shall prove we are unholy in the light of His holy Majesty. Arraigned at His bar, how our hearts fear, our iniquities are searched out! “How are the things of Esau searched out!” When iniquity is found on the skirts, then He comes closer. “I will search Jerusalem with candles.” He shows the wickedness in the heart that we never thought ourselves capable of doing. Our own eyes see it, and our consciences feel it. Here it will come to light.

But Christ says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If we are righteous, Christ will say, “You are not suitable to Me.” But if we say, “My sins exceed all others’, and the awfulness of them cannot be put into words,” Christ says, “I came to call *sinners* to My fountain, to My righteousness. My salvation shall not tarry.” Were we self-condemned, our hearts would say, “God is righteous; I am wrong.” Between God and sinners there is an infinite distance; not only the infinite disparity between God and creatures; it is not a shame to have

that. But there is shame and guilt in this moral distance; and the sinner feels it. This is now to be our experience as sinners – to be justified by faith. Jesus comes to one self-condemned, and says, “Thy sins are forgiven.” So He said to the woman charged with adultery, “Hath no man condemned thee? ... Neither do I condemn thee.” He speaks this on the ground of His own death and resurrection: “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”; and it follows, “Therefore being justified,” we have peace with God by faith. Our faith when drawn out by the Holy Ghost will go to this justifying God, notwithstanding all our badness, and believe that what is impossible with men is possible with God –

“Here’s an amazing change indeed –
Justice is now for me!”

This man is to see God’s well-pleased face, is to feel God has no complaint against him, that Christ is the right ground of hope for a sinner, the door of access to God.

When one comes here, it is like the river Ezekiel saw, which rose higher and higher. At first it was to the ankles – only a hope in Christ’s righteousness is very wonderful, very invigorating. He gets to the knees in this river of justification, of eternal love, and O how he is strengthened! To be there even to his knees, to see a little of the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the unction of the Spirit, to feel the waters flowing into the soul – who can express the sweetness of it? It is a river that makes everything live where it comes. Yet there is more to be had than this; the prophet soon found it a river to swim in. When you get the witness of the Spirit, the love of God, the righteousness of Christ all in your soul, there is a river to swim in, to bathe in. To feel clothed in this robe, to have God’s heavenly smile, the kiss of the Trinity on your conscience, no charge laid against you; to see Jesus and embrace Him, to close in with Him, to get hold of Him; for faith to entwine about Him, to be able to say, “Here is a good and merciful God, and I know Him for myself” – this is justification in experience. There may be charges afterwards, but let us sing while we can. When we look on Christ, let us look as long as we can. Having Him in our arms, let us hold Him as long as we can; and when He speaks, listen as long as we can. Here we feel, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”

3. In the next place, what is the *effect* of justification? “*Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” There is plenty of peace in the world, but not much that is good. If I could I would break the peace of some here tonight; but that is God’s work. We read, “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as

travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5. 3).

True peace is the sweet sense of reconciliation to God in Christ. It is a holy Sabbath in the conscience, the removal of the distance so painfully felt before. Now, like Joseph, Christ says to the soul, "Come near to Me, and dwell near Me." He runs to meet the returning sinner, falls on his neck, and kisses him. Joseph assured his brethren of his relationship to them and friendship; and then they talked with him. So when Christ has made Himself known to a sinner, there is communion.

Nor are we to forget for the rest of our days through whom our justification flows – the Man Jesus, very God and very Man. We shall never love Him enough, nor value Him enough, nor fully realise what it cost Him to make this open way for us, "through the veil; that is to say, His flesh"; to open the window through which light has streamed into our souls. Is it not wonderful to you that all the goodness you want, and have none of before the Lord comes, instantly fills your soul when He comes? You are "full of goodness," as said Paul (Rom. 15. 14). A man who is justified is filled with goodness, God's goodness, under the pouring out of the Spirit, with faith and love. The righteousness of Christ will grow in his esteem. I think what I saw of it at the beginning was nothing compared to what is made out to me in it now.

4. Now there is another effect of this justifying robe, which is especially felt in prayer – *power with God by faith*. That robe enables a man to draw near to God by faith in its merits, and so to prevail, like Jacob. It is said, "By his strength" – his faith – "he had power with God: yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his Memorial" (Hos. 12. 3-5).

But if you have not faith, you have not power with God. You have no dealings with the Lord; you have never owned the worst of your state, never justified Him if He should condemn you. "For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11. 6). You have never spoken into His ear one single confession, or preferred one true prayer – if you have not faith. It is a good word,

"Close in with Christ by saving faith,
And God's your Friend for ever."

Till a man does that, he does not know Christ as his Saviour.

"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." O to believe we are the delight of God! that He has not such pleasure in all the works of His providence and creation as He has in the heart of a sinner,

one that is found in Christ. He says, "Where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor" – and with him will I dwell (Isa. 66. 1, 2; 57. 15). That is, "He shall have access; he shall dwell with Me, delight in Me. He shall have 'plenty of silver' or enough for this world, peace in his soul, and a good prospect for eternity." For "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4. 8). Hence he rejoices "in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5. 2). He shall overcome at last, and be made a pillar in the temple of God, and shall go no more out (Rev. 3. 12).

The good Lord deal with us, and bring justification into our hearts, that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and have peace with God through Him.

ETERNAL COVENANT UNION

By Thomas Boston

The espousals betwixt Christ and the soul are for ever in fact. As this match is designed to be everlasting, so it is everlasting indeed. It shall never end, but last it shall, from the moment it is made, through all the ages of eternity.

It is everlasting, without interruption: it shall never be broken. The marriage covenant betwixt Christ and His spouse is not like Adam's covenant, where man might be in this day and out tomorrow; today the friend of God, tomorrow His enemy. Nay, it is a bond of peace with God, which the believer shall never be shaken out of, though devils do their worst. The spouse of Christ receives a kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb. 12. 28). The marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers is not liable to any uncertainties. If it could be broken, or the relation become extinct in any case, it would certainly come to pass in one or all of these four; 1. In the case of the adversity of either party. 2. In the case of the advancement of either party. 3. In the case of desertion. Or, 4. In the case of the spouse's unchastity. But in none of these cases is the covenant broken or the relation extinguished; in all of them the fatal breach is still avoided.

I. First, the espousals betwixt Christ and the believer stand firm, the covenant remains sure, in the case of the adversity of either party. This case is fatal to many covenants among men, of whom there are many who, as Nineveh's captains (Nah. 3. 17), are like the "great grasshoppers,

which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away." They stick close in a time of prosperity, but adversity drives them off; and they remember not, but renounce the brotherly covenant. But in this covenant, the parties will never break with one another, how low soever either of them be brought.

(1) Christ will not break with His spouse, though she be brought very low; He will cleave to her in her greatest adversity, having taken her for ever and for all conditions. If thou be espoused to Christ, though thy worldly comforts fail, thy reputation sink, thy substance decay, poverty and want overtake thee; yea, though thou be brought so low by sickness and distress as to be unable to do anything for thyself, or anything for thy Lord and Husband, yet know that even in that case the covenant stands firm, and all is yours in right and title. Our Lord will not disown His spouse though she be going in rags. Job was very low every way before that God turned his captivity; but as low as he was, the Lord owns His relation to him, and seems to take a pleasure in owning it (Job 42. 7, 8): "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. Go to My servant Job ... and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, as My servant Job." Four times in these two verses the Lord calls him His servant Job. And thus the covenant sweetens what is bitter in the believer's lot, and makes his thorny crown of afflictions better than a crown of gold.

(2) Christ's spouse will not break with Him when He is in adversity. The apostle speaks of the afflictions of Christ, to wit, in His members, the members of His mystical Body (Col. 1. 24). These offend hypocritical professors; and in such a time many of them fall off; but they that are indeed espoused to Christ follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (Rev. 14. 4). Christ with the cross will be as dear to them as with the crown. Though enemies should prevail to lay Jerusalem on heaps, they will favour the very dust thereof for His sake. If He go to the wilderness, they will follow Him thither. They will take part with Him, whosoever do oppose Him, and side with Him, though all the world should side against Him; they will never break with their Lord and Husband, upon the account of the most bitter cup His enemies can fill up to them.

II. Secondly, the espousals stand firm, and the covenant remains sure, in the case of the advancement of either party. This case has been fatal to some matches amongst men; but here lordship does not change manners. The bride now makes choice of Christ for her Head and Husband, while the world generally despises and rejects Him. The day approacheth wherein she shall see Him come in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels, sit down on His throne,

judge the world, and put all His enemies under His feet: but will He then forget the marriage covenant? Will He then overlook the soul that is now espoused to Him? Nay, He will not.

When "our God shall come, and shall ... call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people," behold how the marriage covenant is remembered and the espoused graciously noticed! "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Psa. 50. 3-5).

On the other hand, howbeit the prosperity of fools shall destroy them, yet the spouse of Christ will never change her Lord and Husband, whatever prosperous turn her outward condition in the world may take. As the world's frowns will not frighten a believer from cleaving to Christ, so the world's smiles will not entice him from it. He will condemn its bribes as well as its boasts (Song 8. 7): "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly condemned."

III. Thirdly, the espousals stand firm and the covenant remains sure, even in the case of desertion on either side. And this is a case which often falls out in the present state and course of the spiritual marriage.

(1) Sometimes the Lord, in His sovereign wisdom, for His own holy ends, deserts His spouse in great measure. Then the soul that was dandled on the knee is cast down; she that had ready access to her Lord is held at the back of the door; she that was crowned with lovingkindness has the crown kicked off her head: but though the marriage covenant is laid up out of her sight, yet it is not torn in pieces. Though He in His anger shuts up Himself (as it were) in His chamber, yet He never leaves the house. Still the relation stands, and there is no total desertion in the case (Jer. 32. 40): "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

(2) Sometimes the foolish creature deserts her espoused Husband, ceaseth to entertain actual communion and fellowship with Christ. Then is she found pursuing this and that other vanity, gadding about among created things, as if she were not espoused, but had her choice yet to make; and she begins to nestle in some forbidden place. But her Lord will not so part with her; He will set fire to her nest wherever it is, and graciously bring her back again, as the psalmist prays (Psa. 119 last verse): "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant." Christ's spouse never totally forsakes Him; for so runs the everlasting covenant with respect to her part, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32. 40).

IV. Lastly, but what shall we say in the case of the unchastity of the spouse of Christ? We must not speak wickedly even for God, nor talk deceitfully for Him (Job 13. 7). It is evident from the Lord's Word that even in that case, the espousals stand firm and the covenant remains sure

(Jer. 3. 13, 14): “Thou ... hast scattered Thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Woe unto us, our case is desperate, if the infirmities of Christ’s spouse make void the marriage covenant! But they do not make it void. Surely our Lord will put a difference betwixt weakness and wickedness; and we know no sin a believer falls into but sins of infirmity (I say, not daily infirmity), “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6. 14).

There is a clause in the covenant touching the miscarriages of believers; but it is not an irritant clause: “If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break” (Psa. 89. 30-34).

Look not on this doctrine as a pillow for carnal security: for, although those who are espoused to Christ need not fear putting away, there remains enough to frighten them from sin, while their sins may be pursued with all manner of strokes upon their bodies, even to death itself; and with terrible strokes on their souls, even to the arrows of the Almighty being within them, “the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit” (Job 6. 4). Yea, one sin in them may be punished with suffering them to fall into another, as David’s sloth was punished with suffering him to fall into other sins of a far more gross nature (2 Sam. 11). And so a believer has that to fear which is more to be feared than hell, if of all evils sin be the greatest. And he spoke right who said, “That if on the one side were presented unto him the evil of sin, and on the other side the torments of hell, he would rather choose to fall into hell than to fall into sin.”

The sum of the matter is this: our Lord has brought His spouse by the marriage covenant into a paradise on earth, while the rebellious dwell in a dry land; and of the tree of life she may freely eat; but under the pain of her Lord’s displeasure, she must not taste of the forbidden fruit. Nevertheless, the day she eats thereof is not the term day of the covenant, that she must remove; nay, but He will chastise her and bruise her, till she vomit up the sweet morsel. And He may so bruise her in His hot displeasure as her faith and hope may be brought to the very point of expiring; yea, her natural life may go for it, she may lose her life in the cause; only the covenant stands sure, the espousals are not disannulled.



Live not so much upon the comforts of God as upon the God of comforts.

Mason

ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

From "Bishop Hall's Contemplations" by Joseph Hall (1574-1656)

Who should be matched with Moses in the hill of Tabor, but Elijah? Surely, next after Moses, there was never any prophet of the Old Testament more glorious than he; none more glorious, none more obscure. The other prophets are not mentioned without the name of their parent, for the mutual honour both of the father and the son. Elijah, as if he had been a son of the earth, comes forth with the bare mention of the place of his birth. Meanness of descent is no block in God's way to the most honourable vocations; it matters not whose son he be, whom God will grace with His service. In the greatest honours that human nature is capable of, God forgets our parents; as when we shall be raised up to a glorious life, there shall be no respect had to the loins whence we came. So it is, proportionally, in these spiritual advancements.

These times were fit for an Elijah; an Elijah was fit for them. The eminentest prophet is reserved for the corruptest age. Israel had never such a king as Ahab for impiety, never so miraculous a prophet as Elijah. This Elijah is addressed to this Ahab. The God of spirits knows how to proportion men to the occasions, and to raise up to Himself such witnesses as may be most able to convince the world. A mild Moses was for the low estate of afflicted Israel; mild in spirit, but mighty in wonders; mild of spirit, because he had to do with a persecuted, and yet a touchy and perverse people; mighty in wonders, because he had to do with a Pharaoh. A grave and holy Samuel was for the quiet consistence of Israel; a fiery-spirited Elijah was for the desperate declination of Israel. And if in the late times of the depraved condition of His church, God have raised up some spirits that have been more warm and stirring than those of common mould, we cannot censure the choice when we see the service.

The first word that we hear from Elijah is an oath, and a threat to Ahab, to Israel: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain, these years, but according to my word." He comes in like a tempest, who went out in a whirlwind. Doubtless he had spoken fair and peaceable invitations to Israel, though we hear them not; this was but the storm which followed his repulse, their obstinacy. After many solicitations and warnings, Israel is stricken by the same tongue that had prayed for it; Elijah dares avouch these judgments to their head, to Ahab.

I do not so much wonder at the boldness of Elijah, as at his power; yea, whoso sees his power can no whit wonder at his boldness. How could he but be bold to the face of a man, who was thus powerful with God? As if God had lent him the keys of heaven to shut it up, and open

it at pleasure, he can say, "There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." O God, how far it hath pleased Thee to communicate Thyself to a weak man! What angel could ever say thus? Thy hand, O Lord, is not shortened; why art Thou not thus marvellous in the ministers of Thy gospel? Is it for that their miracles were ours? Is it for that Thou wouldst have us live by faith, not by sense? Is it for that our task is spiritual, and therefore more abstracted from bodily helps? We cannot command the sun with Joshua, nor the thunder with Samuel, nor the rain with Elijah. It shall content us, if we can fix the Sun of Righteousness in the soul, if we can thunder out the judgments of God against sin, if we can water the earthen hearts of men with the former and latter rain of heavenly doctrine.

Elijah's mantle cannot make him forget his flesh; while he knows himself a prophet, he remembers to be a man; he doth not therefore arrogate his power, as his own, but publisheth it as his Master's. This restraint must be according to his word, and that word was from a higher mouth than his. He spake from Him by whom he sware, whose word was as sure as his life; and therefore he durst say, "As the Lord liveth, there shall be no rain." Man only can denounce what God will execute, which, when it is once revealed, can no more fail than the Almighty Himself.

He that had this interest and power in heaven, what needed he fly from an earthly pursuit? Could his prayers restrain the clouds, and not hold the hands of flesh and blood? Yet behold, Elijah must fly from Ahab, and hide him by the brook Cherith. The wisdom of God doth not think fit so to make a beaten path of miracles, as that he will not walk beside it. He will have our own endeavours concur to our preservation. Elijah wanted neither courage of heart nor strength of hand, and yet he must trust to his feet for safety. How much more lawful is it, for our impotence, to fly from persecution! Even that God sends him to hide his head, who could as easily have protected as nourished him. He that wilfully stands still to catch dangers tempteth God instead of trusting Him.

The prophet must be gone, not without order taken for his purveyance. O the strange caterers for Elijah! "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." I know not whether it had been more miraculous to preserve him without meat, or to provide meat by such mouths. The raven, a devouring and ravenous fowl that uses to snatch away meat from others, brings it to him. He that could have fed Elijah by angels will feed him by ravens. There was then in Israel a hospitable Obadiah, that kept a secret table, in two several caves, for a hundred prophets of God. There were seven thousand faithful Israelites, in spite of the devil, who had never bowed knee to Baal. Doubtless any of these

would have had a trencher ready for Elijah, and have thought himself happy to have defrauded his own belly for so noble a prophet. God rather chooses to make use of the most unlikely fowls of the air than their bounty, that He might give both to His prophet, as a pregnant proof of His absolute command over all His creatures, and win our trust in all extremities. Who can make question of the provisions of God when he sees the very ravens shall forget their own hunger, and purvey for Elijah? O God, Thou that providest meat for the fowls of the air, wilt make the fowls of the air provide meat for man rather than his dependence on Thee shall be disappointed. O let not our faith be wanting to Thee; Thy care can never be wanting to us.

Elijah might have lived for the time with bread and water; neither had his fare been worse than his fellows in the caves of Obadiah; but the munificence of God will have his meals better furnished. The ravens shall bring him both bread and flesh twice in the day. It is not for a persecuted prophet to long after delicacies. God gives order for competency, not for wantonness. Not out of the dainty compositions in Jezebel's kitchen, not out of the pleasant wines in her cellar, would God provide for Elijah, but the ravens shall bring him plain and homely victuals, and the river shall afford him drink. If we have wherewith to sustain nature, though not to pamper it, we owe thanks to the Giver. Those of God's family may not be curious, not disdainful. Ill doth it become a servant of the Highest to be a slave to his palate. Doubtless, one bit from the mouth of the raven was more pleasing to Elijah than a whole tableful of Ahab's. Nothing is more comfortable to God's children than to see the sensible demonstrations of the divine care and providence.

The brook Cherith cannot last always; that stream shall not, for Elijah's sake, be exempted from the universal exsiccation [drought]. Yea, the prophet himself feels the smart of this drought, which he had denounced. It is no unusual thing with God to suffer His own dear children to be inwrapped in the common calamities of offenders. He makes difference in the use and issue of their stripes, not in the infliction. The corn is cut down with the weeds, but to a better purpose.

When the brook fails, God hath a Sarepta for Elijah; instead of the ravens, a widow shall there feed him, yea, herself by him. Who can enough wonder at the pitch of this selective providence of the Almighty? Sarepta was a town of Sidon, and therefore without the pale of the church. Poverty was the best of this widow; she was a pagan by birth, heathenishly superstitious by institution. "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman

that was a widow.” He that first fed the prophet by the mouth of unclean fowls will now feed him by the hand of a heathenish hostess. His only command sanctifies those creatures which, by a general charge, were legally impure.

There were other birds besides ravens, other widows beside this Sareptan; none but the ravens, none but the Sareptan, shall nourish Elijah. God’s choice is not led in the string of human reasons. His holy will is the guide and the ground of all His elections: “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 40th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at the Village Hall, Barton-le-Clay,
Bedfordshire, on Saturday afternoon, May 20th, 2006*

The meeting commenced with the singing of hymn 1134 and Mr. Ramsbottom (Pastor, Bethel, Luton) engaged in prayer. The Chairman (Mr. G.D. Buss) read Psalm 136 and made a few remarks. The psalmist found God’s mercy in everything. If only we could believe that all things do work together for good to them that love God. In verse 12 we have two blessed attributes of divine mercy – a strong hand and a stretched-out arm. Its strength, God Himself, “with God all things are possible,” and a stretched-out arm, where cannot it reach? “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

The Secretary then reported on the accounts and the work of the Trust. He referred to the Lord’s help given over many years and reminded the meeting of the principal Objects. The key word was to *assist*, to assist the churches in the furtherance of their religion and charitable work, etc., and not to *direct*, and to support other charities mentioned in the Trust Objects. Even after laying out substantial funds in recent years, funds had still increased during the last three years by about £500,000 to about £1.14 million. We wait to see the Lord’s purpose for the money in hand. The attention of chapel correspondents had been drawn to these funds which could be used for Disability Discrimination requirements, improvements, heating systems and even chapel replacements. A reminder was given of the need to comply with the Charities Act 1993 when a chapel house is no longer required for a pastor. Financial support of other denomination charities had continued in 2005 – the Magazine Fund and the Library. Work with closed Chapels had continued. Ebenezer Chapel, Worthing had recently been sold, subject to contract, for £193,750 and the proceeds will benefit the Aid

and Poor Relief Societies. Hope Chapel, Hurstpierpoint, was expected to sell at auction for over £600,000 and the proceeds would be available for churches in East and West Sussex.

On the Publications side, the total of items sold at 10,549 was down by 20% on the previous year. It was hoped that new books in production this year would reverse that trend. The Trust was very much indebted to those whose labour of love it has been to write and edit books for the Trust, especially Mr. Ramsbottom whose books year by year account for over one-half of the books sold by the Trust. Two new books just available from the printers were recommended – a re-write of Mr. Broome's book about Oliver Cromwell and a new book written by Mr. Watts and Mr. Buss about our Articles of Faith. This latter was "intended for the ordinary reader in the hope that it will arouse more interest in the precious doctrines which form the basis of church fellowship." Another new book was entitled *Stand Fast*, in which the polemical writings of J.K. Popham had been brought together. James Bourne's *Morning Readings* which came out in late 2003 make good reading for the living family of God, and a book of his Letters was currently being produced. Also being produced were some of the writings of Mr. S.F. Paul under the heading of *Christ as Revealed in the Old Testament*. Mr. J.R. Broome had only that week commenced the last chapter of his biography of Anne Steele and, if the Lord will, it was hoped that this would be ready for Christmas. Some history of the Particular Baptists is to be included, from the Baptist Confession of 1644 through to the late 1700s, with extracts from sermons to show the sort of ministry that Anne Steele sat under. A few extracts were read as usual from Mr. Pearce's Publications reports to the committee. Reference was made to the loyalty of the bookshops that take our books, and also to the success of the friends at Shaw's Corner, Redhill, with their free distribution of the Miracles of Jesus series to schools.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his report and expressed his appreciation for the labours of all those involved in the work of the Trust. He also mentioned the concern of the committee not to forget our doctrinal heritage, and it was hoped very shortly to publish the work of John Gill on *Justification*, an excellent treatise on that most precious doctrine of our most holy faith, and it is hoped that others will follow in this series.

The annual report of the executive committee and financial statements for 2005 were received, the auditors were re-appointed, and Messrs. M.G. Bailey and G.D. Buss were re-elected. The Chairman expressed sadness at the resignation effective at the AGM of Mr. J.E. Pack owing to various pressures on him. His timely advice over the years had been much appreciated. Mr. T.J. Rosier had also resigned with

effect from the AGM for similar reasons. The Chairman expressed appreciation for his loyal support over many years.

Hymn 13 was sung. Mr. Stehouwer read Numbers chapter 10, verses 1-10 and spoke on the subject of *Trumpets*. The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 33 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

NO UNCERTAIN SOUND!

Address given by Mr. J.K. Stehouwer at the Gospel Standard Trust Annual Meeting on May 20th, 2006 (published by request)

Reading: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God” (Numbers 10. 1-10).

When I was approached about speaking a few words on this occasion, my mind went to this particular portion of God’s Word. Friends, my general thought this afternoon is upon the *Trumpets*.

1. Now in the chapter which I have read, the blowing of trumpets was on a day of gladness. The children of Israel were down in the wilderness, and every time they blew the trumpet in certain tones, there was a gathering. It is good when we can let our imagination go to the children of Israel, at least those who know something of the fear of God in their soul. When they would blow these two trumpets, it meant the gathering of the children of Israel to the tabernacle. Now let us imagine how eagerly they may have heard that trumpet. They would gather round the tabernacle, and Moses and Aaron would relate what God wanted them to know. I realise in the case of the children of Israel, all were not

the true spiritual Israel, but let us imagine we are one of them. As you hear the trumpet, you eagerly come up to the tabernacle to hear what God has to say. Now in this particular chapter, every time the trumpet was blown it was certainly a day of gladness. It makes me think of Psalm 89: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

But sometimes when the trumpet was blown, just the chief of the children of Israel must go. Then let us imagine, as the people see these men go, they know they are going to receive further instruction, also to hear the message of salvation or what Moses has to say unto the people.

As they were pilgrims in the wilderness, there were also occasions when the trumpet had to be blown when it was time to march on. Let us just imagine, as they dwelt there in the wilderness, with possibly a little bit of complacency, that certain sound of the trumpet was heard. Then there would be the gathering of this tribe and that tribe and a going on. It was as much as to say, "Friends, we are on our way to Zion, on to the land of Canaan, a land which flows with milk and honey." So again, it was a joy to hear that trumpet.

Then, of course, there were the times of warning. There is always the need to take warning against looseness or any idleness or anything that may turn our eyes away from the God of Israel. There is also warning against enemies drawing near. On another occasion they had to blow the trumpet when it was time to go to war. That trumpet would not be as a dreadful trumpet but as a promise that the Lord would go before them. You will read in the Word of God, on occasions when the children of Israel went to war (especially I believe it was the second king after Rehoboam), they blew the trumpet and the Lord intervened on their behalf against their enemies.

Now the last trumpet that we read of was when they made their sacrifices in the morning and the evening, when the lamb was offered upon the altar. Then the priests, that is, the sons of Aaron, would take the silver trumpets in hand and would blow them over the sacrifice. In other words, it spoke that a substitute was found, a sacrifice had been made, an atonement for sin. As they saw the smoke going up to heaven, they would begin to realise what a mercy it was that God had made a way whereby they could approach Him. In other words, as that trumpet blew, it was a little indication again that their sins had been atoned for; God had heard and answered their prayers. Could I put it this way? As they blew the trumpet, the sacrifice had gone up. The trumpets sounded this message: blessed Calvary, precious Calvary, pointing to the glorious Substitute who would end all sacrifices, who would truly satisfy the justice of God, who would honour and glorify His precious law.

Friends, every one of these trumpets was made of silver. The silver came from the atonement money. They were made of one piece and they

were very special. We would believe the sound was very sweet and melodious to the ears of those who feared God.

2. It is very nice to read about the trumpet in this chapter, but we must also remember there was another trumpet which blew previous to this one. When you study God's Word and come to a special word in any particular text, try to go back to when it first appeared in the Scriptures. May I give you a personal example. Recently I was going to speak upon "The Rock." In Matthew's gospel we find: "Upon this Rock I will build My church." I looked back to see where it originally appears in the Scriptures. I found the first time the word "rock" appears was when the children of Israel were in the wilderness. They had sorely sinned against God in their murmurings, and the Lord said, "I will stand before thee there upon the rock." That is the first mention of the rock; a smitten rock. Then if you turn to your concordance, where is the second time we read of a rock? The second time is where Moses found a place of refuge, "a place by Me," a cleft rock, a place by God. In other words, that rock which was a place by God must first be smitten. Then, if you follow that thought, you will find that every time you come to the word "rock," there is a particular meaning. This will help you throughout the whole of your study of God's Word.

Now I believe you already know where we read of the first trumpet to be blown. Upon Mount Sinai God blew the trumpet louder and louder. There the law was given, setting forth something of God's holy justice, His righteous demand upon the children of Israel and upon mankind. And that trumpet was loud. Have you ever noticed that as that trumpet was blown, it became louder and louder? O in my own mind, I thought: How true! When I look upon my own soul's experience, there was a time when the Lord blew the trumpet. I had seen something of my sin, but as time went on, it blew louder and louder. Not only did I see something of my sins, but I was brought to see something of my fallen nature, the deep-seatedness of sin. The sound of the gospel is never made precious, friends, until we are brought to know something of our sinnership before God, because, "Sinners can say, and none but they, How precious is the Saviour!"

So the first hearing of that trumpet was upon Mount Sinai. Would it have been a melodious sound? No! But as grace comes in, we are brought to hear something of the silver trumpets over the glorious sacrifice of Christ. What a mercy if we can look back and say, "O what a mercy that God opened my ears to hear the first trumpet! He brought me to see myself as a sinner. I have often said to my own congregation, what a mercy when you can look back to the day when the Lord made your life miserable. You were a miserable wretch; you did not know what was wrong, but something was wrong. There was an empty void

the world could never satisfy. In spite of all our slips and falls, yet what a mercy it is when we can look back to when the Lord brought us to be a miserable sinner in the sight of a holy God. Then by His free and sovereign grace, He brought us to that time when we also saw something of the beauty that is here in Numbers 10. The trumpet: the house of God, the means of grace. The trumpet: when the servants of God were taught by the Holy Spirit, when the trumpet roused me out of my lethargy and told me I am on a journey and there is a good land before me. The trumpet: that blew over Calvary, over the glorious sacrifice of a precious Jesus. O would we not desire then to know more and more of that glorious trumpet, the silver trumpet, that speaks of redemption, blown in beautiful harmony from the hand and the mouth of the sons of Aaron.

3. Now I believe we can say this gives us a little key throughout all the Scriptures, as we look upon further trumpets. Already I have quoted out of the Psalms, where the psalmist says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." Those were the silver trumpets. I believe it gives us a little light upon the prophecy of Isaiah, because, without a doubt, every minister has spoken from this text and often quoted it: Isaiah 27 beginning with verse 13: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." I do not believe for one moment that when the time came for the children of Israel to return from their captivity after seventy years, and they could go back to the city of Jerusalem, I do not believe literally a man went out and blew a trumpet, but in a figure, friends, it was a glorious trumpet as far as good news was concerned. We find the children of Israel, as it were in captivity, ready to perish in the land of Assyria and outcast in the land of Egypt, we would almost say given to total despair. How could it ever come about that they could return back to Jerusalem and worship God at Zion? But the day came, with which we are all well acquainted, when Cyrus gave that decree, and the children of Israel were permitted to go. What a trumpet of joy and peace that was! O you can imagine how it stirred up the heart of that little remnant that truly feared God!

4. But now I am going to go a little further, as we look upon another trumpet. I believe I am coming into something which is quite sobering. I want to bring your attention to the words found in the prophecy of Ezekiel 33, verse 3. I will make a few comments upon some of the verses that surround it. First of all, he is speaking about the watchmen, who were types and figures of the true servants of God. They were to be upon the walls of these different cities, on the outlook continually, and they were to look for the enemy, lest anyone should

attack their cities. So the Lord gives this most solemn warning here in the prophecy of Ezekiel 33, verse 3: "If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people."

What a solemn calling it is to be a watchman upon the walls of Zion! I do not have to look at you, friend; I have got enough here. By my standing here, I have made a profession; I am a watchman, a poor thing, but if I am not, then I ought not to be standing here. One thing I can say for any servant of God, although we often feel our inability and our unprofitableness, yet it is a mercy sometimes, when we can look back and think: "Well, I did not put myself here, and I never would have ventured forth, if it had not been for my God." It is a solemn place to be, a watchman on the walls of Zion when an enemy comes. O but I know that sometimes the enemy comes as a roaring lion and sometimes as an angel of light. Friends, it takes a great light sometimes to determine those two individuals. Yet, what a mercy it is when we see anything of a light nature, not to forget the need of that first trumpet to blow from Mount Sinai. Because friends, that is where it must begin. In our proclamation, we must ever bring before all and sundry that man is a fallen wretch, a sinner in the sight of God. Then we are to take that trumpet in hand to warn against sin or anything that may enter in among us. I am not here to judge anything, but I only speak of myself. How easy it is to lay the trumpet aside! You sometimes feel it is all in vain. O may the Lord ever fill us with holy zeal, that as we see these things round about us, we may take the trumpet and sound it clearly. But I read in this portion that there is a very solemn accountability to those who blow the trumpet.

I believe that many of you are hearers of the Word and you sit under a sound ministry. You have a great obligation and calling in this as well. If you hear the trumpet and do not give heed, your blood is upon yourself and not upon the servant of God. But if the servant does not warn, and the enemy comes (in error, lightness, or lethargy; there are many enemies), then he must give account before His God. So friend, whose is the greater accountability, the servant or the hearers? I will put them on one level. In other words, we see the solemn accountability that also lies upon everyone who sits under the truth.

I know it is very heartbreaking for a minister when he feels that, in his poor way, he has tried, as it were, with all the grace of God given, to blow the trumpet from the walls of Zion in warning. At other times, he has brought out the silver trumpet and told them about the glorious salvation, and blown, as it were, over the sacrifice that there is a risen Jesus, an ascended Christ; how that is all important! How sad when we see those who have departed and fallen away and do not return! I can say this, I believe, for any servant of God, that you wish you did not have

this part, but you have had to face it: you look on some empty pews where once sat a young boy here, a young girl there, or a mother and father who preferred something a little lighter, a little more exciting, and they have left their place empty, and like "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Young friends here, do not do it! Abide by the Word. Seek that the Lord may bless the blowing of the trumpets unto your own heart and your own soul.

5. Then, as I look further, there is another trumpet that I want to make reference to, and that is found in I Corinthians chapter 14 verse 8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" I happen to have been in the armed services, as you possibly know. Now the only time that we ever used a bugle was when I was in the States and when we first went to Australia. After that, they did not want a bugle blowing when the enemy was near. But I can remember my first day in the services. I happened to know a little bit about reveille (wake-up call), so I knew the sound of that trumpet; but I did not know what all the other trumpets meant. I saw everyone go to the meal, so I figured out that trumpet tells us when we can go to eat. To me, at the beginning, it had an uncertain sound, but not to others. The trumpets all had a meaning, as we were finally taught, and not an uncertain sound. You know it is a great mercy, friends, if God has taken you in hand and begun to teach you something of truth.

Let me just use another little illustration. If an orchestra is playing, the conductor is possibly the most learned and talented man of that whole assembly. He has a great responsibility, and if he hears one note from a violin or some other instrument sound a little longer than it should have been, he quickly stops and reproves the person. It had an uncertain sound; it was not to be there.

Now what a mercy, if God has taken you in hand and taken you out of nature's darkness. You may have been sitting under the truth all of your life and been properly instructed into the truth, like I was. When I first came out of the services (and I cannot go into all the details), there was a little split in the church. I did not know where to attend. All of my friends were still at the old church. I stayed there a little while sitting under that minister (a sincere, kind, loving man, new into the pulpit), but by the grace of God began to recognize an uncertain sound. Do you know what that uncertain sound was? He seemed to omit man's wretched depravity before God.

O what a mercy if God has taken you in hand and begun to teach you. When it comes to this divine teaching, I can assure you friends, you will never come to the end of it. What a mercy if the Lord opens our eyes and opens our heart, and opens our ears, so that we begin to hear the truth! The whole secret of abiding by the truth is this: a love to the truth.

If we love something, how can we leave it? What a mercy if the Lord takes away the love of sinning. Yet if there is something we love, it has our undivided attention; but there is nothing that can ever compare with the love that God gives in the heart of His people, a love to the truth. I often quote that statement from J.C. Philpot: "Men fall into error because they never really loved the truth they once professed. Once love the truth, and error will never have a place in your heart."

What a mercy if the Lord has taught you that right sound, the right key of the gospel, a right balance. I believe we could then begin with some of those thoughts which have no uncertain sound to those who know something of grace. First of all, what good news is to a convicted sinner. Let us go to the life of Saul of Tarsus, while he was under the law. As far as the outward law was concerned, he was without guilt. He dare look it in the bare face, as far as outward keeping was concerned. But when the Lord came with the trumpet of Sinai, there the man died to law, hope and self. What good would it do for Saul of Tarsus to cling to the law, to do better? It would never have brought peace. What a mercy when the Lord gave that certain sound, salvation by grace and grace alone. O what a joyful sound that was to the apostle, and I believe to those who know something of grace! Although we have not come to the great experience of that beloved man, yet in our own feelings, we have sometimes felt a little glimmering of hope, a little unfolding of the Scriptures, showing us that Christ fulfilled the law and satisfied it. There from glory, He spoke on the road to Damascus, giving proof that He was a resurrected Christ. He came into this world to seek and to save lost souls. Can you imagine how that sound was melodious to the heart of Saul? If anyone later came to him with an uncertain sound, he immediately knew how to answer them in no uncertain terms.

O how solemn, friends in the ministry, if we mix law and gospel. It is an uncertain sound; but rather may there ever be a certain sound to the hearers. I can only wish for those who are members of our causes and for those of our youth, that the Lord may give you that perception, if there is an uncertain sound coming from this one or that one. If a friend says, "Will you go with me? and we will go to some other chapel," if you go along, as you hear something from the pulpit, may the Lord speak to you and say that it has an *uncertain sound*. I thought, even in the publication of these books, friends, what a mercy in this terrible day of declension, to have a little remnant faithful to the truth, compared to the great multitude. O may we have this thought, may we earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints and never be afraid of that straight and narrow way. The silver trumpets also have a reminder in them. You must hear, and you will hear by the grace of

God, the trumpet from Mount Sinai; but there is no hope there. There is only hope in the blessed gospel.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel, we see once again a great obligation, a great accountability to a minister of the gospel: there must be no uncertain sound; and to the hearers as well: there must be no uncertain sound. We need grace; we need divine teaching. It is sometimes a very narrow line. I have often thought it is like a little knife: on one side presumption, on the other side despair. We need to be able to walk on that little line by living faith, taught by the blessed scripture, applied by the Spirit of God, and to be able to say, I have found Christ only by free and sovereign grace.

6. Now there is one more trumpet I would like to draw your attention to. This trumpet, I would dare say, is going to be a joy to some but a very dreadful sound to many. I find it in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 16. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." I look upon this as the final day, when the means of grace and the world comes to its end, and then the trumpet is blown. The dead in Christ are those who have been called by grace. In the resurrection, their body will be joined with their spirit, which is already in glory. I hope I am not misunderstood, and I hope I am not misinterpreting, but I do feel that even the souls of the saints in glory have a sort of "holy groan," waiting for the reuniting with the body. They "groan," as it were, while praising God in the spirit. The body of flesh and blood has always been a hindrance when here upon the face of the earth, but in the final resurrection, the body will come from the grave, a new body. Then the saints will praise Him both in spirit and in body. They praise now only in spirit, but then the body will join in perfection and will not be a hindrance, to praise the holy Triune God: God the Father who chose them, God the Son who gave His life a ransom for them, and God the Holy Spirit who condescended to teach a fallen creature and bring him unto God. O what a mercy if at times, in anticipation, we can say some day we shall praise and bless Him eternally!

Shall the husbandman wait for the precious fruits of the earth, and shall the merchantman wait for the return of his ships, and shall the wife wait for the return of her husband, that is gone on a long journey? (James 5. 7, 8), and shall not a Christian wait for the return of his prayers? Noah patiently waited for the return of the dove to the ark with an olive branch in his mouth, so must you patiently wait for the return of your prayers.

Thomas Brooks

A BRIEF MEMORIAL OF JAMES NEWMAN

By his widow, Ann Newman

This little book was published in 1890. Mr. Newman was the founder, under God, of Bethel Chapel, Luton

My dear husband, James Newman, was born at St. Ives, in the county of Huntingdon, in the year 1830. Soon afterwards his parents removed to Huntingdon.

According to his own account, as he advanced in years, the natural evils of his heart put themselves forth in acts of wickedness of various sorts, into which he plunged with all delight. In the paths of sin and wickedness he wandered in spite of all warnings, cautions, and checks of natural conscience; deaf to all admonitions, he was bent upon "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2. 3). Thus he went on in the course of ungodliness until the time, as he often used to express it, "the Lord had purposed to call, by special grace, my poor, blind, Satan-led and sin-loving soul," which took place when he was about eighteen years of age.

The first solemn conviction, which proved to be the arrow of light and life, was some remark his eldest sister made to him relative to his ungodly conduct. Such was the force with which the reproof entered that, although he would have gladly put it away and have gone on as before, it restrained him in some measure from the same evil course. Advance in that open path of profanity he could not. Conscience was awakened, the heart was made tender, and solemn and serious thoughts exercised his mind as to the end of his evil course, while the sins he had committed rose up to his consternation, and the guilt of them pressed hard upon his conscience; they became as a heavy burden, and his soul groaned beneath the weight of them, which forced out of his distressed heart many and frequent cries for mercy. Lost he felt he must be without manifested mercy.

The Lord was pleased to make him feel the great need he had of the Saviour; his soul vented itself in solemn, real, fervent desires to "be found in Christ." By that gracious ray of heavenly light which the Lord was pleased to direct into his conscience, he saw with the eyes of his understanding that there was no approaching God with acceptance but through the blood, love and grace of the Redeemer. Thus he sought the mercy of God in God's own way, and after the order of the provision of God; and to such seekers the Lord says, "Seek, and ye shall find." Words such as these would at times inspire him with hope; then he felt it good to hope, and as hope rose, his desires were the more vehement.

In the Lord's time the mercy he so earnestly sought was realised in his soul, and he found sweet peace in believing, and his heart in some measure could rejoice in the Lord. Now the subject of believers' baptism

was laid powerfully upon his mind. In a paper I find he has written, "The Lord did powerfully whisper in my soul, 'Buried with Him in baptism.'" Thus it was he felt constrained to be baptized, which was on February 28th, 1850.

At this time my dear husband was among the General Baptists, and frequently would he speak to them, in the warmth and the joy of his soul, of the peace he felt in believing in the Lord. This they did not understand; they looked upon him as one who wanted to appear singular. They had the form of godliness without the power, while my husband was made a partaker of the power in the form. Thus he was made to differ.

About this time he went to hear the late Mr. Brown of Godmanchester [J.C. Philpot's friend, William Brown (1812-1867)]; he took for his text, Psalm 37. 23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." In that sermon Mr. Brown clearly traced out the work of grace wrought by the Lord the Spirit in a believer's soul; this was a word in season to my dear husband, and a time of refreshing to him. He received the Word with joy; he had the echo thereof in his heart; and in after days of his life this sermon proved a sweet support to his soul in the various exercises of his mind, as also in the path divine providence destined him to tread in regard to the affairs of this life, it being like bread cast upon the waters. He found it as a staff, even the staff of life after many days (Eccl. 11. 1). That bread of the gospel strengthened his heart in the midst of conflicts he had afterwards to endure (Psa. 104. 15). But often had he to dip that morsel in the vinegar of mortification (Ruth 2. 14); yet in the midst of it all he proved the gospel word sweet to his spiritual taste (Jer. 15. 16), and thus he writes of it:

"The Word of God is pure,
As pure can be;
His promises are sure,
By which He speaks to thee.
Come, come, my soul, look unto God,
His promises are sealed with blood."

Now it pleased the dear Lord of all events, who reigneth over all men, time and things, to overrule the circumstances which brought my husband to Luton, among strangers. To that town the Lord directed his steps, and He directed them also in the town. With regard to the exercises of his mind in thus being in a strange place, he wrote the following: "I pleaded hard with the Lord to bless me and go before me. I entreated with prayer and supplication for the Lord to prosper my endeavour. In my entreating the Lord for this favour, I vowed if He would do so, I would, according to the ability He was pleased to give me, communicate to His cause and His poor people."

His mind was led to commence business; being a currier [working with leather] by trade, he opened a shop in that line.* The Lord, even in the midst of many trials and losses in business, prospered him during a long illness of my sister, who lived with us, and to whom my husband was much attached, having brought her up. She was an idol to him; however, it pleased the Lord to take her to Himself. Her death, I am persuaded, was "gain" to her, but by me and my dear husband her loss was keenly felt. In the midst of all his trials, the Lord enabled him to have respect unto his vow, and many can bear witness thereunto.

Great and many were his fears that his business would fail; indeed, such was the effect of them, they sometimes brought on severe headaches, which so prostrated him that he was obliged to lie for hours on the sofa. In those dark seasons of mind, his distress was great. However, this had the effect of weaning him from all trust and dependence in self, and compelled him to cry unto the Lord to undertake for him, in sending him customers, giving him wisdom, and prospering his way. The Lord in mercy did in some degree grant unto him gracious answers. I feel my heart softened within me at the remembrance of the Lord's goodness to us in His kind providence. My soul would bless the Lord, and my desire is to record His mercies, and to speak of His goodness, to the honour of His great and glorious name.

We constantly attended the means of grace. Those sermons which treated of the precious Redeemer in His glorious Person, His covenant engagements, His sweet relationships, blessed characters, and the glory of His finished work, when spoken of as the Holy Ghost revealed those blessed things in the hearts of His people, were his delight. My husband, as I may say, was a private believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Circumstances arose at this time which weighed heavily upon him. In a short memorandum he writes, "I felt as if I was sinking into despair, which I am sure would have been the case had not the dear Lord of His tender, rich and sweet mercy appeared for me. O how precious were His words to my soul: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love!' and also, 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me'; and, 'I will water thee every moment.'" These portions refreshed his soul, revived his spirit, strengthened his hope, supported his faith and subdued his unbelief. Yet at times his darkness of mind, unbelief and fears would return. On a paper, which is now before me, he has written, "I went to see the late Mr. Godwin [Thomas Godwin (1803-1877), who followed Mr. Brown as pastor at Godmanchester], consulted with him; I laid before him the circumstances. His answer and advice was, 'Be quiet; be still; look on: something will turn up; you will see it.' And so it came to pass in the Lord's time."

* This was where Bethel Chapel now stands.

A few agreed to meet together for prayer in the cottage of a good old woman, Mrs. Parkins. She was too ill to get to chapel, and my husband was asked to go, and we went, and we had a nice meeting. On that occasion he gave out hymn 386, Gadsby's Selection, "Weary of earth, myself, and sin." He spoke a little of his own feelings, being just the same as those expressed in the hymn. He had for some considerable time been passing through trying dispensations of cross-providences, and things crooked within, which made the hymn so suitable to him. He could say, "Weary of earth," and so on. He could not refrain from making a few observations, which the friends much enjoyed; also on hymn 295, "I asked the Lord that I might grow." The friends present expressed the satisfaction they felt; the Lord, they felt sure, was with His comforting presence among them in the midst of their little assembly.

Those meetings continued, my husband taking the lead, according to the express wish of the friends, giving out the hymns and reading sermons. The work of the ministry had for some time exercised his mind which, with all his endeavours to get rid of, still forced itself upon him. However, he was enabled to leave the matter with the Lord, for the Lord to go before him and bring him forth. The times and seasons the Lord has in His own power. Often have I heard my husband speak of this matter as being one of the most solemn and weighty of all matters; it exercised him much in prayer. In fact, it absorbed his whole soul. Thus was he exercised for some time; the words, he said, kept rising up, "Have not I made man's mouth?" which seemed to speak to him, "I have given thee a mouth, the mouth of experience; faith to believe, hope to expect, love to embrace, light to discover, life to feel, and grace to cherish; then go, and separate the precious from the vile, according to the ability I give, and thou shalt be as My mouth." But still he lingered.

In a note he has written of it, the matter came about in a peculiar manner. "I was," he said, "reading one of Mr. Tiptaft's sermons at one of our meetings, to the friends. When I was reading there came over my mind such darkness that caused such a confusion of mind, read I could not; I was obliged to sit down with trembling, the words sounding in me, 'Who made man's mouth?'" "The next week," he remarks, "I was much exercised about the matter; I felt willing to go, and willing to stay, if I only knew the mind of the Lord; that was what I wanted to get at. I pleaded with the Lord again and again, that if He would be with me, I would willingly go; and if I attempted to speak, that He would give me liberty in matter, in feeling, in thought, in understanding." "Well," he says, "I went to the next meeting intending to speak, if I found my mind led that way. So it was; I read the 51st of Isaiah, and felt constrained to comment upon it. The Word was sweet to me; matter kept bubbling up in my heart; I felt it like a springing well within me (John 4. 10, Isa.

12. 3). O how sweet it is to speak of the Word of the Lord, and the God of the Word, when the power of the former is felt, and the presence of the Lord is enjoyed!" The friends said it was a precious time to their souls, long to be had in remembrance.

From that time doors were opened, and invitations came for my husband to go and speak in the name of the Lord (this was about the year 1873). He has thus written concerning this: "O how my soul was exercised afterwards; the trials I passed through, fearing it was all of the flesh! But the words kept bubbling up, "Who made man's mouth?" and comforted me, so I was encouraged to hope and trust in the Lord, and went on. The first text I took to speak from was Heb. 13. 8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The friends said it proved a refreshing time to their souls."

(To be continued)

GOD'S PROMISES

By Thomas Brooks

Concerning precious promises, let me give you these eight hints:

1. Firstly, that they are truly propounded and stated by God.
2. Secondly, that they shall certainly be performed (2 Cor. 1. 20), they being all made in and through Christ. They are made first to Christ, and then to all that have union and communion with Him. Sirtorius, says Plutarch, paid what he promised with fair words but God does not so do. Men many times say and unsay; they often eat their words as soon as they have spoken them; but God will never eat the words that are gone out of His mouth: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46. 10, 11).
3. Thirdly, that they all issue from free grace, from special love, from divine goodness (Hos. 14. 4).
4. Fourthly, That they are all as unchangeable as He is that made them (Jer. 31. 3).
5. Fifthly, that they are all bottomed and founded upon the truth, faithfulness and all-sufficiency of God (Mal. 3. 6).
6. Sixthly, that they are pledges and pawns of great things that God will do for His people in time (Heb. 13. 5).
7. Seventhly, that they are most sure and certain evidences of divine favour, and a declaration of the heart and goodwill of God to His poor people (Heb. 6. 12; Num. 23. 19).
8. Eighthly, that they are the price of Christ's blood.

OBITUARY

Frederick Charles Farncombe, (always known as Charles), member of the church at Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon, Surrey, for over sixty years, passed away on January 25th, 2006, aged 99 years.

Mr. Farncombe was born in 1906 and when he was about two years old his mother died – his father subsequently re-married. When he was about eight years old he used to attend Protestant meetings in a friend's house with his older brother, Samuel. One day his mother gave Mr. Farncombe a note for the leader of the meeting to explain that his brother Samuel had been taken to hospital with peritonitis. This was read out for all to hear and the doctor had stated that "there was no hope." Our friend had no idea that his brother was so ill, and it was a great shock to him, and made a deep impression.

1930 was another sad year in Mr. Farncombe's life, when his youngest sister Margaret, known as "little Meg," died at the age of thirteen years. Her last words were, "O that my soul could love and praise Him more!"

He was married to Molly Beazley on July 15th, 1939, by Mr. George Rose at Station Road Chapel, Redhill, Surrey.

In 1945 his father suddenly passed away aged 69 years. This was a tremendous shock to the family, the church and denomination. When Mr. Farncombe next went to chapel he found his father's Bible on the desk. On opening it he found a piece of paper with a note by his father written for the Bible class. The heading was, "My Father's God, and I will exalt Him" (Ex. 15. 2). This is what our dear friend desired to do.

For some time he had been exercised about joining the church, but his fear was that he could not do all his father did – that is, speak in public prayer, and teach in the Sunday School. About this time, his friend Mr. Raymond Jarman (see obituary *Gospel Standard* 1991, page 94) asked him if he was concerned about joining the church at Tamworth Road. Mr. Farncombe told him he was, and together they compared their experiences. Remarkably these two men were baptized together in October 1945, and later were both elected deacons together.

On one occasion, his work took him away from home over a weekend, and he heard Mr. Salkeld preach from Philippians 2. 5 (Mr. H. Salkeld, see obituary *Gospel Standard* 1996, page 157). He spoke of the mind of Christ – a humble and obedient mind. "Let this mind be in you," was Mr. Farncombe's desire, and was with him throughout his life.

October 1991 was a very sad time. His dear wife, Molly, passed away very suddenly – although for some time she had been failing in health. She collapsed in his arms and passed away with a heart attack. For fifty-two years she had been a loving wife and, in due time, a mother and grandmother. His pastor, in writing a letter of sympathy to him, wrote concerning Mr. Farncombe's dear wife, "They shall be Mine" – which was a word of comfort to him. He was much helped at this time, as he had always felt he could not live alone, but all fear was taken away.

Extract taken from his personal spiritual experience:

"Much about what I have written has been about my providential pathway. What about my spiritual life? I cannot write about great experience. I feel the

Lord has been very gracious to me and led me on gently. It is a concern sometimes as to what I really know. Is it just knowledge acquired by being brought up at chapel all my life? And is it just head knowledge? In my early days I remember a service at Tadworth chapel; the preacher was Mr. Brooks (whether Alfred or George I am not sure). The text was Revelation 1. 5: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' I cannot remember what was said but the effect remained with me. One Christmas morning Mr. Wood preached from John 1. 14: 'We beheld His glory.' Another Christmas morning I was unwell and had to stay in bed. My mind was directed to Hymn 874, 'Vanquish in me lust and pride.' That is often my prayer. But it was the lines in verse 3 which were blessed to me:

'Ah! compassionate my case;
Let the poor Thy pity move:
Give me of Thy boundless grace,
Give humility and love.'

This is my desire and prayer. I feel so unthankful at times, and cannot thank Him as I would.

'O that my soul could love and praise Him more,
His beauties trace, His majesty adore;
Live near His heart, upon His bosom lean;
Obey His voice, and all His will esteem.'

'Here I raise my Ebenezer
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home.'"

Mr. Farncombe was a dear, faithful friend and church member who ably led the singing for many years. In addition he was a Bible Class teacher in the Sunday School and for a short time Superintendent. He was very useful and was closely associated with the Trinitarian Bible Society. Having taken early retirement from his secular calling in 1969, he was their accountant for six years and in 1989 he became a Vice-President. For many years he was President of the Croydon Strict Baptist Educational Society, which was formed in 1920 and still continues with regular meetings for the young during the winter months. He was also, for a time, Secretary of the Croydon Auxiliary of the Pilgrim Homes. He was particularly gifted and blessed with wisdom, and gave much gracious advice, and would often type out meditations on the Word of God.

During the last two years of his life, Mr. Farncombe was cared for by his daughter, which necessitated him moving from Croydon to Cambridgeshire. Even at his great age, he was constantly in contact with his Tamworth Road friends – his mind was clear to the end.

We, as a church, have lost a loving, faithful friend and his counsel will be greatly missed. "A brother beloved."

The funeral took place on February 10th, 2006, at Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon, with the interment at Green Lawns Cemetery, Warlingham, Surrey conducted by his pastor, Mr. C.A. Wood.

C.A.W

BOOK REVIEWS

Elizabeth Prentiss: ‘More Love to Thee,’ by Sharon James; hardback; 241 pages; price £15; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The name of Elizabeth Prentiss was unknown to us, though well-known to some of our readers. The daughter of Edward Payson, a well-known American divine, she lived from 1818 to 1878 in the U.S.A., and became one of the most popular Christian writers of the nineteenth century. Her best-known book is *Stepping Heavenward*. She came from the old Calvinistic Presbyterian background, and as a girl read Owen and Flavel. The man she married, George Prentiss, became a Presbyterian minister.

This is rather different from the usual Banner of Truth biography. As a Pastor’s wife, Mrs. Prentiss had an interesting life, but one of much sorrow and sickness, losing two of her children in infancy. The great theme of her life was that “God never makes a mistake,” and that suffering and sorrow are God’s gifts to draw His children to Himself. She wrote:

“God uses suffering to bring His people closer to Himself, and true happiness is found in submitting one’s will to His.”

“Our souls need winter as well as summer.” So her ambition was: “To love Christ, and to know Him – this is all.” “To love Christ more – this is the deepest need, the constant cry of my soul.”

Elizabeth Prentiss was also a hymnwriter, and the book’s title is taken from her best-known hymn:

“More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee;
This is my earnest plea,
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!”

In accordance with her life’s theme, blessing through suffering, is the third verse:

“Let sorrow do its work, send grief or pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain,
When they can sing with me,
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!”

In the Lord’s dealings with her, she knew very deep conviction, and also a heart melted with love. She was often brought into contact with the “Higher Life” (or Perfectionist) Movement which swept the U.S.A. and later England. At first she found some attraction, longing for a life of more communion with the Saviour; but at length, seeing the fallacy of a “let go, and let God” religion, with a life of nothing but serenity, she angrily rejected it, saying:

“Imagine soldiers getting ready for warfare, being told by their commander that they had no need to drill, and had nothing to do but drink nectar!”

It would be false to say that we can go along with everything, and some of the connections of her husband seem rather strange; but it is most humbling to read a life (in Toplady’s words):

“Only reserved for Christ that died,
Surrendered to the crucified.”

Sharon James is an excellent writer. The book is well-researched, written in an interesting way, and enriched by many explanations of the background and customs of mid-nineteenth century America.

Let's Study 2 Peter and Jude, by Mark G. Johnston; paperback; 126 pages; price £6.75; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

No aim can be more noble than a desire to publish sound expositions of Holy Scripture, and this obviously is the desire of The Banner of Truth Trust in this series.

Mark G. Johnston, minister at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, has sought to give a simple, spiritual explanation of these two epistles, and has succeeded. He has kept close to the truth – even on 2 Peter 3. 9 where so many writers and preachers go astray.

Our one problem is the use of versions, ourselves being committed to our dearly-loved Authorised Version. Take, for instance, the opening of Jude's epistle: “To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” How Mr. Johnston's predecessor, Joseph Irons, gloried in a text like this, setting forth covenant realities and the work of Father, Son and Holy Ghost in salvation! We have no problem with what Mr. Johnston has written, but the text he expounds is different (the English Standard Version): “To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.”

But who is to know which is correct? There is a difference, surely, between “sanctified” and “beloved.” Why did Tyndale, and later the many learned A.V. translators, translate “sanctified”? They were eminent Greek scholars.

Then “preserved in Jesus” is rendered “kept for Jesus” – a different meaning. Was John Kent mistaken in the verse from his well-known hymn:

“Preserved in Jesus, when
My feet made haste to hell”?

But then Evangelical Press have also recently published a commentary on Jude (this time based on the New International Version), with yet another rendering: “kept by Jesus.”

Surely these three translations do not mean the same: “preserved *in* Jesus”; “*kept for* Jesus”; “kept *by* Jesus.”

We feel this proliferation of new versions can do no good, and will only add to the confusion of young people seeking after truth. For years we could pick up *the Bible*, and with reverence say, “This is the Word of God.”

Sovereign Grace – Past and Present, edited by Ian Potts; large paperback; 384 pages; price £12 plus postage; published by Grace and Truth Online Publications, and obtainable from the Christian Bookshop, 21 Queen Street, Ossett, W. Yorkshire, WF5 8AS.

This is a most interesting collection of sermons and writings, and, as the title indicates, “from past and present.”

We do not know of any similar publication that consists of sermons preached by so many different eminent, godly preachers from a former

generation. These are Tiptaft, Crisp, Huntington, Gadsby, Philpot, Kershaw, M'Cheyne, Bourne, Ashdown, Covell, Vinall and Warburton (in that order). What a collection of burning and shining lights! Surely "a feast of fat things"!

The second half of the book consists of present day free grace preachers. Not all the chapters are sermons; some are shorter articles. Most of the preachers are from the U.S.A. and unknown to us. They appear to be very strong and sound on the glorious doctrines of the gospel, but with not the same emphasis on gracious experience as the ministers from the past.

The book is beautifully produced and sold at a most reasonable price. Our readers will remember that recently we reviewed Grace and Truth Online's first publication: *Christ the Sun of Righteousness* and Huntington's *Fountain of Life*.

"BUT CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL"

Lonely? No, not lonely,
While Jesus standeth by;
His presence fills my chamber,
I know that He is nigh.

Friendless? No, not friendless,
For Jesus is my Friend;
I change, but He remaineth
True – faithful to the end.

Tired? No, not tired,
While leaning on His breast;
My soul hath sweet possession
Of His eternal rest.

Saddened? Ah! yes, saddened
By earth's deep sin and woe;
How can I count as nothing
What grieved my Saviour so?

Helpless? Yes, so helpless,
But I am leaning hard
On the mighty arm of Jesus,
And He is keeping guard.

Waiting? O yes, waiting,
He bade me watch and wait;
I only wonder often
What makes my Lord so late.

Happy? Yes, so happy,
With joy too deep for words,
Precious sure foundation,
A joy that is my Lord's.

Author unknown

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2006

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

THE CLEANSING OF NAAMAN

*Sermon preached by Mr. Caleb Sawyer at the
Aged Pilgrims' Home, Brighton, on July 29th, 1935*

Text: "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5. 13).

These words have been hanging about my mind for the last day or two, and when such is the case I often find that it is a word to bring before the people, especially when that word contains the sum and substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a gracious experience, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Naaman was really nothing to do with Israel. He did not belong to God's own favoured people. And no doubt this was the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ when preaching the doctrine of election. He mentions the case of there being many lepers in the land of Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, but unto none of them was the prophet sent but unto Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4. 27). It shows to my mind the prefiguration of the calling of the Gentile church.

We are not obliged to decide whether Naaman was a vessel of mercy, but there appears to be every indication of it. He was singled out by God's special providence, and I should hope by God's special grace, first in sending the little maid taken captive out of the land of Israel to wait upon his wife. And often the beginnings of the work of grace upon the soul are by very small, apparently insignificant means. Here is the captive maid that knew something of the power of Israel's God that was repositied, as it were, in the office of the prophet. Not that there was anything inherent in Elisha, but being the anointed prophet of the Lord, there was that in his office that constituted him something different from the generality of men. And though the ministers that God sends to preach the gospel are men of like passions with others – they are just what Paul calls himself, the least of all saints as well as the greatest of all sinners – yet in the office of the ministry, that is those that are anointed to that work, there is something beyond just the ordinary gifts, or even the graces, bestowed upon private individuals. They are "ministers by

whom you believe.” They are raised up and sent of God to this end. Therefore they should be esteemed highly for their work’s sake. “Whose faith follow,” following them as far as they follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and no farther.

But this captive maid, I should say, was one who was not destitute of faith. So she sends by her mistress this man that was a leper – not, I presume, of a contagious nature, the kind that demanded complete isolation. But at any rate it was an obnoxious complaint that rendered him unclean. And what a type leprosy is! The leprosy that we read of in the law of Moses doubtless was the worst type of leprosy. But Naaman’s leprosy was a type of sin. It was such that he needed cleansing, and he went at the instigation of the king of Syria, who commanded him to go to the king of Israel, and he took with him a huge sum of money and changes of raiment, expecting to buy this blessing that was to be freely given.

And so it is with a seeking soul. When the law first enters the conscience – I mean when sin becomes a burden and an affliction to you, and when you truly feel your need of that cleansing which can only proceed from the blood that issued forth from that dear, crucified Redeemer – yet in the first instance you are apt to think that mercy must be bought, not with what Christ accomplished, not in the shedding of that precious blood; but you verily think that you may obtain that rich gift of God by something that you can do yourself. And if you cannot do it now, you think that the time will come when you will be able to do it and thus obtain God’s favour.

It is the very nature of the law, when it comes to the conscience with its demands, to stir up a spirit in us whereby we are determined to work to obtain the favour of God. It is true that we may do it in more ways than one. Some would simply make a reformation in their lives and attempt to do all the good they can. Others – and this is a very intricate matter – others think that by some means or the other there is a resident power in ministers to do this thing for them, and if they can only attend so many services (and I say nothing against it; when the soul and all is at stake you cannot attend too many services). I do believe that when conscience is awakened, and when perhaps you are brought to know that sin is mixed with all you do, there is sometimes a secret, subtle leaning upon an arm of flesh. You may think to yourself, “Well now, I will read chapter after chapter in the Bible,” and a good thing to do so. You may say, “I will sit up all night in prayer.” And you may shed tears. You may shed a flood of tears, hoping thereby to obtain the favour of God. I grant that tears fit well to the petition, and I will grant that it is a good thing to wrestle hard with God in prayer, and it is a very good thing indeed to be able to read the Scriptures day and night; but if you lean upon these

things and put them in the place of the merits of Jesus Christ in the matter of your salvation, then you are doing much the same as Naaman and the king of Syria did in sending such an expensive present to the king of Israel.

But presently he comes to Elisha. The king could not have done better than to send him to Elisha. It would seem that Elisha had to send to the king first. People are so apt, shall I say, to put second things first. They are apt to look to the wrong quarter. But when Elisha, the man of God, heard of the king being in trouble on this account, he told him to send Naaman to him, and he should know that there was a prophet in Israel.

And then Naaman comes with his horses and his chariots, making some imposing appearance, that he was a man of some consequence and some importance. That is the inference; I do not say that it was absolutely the case. And so it is often when the soul is first quickened to feel the misery of sin. They do not want to be saved as the thief on the cross, or as Mary or as Manasseh. They do not want to be saved as the poor and the afflicted of the people of God. I did not – not until the Lord was pleased to humble me in the dust of self-abasement, and then I was willing to put myself amongst the meanest of the people of God. I expect some of you know what I am speaking of relative to my own experience. There is so much accursed pride in us that, if God did not humble our proud hearts, it would sink us into the pit of everlasting destruction, and even when soul and all is at stake, there is just this pride, that we want to be just a little something more than other people. I know some would say: "Well, my trouble was such that I was willing to be saved even as that poor beggar Lazarus that lay at the rich man's gate." Yes, and that is where you will come if you are to find a place in Abraham's bosom when you come to die. You must be in a sense like that beggar at the rich man's gate.

But presently the prophet, instead of going out to Naaman, simply sends a message. And here the Lord sometimes manifests His grace to one in rather a different way from what He does another. It may be, in the first opening up of the gospel in some of your cases, the Lord may have made Himself very near and very dear. He may have come, so to speak, Himself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say that the Lord Jesus Christ leaves heaven to come to the sinner, but the Spirit of God may have given such a lively representation of the things of Christ that it was, as it were, as if He were present with you. Now that is one case, and generally it is to those who have been humbled and crumbled in the dust of self-abasement. But on the other hand, there are those who simply die, shall I say, a lingering sort of death under the law, or to use another figure, like a moth fretting a garment. The bringing of them

down to make the gospel palatable is the matter of a lifetime; but it comes.

Well, there was a message sent out, instead of the prophet coming himself, and this was the message: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Well now, what was more simple? But it was just that simplicity; and the effect of the message being sent, instead of the prophet coming out himself, that offended this man. O I hope we shall not be offended at the cross of Christ! I hope that none here ever will be offended at the sovereignty, and yet the freeness, of that salvation that is without money and without price. But he was told to go and wash in Jordan seven times. There must be the application. It was not sufficient for the prophet simply to say, Go and wash. There was a needs-be that this leprous man should go to Jordan's stream and dip therein seven times.

I believe what one good man has said, that the gospel was too simple to be understood, too easy to be believed. I know some of you would not agree with it, but there are times when the Lord's people are brought into the simplicity of the gospel, and when the veil is removed from their understanding, so that they understand that good man's sentiment.

Well now, this leper was going away in a rage. He thought the rivers of Damascus infinitely better than the waters of Israel. And I expect there are some of you that would rather trust in your own goodness, in the matter of acceptance with God, than in the crucified God-Man, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O there is a secret leaning to our doings, to our works, for our acceptance, whilst we have the language of the gospel upon our tongues. We may speak very finely concerning the truths of the gospel, and we may have as legal a heart as any free-willer, secretly leaning upon our good opinion of ourselves and our few wretched rags of good works, at the same time putting in the doctrine of Christ for a sort of make-weight. Well, if you have never been guilty of it, I know one who has been guilty of it, and apart from the grace of God he will be guilty of it again, and that is the speaker. Legality is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of correction will drive it from him.

And so his servants came near. It is well when we have good, kind friends, a faithful friend or servants, as the case may be. But they seem to have been on very affectionate terms, for these servants addressed him as their father. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" They touch the very spot; and even strangers to God and to His gospel can sometimes touch the spot. I do not mean bring the saving benefits of the gospel into our hearts, but they can sometimes show us the fallacy of our own hopes. Well, I will put it

like this – you are perhaps endeavouring to do some great thing, to bring a righteousness for your acceptance, and you watch every word, every thought, and every act; and then perhaps you find that there is a person that does not believe the gospel at all, a veritable infidel, and yet he can live as honestly and as uprightly as yourself, and you may say, “Well, what is the difference?” It may show you that there is something needed beside this great thing that you would perform for your acceptance, something that the world knows nothing of, and that the world desires not.

But still, this was good advice: “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?” I believe many people have been in this state. If heaven could have been got for some great thing that they could do, at least they would attempt to do it. And when they find mercy cannot be bought, and heaven cannot be purchased, and when they find this, that if it could be, they have not the wherewithal to obtain it, then it makes a way for this latter part of our text. You would do it if you could, but you cannot do it, and therefore you are thrown absolutely upon the rich mercy of God that flows in the channel of a dear Redeemer’s blood.

Now, this was what was said: “How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” Who wants washing? I wonder how many of us in this room tonight have ever felt their need of washing. I mean, the washing that this is typical of, namely, being plunged in the crimson ocean, even the precious atonement of Jesus Christ. Do not say you have if you have not, even to yourself. You had better say, “Lord, I know nothing about the atonement, but I know that I am a poor, wretched sinner, that I deserve nothing at Thy hand; but if there is a way in which Thou canst save a poor sinner, do Thou save me.” And if that is your sincere prayer, the truth will be opened to you some day relative to that precious blood that issued forth from the smitten Rock, Christ Jesus.

There is need of washing, that is the thing. If I can come across a person that really needs washing, there is hope concerning that person’s religion. They are, it may be, stuffed full of erroneous things, but that will be purged from them. To be really in a condition to need that which can alone blot out your transgressions and hide them from view, that can cover your sinful soul, that can make you, a poor leper, white as snow. O do you need this washing? Blessed be God if you know the affliction and the sorrow of sin so much as to be like that blind man that was born blind, when the Lord anointed his eyes and told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash, and he went and washed and came back seeing. Now, if you need this washing, I do believe this, that you will be made willing in the day of God’s power to dip, not in Jordan’s stream, but you will be made willing to be saved purely upon the ground of Christ’s merits for

your acceptance with God. That is a great point of experience. I will not say it is a great point of knowledge, because many people know it. But it is a great point of experience when you are so filthy that you feel that there is nothing but that rich blood that was shed that can cleanse away your filthiness. That is represented by Jordan's stream here, even that wonderful atonement which was made once for the sins of many, the only satisfaction that has ever been rendered to infinite justice for the transgressions of God's people.

Now, there will be a dipping, and that dipping will be by faith, a going-out by precious faith to lay hold upon the truth, and for that truth to be brought with power and application into your heart, that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, the blessed opening-up of the truth in Jesus Christ as set forth by this leper of Jordan. A Naaman must dip seven times, that is to say until he was cleansed. You may have to go to the Lord seventy times seven before you obtain just that cleansing that you feel to need. But seven is a perfect number, and I take it to set forth this, that no sinner who has been rightly convinced of sin will be satisfied that he is right with God until he has received that healing virtue that flows from a once-crucified but now-risen Saviour. There will be a coming, and a coming, and a coming to the throne of grace that you may obtain peace and healing in your conscience. And when that comes, it will be when you have spent every penny piece of the money of your supposed good works, so that you are saved purely upon the free grace and goodness of God in Jesus Christ. There is a wishing, a coming, a cleaving, a wrestling, a waiting upon the Lord until He is revealed in the heart and in the conscience.

And thus there will be this cleanness. That does not mean that you will be clean or cleansed from the inbeing of sin; but it will mean this, that your conscience will be purged from the guilt of sin, and with that, peace will be proclaimed in your heart, and then there will be a cleansing of your way: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Said the Lord Jesus: "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." There will be a necessity, shall I say, of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of sanctification to preserve you from evil and from being contaminated with sin. But as oft as you are defiled thereby, you will need this cleansing efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled upon your conscience. The older you get the more you will feel the need of it.

Another thing we may like to notice is this, the gratitude of Naaman. O how differently he returned to the prophet; and when the prophet would take nothing, then he must beg for two mule loads of earth to make an altar after the type of Israel's altar. There was his gratitude, his humility, his willingness to serve Israel's God. And so there will be with

you, if the Lord manifests His cleansing power in your heart, speaking peace through Jesus Christ; you will want to raise an altar. I mean just this, to put it very plainly and simply – when you have received the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart, you will want to put Him on in a public profession; you will want to show whose you are and whom you desire to serve in humility.* O yes, my friends, it will not be to do some great thing for Christ, but rather it will be to show your love. In fact, unless love is in it, there is no purpose whatever in this putting on the Lord Jesus.

But then you will say, he begged pardon relative to going into the house of Rimmon when his master went there to worship. Many people have used that as a cloak to go into unsuitable places. I do not believe it was left in the Scripture for that end. It shows the man's tenderness of conscience, and doubtless if we could have filled up the life history of Naaman, we should find that before long he would have to come off even that. We want to be very careful how we mix up with things, especially religious things that are contrary to truth. Yet there are times, I believe, when some of the Lord's people are brought into such circumstances, brought into contact with people in daily business that they cannot dissociate themselves from, though they would gladly do so. This some of us have known in days that are past, and yet the Lord can preserve you, and He can make even these things an incentive to you to seek more earnestly the company and association of God's people. We leave the subject. May the Lord add His blessing.

GOD OPENING HIS HAND

By J.C. Philpot

“Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” There is something very sweet in this expression: “Thou openest Thine hand”; implying that the Lord holds the blessing in His own hand, and that it is the opening of the hand, the unclosing of the heavenly palm, whereby the blessing is communicated.

I have thought sometimes from these words that there is some intimation of the way in which the Lord communicates His blessings. It is something like an earthly father when he comes home at night. Perhaps he has purchased something for his child, some toy or sweet during the day, which he holds in his hand, and just opens it for a few moments and lets the child see what he has brought him. This is to kindle the desire of the child after the thing which the father intends him

* The late David Lewis of Brighton, remembered and esteemed by many, was specially favoured under this sermon, and shortly afterwards was baptized.

to have. But no sooner has the father opened his hand for a few moments than he closes it again in order to whet still more the desire of the child, and make it run to him to try to obtain possession of it.

So the heavenly Father often for a moment uncloses His hand, displays the blessing before the eyes of His children, holds forth the atonement, and discovers the beauty, the grace, the loveliness of Jesus; and as He for a few moments opens His hand, He kindles all the burning desires and breathing affections of the soul after the blessing. The living child then runs to the Father to procure it; but the hand is closed, the blessing is withheld.

But to pursue our comparison, the child, having once seen what is in the father's hand, knows that it is there, and its object is to get possession of it; and therefore it will try to thrust its tiny finger into the father's palm and thus force it open. Does not this resemble the child of God who, when he has seen the blessings that God holds in His hands, and the affections of his heart are kindled after those blessings, seeks by fervent prayer and earnest cries and holy wrestlings to prevail upon the Lord to give him possession of that blessing which he longs to obtain? Do I speak irreverently or unscripturally when I say that thus to seek the blessing is to thrust our finger into the closed palm of the Lord and endeavour to force it open? For "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me."

But as the child seeks to uncloset its earthly parent's hand, the father will often hold it tighter; and so when a living soul is seeking to get a blessing from the Lord, it often seems as though the hand of the Lord was clasped more firmly than before. But after a time the earthly parent suffers the little fingers of the child to prevail. What is the child's strength against the father's? But he is overcome by love; it was always his intention that the child should have the blessing, and his purpose was to give it in that way; and therefore he suffers his strong hand to be overcome by the tiny finger of a little child. He unlocks his fingers, unclasps his palm, and lets his child draw out the blessing.

So it is spiritually with the family of God. He suffers Himself to be prevailed upon; He unclasps His fingers and unlocks His palm, and so gives that blessing which He always meant to bestow. This seems clearly set forth in Jacob's wrestling with the angel. There was a blessing which the Lord always meant to give him – that Esau should not prevail against him; but Jacob was to wrestle for it. He must put forth his human hands, and wrestle with the Lord; and the Lord Himself, the God of all power and might, allowed Himself to be overcome, suffered Himself to be prevailed upon, permitted weak, lame Jacob to "have power with God

and prevail," to show that our weakness is no barrier against our receiving blessings, for the Lord suffers our weakness to prevail over His strength.

Then He "opens His hand," and not only displays the blessing, but allows the hand of faith to grasp the blessing, strengthens the hand of faith to lay hold upon Jesus' righteousness, the eye of faith to look upon Jesus' beauty, and the ear of faith to hear His voice and live.

PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN

By J.C. Philpot. See Ephesians 4. 22-24

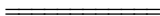
Now, as you thus put on the new man, he spreads his influence also over your life, walk, conduct and conversation; for these secret influences will manifest themselves openly, and the tree being made inwardly good, will bring forth outwardly good fruit. True religion will always be manifested by a man's life and conduct. In your families, in your business, in your daily conversation, it will be manifested under what influence you are. If you put off the old man, you put off with him peevishness, rebellion, evil temper, pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, harshness, fretfulness, obstinacy and self-righteousness. If you put on the new man, you put on bowels of mercy towards God's people, kindness and compassion to those who are in difficulty and sorrow, tenderness of conscience, godly fear, strictness of life, circumspection of walk, and uprightness of conduct; and thus you make manifest whose you are and whom you serve. O what a mercy would it be for us as we go about and go into the world, to be ever putting on the new man, and no more leave the house without him than we should without our coat or gown. How he would guard your conduct, keep you from lightness and frivolity, and make you watchful over every word and almost every look. You would not, then, drop into every idle conversation in the omnibus, in the railway, in the shop, in the street; it would not be to everyone, "Hail, fellow, well met." There would be a sobriety, a consistency, a godliness, a separation of spirit – a something to mark you as distinct from the profane and the professing.

Many persons, I well know, would think this a very gloomy religion, and rebel against being tied up, as it were, to such restraints. But it is because they know not the sweetness and blessedness of putting on the new man. In copy-books, boys write sometimes, "Virtue is its own reward." I will give you a copy to write upon your heart: "Godliness is its own reward"; or I will set you a copy out of David's book and in his best hand, "In keeping of them there is great reward." As to bondage and

constraint, and all that idle talk, you would find it just the contrary; and that, in proportion as you were enabled to put off the old man, you would enjoy more liberty of soul, more access to God, more sweetness in religion, more blessedness in the Bible, more access to the throne of grace, and clearer and brighter prospects of heaven. And you would find also no bondage in this. I will tell you where the bondage is: *sin*. The bondage is in sin, and the law which is the strength of sin. There is no bondage in the gospel. It is pure liberty. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made (you) free" (Gal. 5. 1). There is no bondage in the new man. He is all liberty; he is free as Christ is, as holy as God is. There is no wrath, no enmity, no bondage, no guilt, no shame, no fear in the new man. He walks at liberty, and therefore for men to say: "We must not look at the precepts; we shall get into bondage"; or for a minister to say, "I am not going to be legal this morning; I shan't take the precepts and give you a lecture out of them, to bring your soul into bondage" – why the man does not know what he is talking about. He has never felt the beauty and preciousness of these kind admonitions and gracious cautions, the blessedness of keeping God's Word, of walking in God's ways, and knowing His will and doing it.

There is no bondage in obedience, no bondage in walking in the ways of the Lord, no bondage in serving God and doing His will.

The glorious gospel of the grace of God is free in its doctrines, free in its promises, free in its precepts; and this is its marked characteristic, that it *makes* free as well as *is* free. For this is the promise: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8. 31, 32). But when men want to be made free *from* the precept, and not *in* the precept; when they want to be indulged with liberty to walk in forbidden ways, and hug the doctrines of the gospel while they despise and trample upon the precepts of the gospel, let them know that their hearts are not right before God, and that as they sow, so will they reap; for he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6. 7, 8).



In the worst of times, there is still more cause to complain of an evil heart than of an evil and corrupt world.

Fleming

None are more ready to shrink in a day of trouble than such who at a distance seem most daring.

Fleming

BAPTISM – AND AFTERWARDS

Baptism is a beautiful ordinance. Solemnly it sets forth the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is the believer's privilege to follow Him in the way He has led, in obedience to His commandment,

“View the rite with understanding;
Jesus' grave before you lies;
Be interred at His commanding;
After His example rise.”

Believers' baptism is an ordinance for sinners – sinners professing their only hope to be in what the Lord accomplished in His death, burial and resurrection, and also their desire to die with Christ and rise again to newness of life.

It is a wonderful thing that the Holy Spirit still works in sinners' hearts, bringing them to a saving knowledge of the truth, and enabling them openly to profess the Lord's name.

“With pleasure we behold
Immanuel's offspring come”;

and it has been a pleasure to witness a number of our young people among them.

Now and again we hear people saying, “Have you heard that so-and-so is being baptized?” But sometimes, wrongly, people speak of baptism as if it is the end. In many ways it is the beginning – the beginning of an open profession of the Lord's name. But then that profession has to be walked out – a wonderful privilege but an awful responsibility. The Word of God has so much to say about a profession of the Lord's name.

It is a journey, a pilgrimage. We are so weak and helpless and our enemies, sin, Satan and the world are so strong. It is not just beginning; it is enduring to the end.

It is a fight, a conflict, with cruel adversaries.

It is a race. How easy it is to begin the race, but it is the continuing, “looking unto Jesus.” “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It is a heavenly voyage. We “leave the world's deceitful shore, and leave it to return no more.” The ship, as it sails to its destination, will meet with many storms by the way. Often those who have just been baptized will meet a storm. This does not mean they are wrong or have been mistaken (as Satan will suggest) but that it is for the trial of their faith. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Was there

ever clearer leading than when the Lord Jesus constrained His disciples to get into the ship, saying, "Let us pass over unto the other side"? Yet immediately there was a terrible storm which, it seemed, would wreck them. But "they came over unto the other side."

Thus what lies before us is not just to make a profession but, with God's help, to journey to the end, to be victorious in the fight, to win the race, and to come safely to our desired haven. If God is with us at the beginning, He will be with us all the way through, right to the end. There were three thousand baptized on the Day of Pentecost, but all of them "continued steadfastly," because it was God's work.

Well then, there are a few things that should follow baptism. What are the things which those who have been baptized should consider?

1. *We are now church members.* After a person is baptized he is received into the fellowship of the local church as a member. This is not something carnal, like joining a club. The New Testament speaks highly of the church as the body of Christ, and sets a high standard for membership. There are many privileges and responsibilities, and they should never be taken lightly. Years ago people did not speak so much of "being baptized" as "joining the church."

How important it is that we should seek to maintain the standard of divine truth! "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Over the years, especially the last forty or fifty years, there has been a gradual decline in standards. May our young people especially see the vital importance of the truth as in Jesus. May we contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Do not depart from the truth in doctrine, experience or practice.

Seek to be loyal. What a blessing Ittai is to the church of God. Remember Ittai? "And Ittai answered the king, and said, In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (2 Sam. 15. 21).

Pray for the minister. Pray for God's blessing. Pray for peace and prosperity. Who can estimate the value of the "hidden pillars" in the church of God who pray without ceasing?

Seek to bring a gracious influence to the house of God – for whether we realise it or not, we each bring an influence for good or bad.

Seek to be a useful church member. When a person is baptized, it is very difficult to tell whether he will be a good and useful church member, or not. Two people may join the church together: one proves such a faithful, useful church member, and the other a disappointment.

The analogy of the church as the body of Christ clearly teaches that *every* member is to be useful (1 Cor. 12). The working together of the various members of the body is a beautiful picture of the church. Not one member is unnecessary; all are needed. There is something which the Lord has appointed for each one. Seek to be useful.

Some can speak a kind word. Some can write an encouraging (or reproving) letter. Some teach in the Sabbath school. Some are good visitors. Some count it an honour to do the most menial thing. Of course, others will have positions of responsibility, public positions. The Lord Jesus said, “I am among you as He that serveth.” “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

Above all, be faithful. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

2. *We now come to the Lord’s table.* Baptism is a once for all profession of the Lord’s name; the Lord’s supper is a continual profession. In coming to the Lord’s table we show forth His death “till He come.” The broken bread and the poured out cup symbolise the sacred body of Jesus broken on the cross and His precious blood shed for sinners. We profess that all our hope is built on what is symbolised here.

The Lord’s supper is a beautiful ordinance, and it is for sinners. We are reminded of that occasion in the Highlands of Scotland, in days of real spiritual prosperity, when a godly woman passed by the cup, feeling her sin and unworthiness. The minister, discerning what had taken place, took the cup to her personally, saying, “Drink, woman, it was shed for sinners.”

But it is a solemn ordinance, and we are warned against partaking unworthily. Let us be clear. We can never *be* worthy; we never shall be; but we seek grace to eat and drink *worthily*. We would come with a soft heart, “discerning the Lord’s body.”

Seek that you may feast on Christ by faith. May it be a true Passover; “for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast” ... a feast of gratitude and rejoicing. Yet the Passover now, as when Israel came out of Egypt, has to be kept with the bitter herbs of repentance, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and with our loins girded and our staffs in our hands – as pilgrims and strangers.

Seek that it might be a strengthening ordinance, for how often a poor, drooping soul, discouraged by the greatness of the way, has been strengthened to go on! Also, seek that it might be a sanctifying ordinance; for nothing has a more sanctifying effect than a view by faith of Him, who “that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

3. *We are now to set an example.* As those who have professed the Lord’s name we will be watched. The world will watch us. It does not set a high standard for itself, but it does for the followers of Jesus. Satan will watch us, if possible to ensnare our feet. The congregation will watch us. They have seen us baptized, and some of them have heard what we have to say; now they will watch to see how we behave. Above

all, the Lord Himself will watch us. May we be kept from dishonouring that worthy name by which we are called.

Much of the New Testament, especially the latter parts of the epistles, emphasises the godly example which must be set. The standard is high.

"I ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us."

J.K. Popham just before he died was speaking to one of his young church members. He said to her, "Always remember whose you are and whom you serve."

There is only one way in which you will be able to set a godly example and that is as you are upheld by the Lord. "Kept by the power of God." "My grace is sufficient for thee."

How many a young person has shrunk from an open profession, fearing to come short in walking it out afterwards. But the Word of God still stands: "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His throne with exceeding joy."

What a standard! Our only hope is in divine enablings of the great Head of the church, and fresh supplies of grace out of His fulness. But what a word that is: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Here we are on earth, weak, sinful and helpless. We have made our profession. How can we hold it fast? As our great and glorious High Priest holds *us* fast. *He* is not on earth. He has passed into the heavens, having led captivity captive, and triumphed over sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave. In heaven He reigns supreme, the almighty Saviour. He is the One who in love and mercy will hold us fast, supply all our needs, uphold us in our profession, and bring us safely through at last to the praise and glory of His name.

* * *

At the end of our Articles of Faith the following very profitable piece appears. These words, in substance, were used by the church at Horsley Down, London, where Dr. Gill became pastor, as far back as the early 1700s. We remind our church members that when they sign the Articles, they also sign agreement with these beautiful words which follow.

Now all and each of these doctrines and ordinances we can honestly say it is our desire to maintain and defend in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

And we desire, by the grace of God, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and that we may live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world.

And, as it regards each other in church communion, we desire to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love; to watch over each other's conversation, to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to His revealed will; and when the case requires, to warn and admonish one another according to God's Word.

Moreover, we desire to sympathise with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, into which God, in His providence, may bring us; as also to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings and infirmities; and particularly to pray for one another, and for all saints, and that the gospel and the ordinances thereof may be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.

And for every blessing and favour, both temporal and spiritual, we, who are as deserving of hell as the vilest of the vile, desire to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of a Triune God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN SALVATION

By John Bunyan

Question. But some may say, Wherein doth the saving grace of the Spirit appear?

Answer. In many things.

In taking possession of us for His own, in His making of us His house and habitation, so that though the Father and the Son have both gloriously put forth gracious acts in order to our salvation, yet the Spirit is the first that makes seizure of us. Christ, therefore, when He went away, said not that He would send the Father, but the Spirit, and that He should be in us forever. "If I depart," said Christ, "I will send Him, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter."

The Holy Spirit coming into us and dwelling in us, worketh out many salvations for us now, and each of them in order also to our being saved for ever.

1. He saveth us from our darkness by illuminating us; hence He is called "the Spirit of revelation," because He openeth the blind eyes, and so consequently delivereth us from that darkness which else would drown us in the deeps of hell.

2. He it is that convinceth us of the evil of our unbelief, and that shows us the necessity of our believing in Christ; without the conviction of this we should perish.

3. This is that finger of God by which the devil is made to give place unto grace, by whose power else we should be carried headlong to hell.

4. This is He that worketh faith in our hearts, without which neither the grace of the Father nor the grace of the Son can save us, "For he that believeth not shall be damned."

5. This is He by whom we are born again; and he that is not so born can neither see nor inherit the kingdom of heaven.

6. This is He that setteth up His kingdom in the heart, and by that means keepeth out the devil after he is cast out, which kingdom of the Spirit, whoever wanteth, they lie liable to a worse possession of the devil than ever.

7. By this Spirit we come to see the beauty of Christ, without a sight of which we should never desire Him, but should certainly live in the neglect of Him, and perish.

8. By this Spirit we are helped to praise God acceptably, but without it, it is impossible to be heard unto salvation.

9. By this blessed Spirit the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and our hearts are directed into the love of God.

10. By this blessed Spirit we are led from the ways of the flesh into the ways of life, and by it our mortal body, as well as our immortal soul, is quickened in the service of God.

11. By this good Spirit we keep that good thing, even the seed of God, that at the first by the Word of God was infused into us, and without which we are liable to the worst damnation.

12. By this good Spirit we have help and light against all the wisdom and cunning of the world, which putteth forth itself in its most cursed sophistications to overthrow the simplicity that is in Christ.

13. By this good Spirit our graces are maintained in life and vigour, as faith, hope, love, a spirit of prayer, and every grace.

14. By this good Spirit we are sealed to the day of redemption.

15. And by this good Spirit we are made to wait with patience until the redemption of the purchased possession comes.

Now all these things are so necessary to our salvation that I know not which of them can be wanting; neither can any of them be by any means attained but by this blessed Spirit.



He that hath slight thoughts of sin, never had great thoughts of God.

Owen

THOUGHTS ON PSALM 4

By Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

Reader! let us never lose sight of the Lord Jesus while reading this Psalm. He is the Lord our righteousness; and therefore, in all our approaches to the mercy seat, let us go there in a language corresponding to this which calls Jesus the Lord our righteousness. While men of the world are seeking their chief good from the world, let us desire His favour which infinitely transcends corn and wine, and all the good things which perish in the using. Yes, Lord, Thy favour is better than life itself. Thou causest them that love Thee to inherit substance, and fillest all their treasure.

O Thou gracious God and Father, hast Thou in such a wonderful manner set apart One in our nature for Thyself? Hast Thou indeed chosen One out of the people? Hast Thou beheld Him in the purity of His nature, as One in every point godly? Hast Thou given Him as the covenant of the people? And hast Thou declared Thyself well pleased in Him? O then, well may my soul be well pleased in Him also!

Now do I know that my God and Father will hear me when I call upon Him in Jesus' name, and when I look up to Him for acceptance for Jesus' sake. Yes, my heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed; Jesus is my hope and righteousness; the Lord will hear me when I call. And henceforth will I both lay me down in peace and sleep securely in Jesus, accepted in the Beloved; for this is the rest wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing.

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE SURE

*Thoughts on Psalm 121.8 by William Cowper (1566-1619),
Bishop of Galloway*

"The Lord shall preserve." The word *shamar* imports a most tender preservation; from it comes *shemuroth*, signifying the eyelids, because they are the keepers of the eye, as the Lord is called in the verse preceding, *shomer Ishrael*, "*the Keeper of Israel*." If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it. All their motion is for the good of the eye. O what a comfort is here! The Lord calleth His church "the apple of His eye": "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." The church is the apple of God's eye, and the Lord is the covering of it. O how well are they kept whom "the Keeper of Israel" keepeth! The Lord was a buckler to Abraham. None of his enemies could harm him, for his buckler covered him throughly. The Lord was a hedge unto Job. Satan himself confessed

he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job.

But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times is the word of keeping or preserving repeated), why is it now made over again? Not without cause; for this doubling and redoubling serves, first, for a remedy of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to “sacrifice to their own net,” or, “to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand,” as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their “deliverance” to their “calf,” and therefore often is this resounded, “The Lord,” “The Lord.” Is thy estate advanced? The Lord hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the Lord; thy help is from on high, and to Him let the praise be returned.

Secondly, it is for a remedy for our natural diffidence: the word of the Lord in itself is as sure when it is spoken as when it is sworn; as sure spoken once as when it is oftener repeated; yet is not the Lord content to speak only, but to swear also; nor to speak once, but often, one and the selfsame thing. The reason is showed us by the apostle, that hereby he may “declare to the heirs of promise the stability of his counsel” (Heb. 6. 17; Gen. 41. 32). As Joseph spake of Pharaoh’s vision, “It was doubled, because the thing is established by God, and God hasteth to perform it,” so is it with every word of the Lord, when it is repeated; it is because it is established, and God hastens to perform it.

THE TRINITY

By Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one” (1 John 5. 7).

God is but one, yet are there three distinct Persons subsisting in one Godhead. This is a sacred mystery which the light within man could never have discovered. As the two natures in Christ, yet but one Person, is a wonder, so three Persons, yet but one Godhead. Here is a great deep: the Father God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, yet not three Gods, but one God. The three Persons in the blessed Trinity are distinguished, but not divided; three substances, but one essence.

This is a divine riddle, where one makes three and three make one. Our narrow thoughts can no more comprehend the Trinity in Unity, than a nut-shell will hold all the water in the sea. Let me shadow it out by a similitude. In the body of the sun, there are the substance of the sun, the beams and the heat; the beams are begotten of the sun, the heat proceeds both from the sun and the beams; but these three, though different, are

not divided; they all three make but one sun. So in the blessed Trinity, the Son is begotten of the Father, the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, yet though they are three distinct Persons, they are but one God.

First, let me speak of the Unity in Trinity, then of the Trinity in Unity.

I. *Of the Unity in Trinity.* The Unity of the Persons in the Godhead consists of two things:

1. The identity of essence. In the Trinity there is a oneness in essence. The three Persons are of the same divine nature and substance; so that *in Deo nonest magis et minus*, “there are no degrees in the Godhead”; one Person is not God more than another.

2. The Unity of the Persons in the Godhead consists in the mutual in-being of them, or their being in one together. The three Persons are so united that one Person is in another and with another. “Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee” (John 17. 21).

II. *Let me speak of the Trinity in Unity.*

1. The first Person in the Trinity is God the Father. He is called the first Person, in respect of *order*, not *dignity*, for God the Father has no essential perfection which the other Persons have not. He is not more wise, more holy, more powerful than the other Persons are. There is a priority, not a superiority.

2. The second Person in the Trinity is Jesus Christ, who is begotten of the Father before all time. “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth” (Prov. 8. 23-25). This scripture declares the eternal generation of the Son of God. This second Person in the Trinity, who is Jehovah, is become our Jesus. The Scripture calls Him the Branch of David (Jer. 23. 5), and I may call Him the flower of our nature. “By Him all that believe are justified” (Acts 13. 39).

3. The third Person in the Trinity is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, whose work is to illuminate the mind and enkindle sacred motions. The essence of the Spirit is in heaven and everywhere, but the influence of it is in the hearts of believers. This is that blessed Spirit who gives us the holy unction (1 John 2. 20). Though grace comes through the merits of Christ, it is the Holy Ghost that works it in us. Though Christ makes the purchase, it is the Holy Ghost that makes the assurance and seals us to the day of redemption.

Thus I have spoken of all the three Persons. The Trinity of Persons may be proved out of Matthew 3. 16, 17: “Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water ... and He saw the Spirit of God

descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son.” Here are three names given to the three Persons. He who spake with a voice from heaven was God the Father; He who was baptized in Jordan was God the Son; He who descended in the likeness of a dove was God the Holy Ghost. Thus I have shown you the Unity of essence, and the Trinity of Persons.

Use one: For confutation.

1. This confutes the Jews and Turks, who believe only the first Person in the Godhead. Take away the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity, and you overthrow man’s redemption; for God the Father being offended with man for sin, how shall He be pacified without a mediator? This mediator is Christ, who makes our peace. Christ having died and shed His blood, how shall this blood be applied but by the Holy Ghost? Therefore, if there be not three Persons in the Godhead, man’s salvation cannot be wrought out; if there be no second Person in the Trinity, there is no Redeemer; if no third Person, there is no Comforter. Thus the plank is taken away by which we get to heaven.

2. It confutes the execrable opinion of the Socinians, who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus, and make Him to be a creature only, but of a higher rank. As the Papists blot out the second commandment, so the Socinians do the second Person in the Trinity. If to oppose Christ’s members be a sin, what is it to oppose Christ Himself? Jesus Christ is co-equal with God the Father. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2. 6). He is co-eternal with God the Father: “I was ... from the beginning” (Prov. 8. 23). If not, there was a time when God was without a Son, and so He would be no Father; nay, there was a time when God was without His glory, for Christ is the brightness of His Father’s glory (Heb 1. 3). He is co-essential with God the Father. The Godhead subsists in Christ. “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2. 9). It is said, not only that Christ was with God before the beginning, but that He was God (John 1. 1). “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3. 16). The title of Lord, so often given to Christ, in the New Testament, answers to the title of Jehovah in the Old (Deut. 6. 5, Matt. 22. 37). Christ has a co-eternity and co-substantiality with His Father. “I and My Father are one” (John 10. 30). It were blasphemy for an angel to speak thus.

Yet further to prove Christ’s Godhead, consider

(i) The glorious, incommunicable attributes belonging to God the Father are ascribed to Christ. Is God the Father omnipotent? So is Jesus Christ. He is the Almighty (Rev. 1. 8), and He creates (Col. 1. 16). Is God the Father infinitely immense, filling all places? (Jer. 23. 24). So is Jesus Christ. While Christ was on the earth by His bodily presence, He was at the same time in the bosom of the Father by His divine presence (John 3. 13).

(ii) The same *jura regalia*, or prerogatives royal, which belong to God the Father, belong also to Christ. Does God the Father seal pardons? This is a flower of Christ's crown. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9. 2). Nor does Christ remit sin *organice* only, as ministers do, by virtue of a power delegated to them from God; but He does it by His own power and authority. Is God the Father the adequate object of faith? Is He to be believed in? So is His Son (John 14. 1). Does adoration belong to God the Father? So it does to the Son. "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1. 6).

How sacrilegious therefore is the Socinian, who would rob Christ of His Godhead, the best flower of His crown. They that deny Christ to be God, must greatly wrest or else deny the Scripture to be the Word of God.

3. It confutes the Arians, who deny the Holy Ghost to be God. The eternal Godhead subsists in the Holy Ghost. "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16. 13). Christ speaks not there of an attribute, but of a Person. That the Godhead subsists in the Person of the Holy Ghost appears in this: that the Spirit, who gives diversity of gifts, is said to be the same Lord and the same God (1 Cor. 12. 5, 6). The black and unpardonable sin is said, in a special manner, to be committed against the Godhead subsisting in the Holy Ghost (Matt. 12. 32). The mighty power of God is made manifest by the Holy Ghost, for He changes the hearts of men. The devil would have Christ prove Himself to be God by turning stones into bread; but the Holy Ghost shows His Godhead by turning stones into flesh. "I will take away the stony heart ... and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36. 26).

Yet further, the power and Godhead of the Holy Ghost appeared in effecting the glorious conception of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very shadow of the Holy Ghost made a virgin conceive (Luke 1. 35). The Holy Ghost works miracles which transcend the sphere of nature, as raising the dead (Rom. 8. 11). To Him belongs divine worship; our souls and bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6. 19), in which temples He is to be worshipped (verse 20). We are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we must believe His Godhead or renounce our baptism in His name.

Methinks it were better for such men not to have so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost (Acts 19. 2) than to deny His Deity. They who would wittingly and willingly blot out the third Person shall have their names blotted out of the book of life.

Use two: For exhortation.

1. Believe this doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the unity of essence. The Trinity is purely an object of faith. The plumbline of reason is too short to fathom this mystery; but where reason cannot wade, there faith may swim. There are some truths in religion that may

be demonstrated by reason, as that there is a God, but the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of essence is wholly supernatural, and must be believed by faith. This sacred doctrine is not against reason, but above it. Those illuminated philosophers that could find out the causes of things and discourse of the magnitude and influence of the stars, the nature of minerals, could never by their deepest search find out the mystery of the Trinity. This is of divine revelation and must be adored with humble believing.

We can be no good Christians without the firm belief of the Trinity. How can we pray to God the Father but in the name of Christ and through the help of the Spirit? How believe the glorious Trinity? How are the Quakers to be abhorred, who go under the name of Christians, and yet undervalue and renounce Jesus Christ! I have read of some Quakers who speak thus: "We deny the Person of Him whom you call Christ and affirm that they who expect to be saved by that Christ without works will be damned in that faith!" Could the devil himself speak worse blasphemy? They would pull up all religion by the roots, and take away that corner stone on which the hope of our salvation is built.

2. If there be one God subsisting in three Persons, then let us give equal reverence to all the Persons in the Trinity. There is not more or less in the Trinity; the Father is not more God than the Son and Holy Ghost. There is an order in the Godhead, but no degrees; one Person has not a majority or supereminence above another; therefore we must give equal worship to all the Persons. "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5. 23). Adore Unity in Trinity.

3. Obey all the Persons in the blessed Trinity; for all of them are God. Obey God the Father. Christ Himself, as Man, obeyed God the Father (John 4. 34); much more must we (Deut. 27. 10).

Obey God the Son. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry" (Psa. 2. 12). Kiss Him with a kiss of obedience. Christ's commands are not grievous (1 John 5. 3). Whatever He commands is for our interest and benefit. O then kiss the Son! Why do the elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ and fall down before the Lamb? (Rev. 4. 10, 11). To testify their subjection, and to profess their readiness to serve and obey Him.

Obey God the Holy Ghost. Our souls are breathed into us by the glorious Spirit. "The Spirit of God hath made me" (Job 33. 4). Our souls are adorned by the blessed Spirit. Every grace is a divine spark lighted in the soul by the Holy Ghost. Nay, more, the Spirit of God sanctified Christ's human nature. He united it with the divine and fitted the Man Christ to be our Mediator. Well then does this third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, deserve to be obeyed, for He is God, and this tribute of homage and obedience is due to Him from us.

PROFITABLE THOUGHTS

By Thomas Brooks

Conscience

Conscience is God's spy in the bosom. Conscience, as a scribe, a register, sits in the closet of your hearts with pen in hand, and makes a daily record of all your secret ways and secret crimes, which are above the cognizance of men. It sets down the time when, the place where, the manner how, and the persons with whom such and such secret wickednesses have been committed; and that so clear and evident that, go where you will, and do what you can, the characters of them shall never be cancelled or razed out till God appear in judgment. Let a man sin in the closest retirement that human policy can contrive, let him take all the ways he can to hide his sins, to cloak and cover his sin, as Adam did, yet conscience will so play the judge that it will bring in the evidence, produce the law, urge the penalty, and pass the sentence of condemnation upon him.

Do not be taken up with lesser things

Beware of spending too much of your precious time in circumstantial matters, in the little things of religion, as "mint and anise and cummin" (Matt. 23. 23), or in searching into the circumstances of worship, or in standing stoutly for this or that ceremony, and meanwhile neglect the studying of the covenant of grace; or in inquiring what fruit that was that Adam ate in paradise, or in inquiring after the authors of such and such books, whose names God in His infinite wisdom has concealed, or in inquiring what God did before the world was made. When one asked Augustine that question, he answered that He was "preparing hell for such busy questioners as he was." It was a saying of Luther, "From a vainglorious doctor, from a contentious pastor, and from unprofitable questions, the good Lord deliver His church."

It is one of Satan's great designs to hinder men in the great and weighty duties of religion by busying them most about the lowest and least matters of religion. Satan is never better pleased than when he sees Christians puzzled and perplexed about those things in religion that are of no great moment or importance (Col. 2. 21). Such as negotiate and trade in religion more for a good name than a good life, for a good report than a good conscience, to humour others rather than to honour God, etc., such will take no pleasure in closet duties. Such as are more busied about ceremonies than substances, about the form of godliness than the power (2 Tim. 3. 5), such will never make it their business to be much with God in their closets, as is evident in the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 6. 1-6).

Such as are more taken up with the outward dress and garb of religion than they are with the spirit, power and life of religion, such will never affect to drive a secret trade heavenwards (Luke 11. 34-40). There cannot be a surer nor a greater character of a hypocrite than to make a great deal of stir about little things in religion, and in the meanwhile neglect the great and main things in religion. Such as these have all along in the Scripture discovered a strangeness and a perfect carelessness as to closet duties. I never knew any man hot and zealous about circumstantials, about the little things of religion, that was ever famous for closet prayer.

Secret prayer

Of all the duties of religion, Satan is the most deadly enemy to this of secret prayer; partly because secret prayer spoils him in his most secret designs, plots and contrivances against the soul, partly because secret prayer is so musical and delightful to God, partly because secret prayer is of such rare use and advantage to the soul, and partly because it lays not the soul so open to pride, vain glory and worldly applause as prayer in the synagogue does; and therefore he would rather that a man should pray a thousand times in the synagogues, or in the corner of the streets, or behind a pillar, than that he should pray once in his closet; and therefore you have need to steel your hearts with holy courage and resolution, that whatever suggestions, temptations, oppositions or objections you may encounter, that yet you will keep close to closet prayer.

The ground of answered prayer

The saints' infirmities can never make void those gracious promises by which God stands engaged to hearken to the prayers of His people (Psa. 50. 15; Isa. 30. 19; 65. 24). God's hearing of our prayers does not depend upon sanctification, but upon Christ's intercession; not upon what we are in ourselves, but upon what we are in the Lord Jesus; both our persons and our prayers are acceptable in the Beloved (Eph. 1. 6; 1 Pet. 2. 5). When God hears our prayers, it is neither for our own sakes nor yet for our prayers' sake, but it is for His own sake, and His Son's sake, and His glory's sake, and His promise's sake. Certainly God will never cast off His people for their infirmities.

God's great design, in the method of salvation made choice of by infinite wisdom, was to stain the pride of all glory, that no flesh might glory in His sight, but that he that glorieth should glory only in the Lord.

Halyburton

A BRIEF MEMORIAL OF JAMES NEWMAN

By his widow, Ann Newman

(Continued from page 283)

The cottage being too small to accommodate the friends, after much thought and anxiety, and many exercises of mind, and many prayers, my husband felt it laid upon his mind so much that he could not get away from it, *viz.* to turn a portion of some of his work-rooms into a meeting-room, which he did in 1874, and it was called "Particular Baptist Meeting-Room." My husband was much exercised about this, for I find written on a paper now before me:

"The Lord only knows the great trials of mind I have had in respect of this place; sometimes I felt a drawing back; must give it up; cannot see anything to encourage me to go forward; then my mind comforted with a sense of God's goodness, my heart humbled in me, then felt constrained in dependence upon the Lord to go on. A few like myself, in distress, in debt and discontented, like David's few who came to him to the cave of Adullam (which Cruden says signifies "*their testimony, their prey, or their ornament*"), who dearly loved the truth of God in an experimental form, these were dear to me.

"My first text in the converted room was part of Jude 3, 'Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' The object of faith, the dear Saviour; Abraham's faith looked forward to the coming of the great Sacrifice provided of God; and his faith 'was accounted to him for righteousness. To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ' (Gal. 3. 6, 16). It was not the grace of faith, but the object of faith, that was imputed to Abraham for righteousness (Rom. 4. 23). To everyone favoured with the gift of faith, He is precious, as the one thing needful. This I knew, He was precious to my soul when attempting to set Him forth as the righteousness of believers. And how the faith of believers cleaved unto Him in their troubles, trials, deep exercises and darkness of mind; stripped of all hope and help in themselves, they can and they do say, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee' (Psa. 73. 25). To a believer heaven and earth without Christ would be void. The apostle esteems Him, 'All, and in all' (Col. 3. 11). The Lord is more precious than life, exceeding all things beneath the sun: 'I will make a Man more precious than fine gold; even a Man than the golden wedge of Ophir' (Isa. 13. 12). This is the only object worth contending for, not in a dry, formal, doctrinal sort of manner, but as the Spirit reveals Him in the heart of real, godly mourners. I felt it good to speak; the friends present said they felt it good to hear."

The friends worshipping at the Room consulted among themselves as to the propriety of forming a church. A few were joined together in heart in the blessed truths of the gospel. It was their desire that they should be joined together in church fellowship, that the ordinances of the gospel may be observed by them.

The Lord was sought unto by prayer and supplication for His direction and guidance as to this matter. There was but one feeling prevailed in the minds of the friends, that a church should be formed upon the principles of strict communion. In accordance with their wish a church was formed after the order laid down in the New Testament. Mr. H. Fox [of Stevenage] publicly recognised the few joined in love and affection as a church by breaking of bread to them in June 1876. My husband was the principal supply; there were others who occupied the pulpit occasionally when my husband went to other places.

Our little meeting-place was at length too small. We enlarged it in the year 1877. It now goes by the name of Bethel Chapel.* The Lord we hoped was at times present in our assemblies; we often felt it to be times of soul-comforting, refreshing and establishing under the preaching of the Word, and at our social prayer-meetings. There were several added at different times to the church.

My husband had invitations to supply at various places, among them, one from the friends at Redbourne, a few miles from Luton, and he went occasionally to supply for them. They received the Word not in word only, but in power, in love and sweet assurance. By his frequent going to them, there sprung up a union of spirit; his testimony was commended to their consciences, the Lord speaking through him, which endeared him to their hearts for the truth's sake. It was the united wish of the friends that my husband should take charge of them as their stated pastor. He was much exercised about the matter. I could see it lay upon his mind as a weight, both in his conversation and prayers, and also in absorbed thought. After some time being thus exercised, he felt inclined to accept the invitation, which he did in June 1881. Mr. Warburton [John Warburton of Southill] preached on the occasion, and I have no cause to think he ever regretted it.

Yet however comfortable he felt with the few, and they with him, trouble arose which sometimes pressed with such weight upon my husband's mind as to render him miserable for a time. Those seasons of trial – the feeling of wretchedness, the darkness of mind, the despondency of spirit he went through as the result – were all appointed of the Lord in love, and they were overruled in wisdom to keep the soul of my dear husband alive in spiritual things. For as his afflictions

* This chapel was demolished in 1906 and the present chapel built on the same site. To mark the centenary a pamphlet, *How the Chapel was Built*, has been produced.

abounded, so he spoke of them, which met the cases of the spiritual hearers, and this had the effect of uniting their hearts to him more closely, and his heart to them. Moreover as his afflictions abounded, so his consolations abounded also; the Word of the Lord was sweet to his soul in his times of trial. The precious gospel promises, full of grace, meeting his soul in time of affliction, encouraged him not only to hope in the Lord, but strengthened him in the work of the Lord, and enabled him, in the confidence of experience, to speak of the faithfulness of the Lord, upon which he loved to dwell. For having proved the goodness of the Lord in so many instances, and for so many years, both in providence and grace, he was in some measure enabled to speak of it to the comfort and edification of those who attended his ministry, and his ministry was the one suitable for the people at Redbourne.

The frequency of his going to speak to them in the ministry of the Word increased their love towards his testimony, and to him as the instrument, by whom the dear Lord was pleased to comfort their souls. Their love was not in word only, but in very deed; and being a poor people, it was truly wonderful and pleasing to behold how liberally at times they responded to the call for meeting the necessary expenses for repairs of the chapel and other incidental expenses. True, they were not a large body of people but, though few, they were one in heart. A few worshipping the Lord together in spiritual union are more to be preferred than a large number with contention; for unless it be a striving together for the honour and glory of God, the apostle says of such, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.... For whereas there is among you envyings, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3. 1, 3.)

When at times I have assembled with them during the pastorate of my dear husband, I have heard from their lips the expression of love, the love of their heart, and the words of the psalmist have been sweet to my mind: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"; that is, in the unity of the Spirit, for of that the psalmist speaks. The basis of that fellowship is union with the Lord Jesus Christ, united to Him by the bond of His own peace-speaking blood, thereby in measure being made partakers of his Spirit (Rom. 8. 9). This, the psalmist says, is "like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." The allusion is to the ointment Moses was commanded to make "after the art of the apothecary." This was termed "a holy oil," by divine command prohibited to be used save only in sacred things of the tabernacle, and by the priests officiating therein; for the tabernacle, the vessels and the priests were to be anointed therewith.

The anointing, or teaching of the Holy Ghost, is the substance of this, which, as John says, "teaches all things," especially love, Christian love, which is forbearing love, sympathising love, forgiving love, and this the bond of perfectness, concerning which the apostle speaks: "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4. 9). This effect the ministry of my dear husband's had with the few experimental lovers of truth at Redbourne.

My dear husband wrote several pieces on subjects of an experimental nature. His soul was set upon and he contended for the power, light and life of religion. Doctrine without the experience thereof he knew was at best dry, cold, lifeless notion. "Practice without the life and power of godliness in the heart," as he used to express himself, "was only dead formality, a form without power" (2 Tim. 3. 5).

A long piece on "Salvation," which Mr. Newman wrote, appears here in the original memoir.

In the year 1849 my husband penned the following verses respecting some of the promises of God which had been sweet to his soul:

"Thy promises, Lord, how refreshing they are,
To poor weary souls when travelling far,
And alone, with trials and dangers around,
No strength like the promises then can be found.

"How few are the friends which we meet on the road,
While travelling to Zion, the home of our God!
Yet foes there are plenty, whose strength is not small,
But Christ gives us help, and we pass by them all.

"When we trust to our feelings, how sad is our case;
How feeble and trembling we are in our ways!
We shudder at shadows, we flee in despair,
When nothing is near us to cause us to fear.

"How different our feelings when now and again
We taste that the promise is 'yea and amen'!
Our cry is now, 'Forward,' and onward we move,
Our sorrows forgotten in Christ, whom we love."

The following is one of the many letters he wrote to his friend Mr. Warburton, which gives the deep exercises of his mind, and he could in some measure enter into the seventh of Romans:

To Mr. Warburton

My dear friend, I am still learning that in me, that is in my flesh, there is nothing but sin, death and barrenness; poor, polluted dust and ashes. Those things are not discovered to be mourned over by the light of nature. The Lord teaches the heart the sinfulness of our fallen nature;

all believers are under the same tuition, and as they speak of this matter out of the abundance of the heart, they say the same thing. I do, but would not; I would, but do not; I hate, but do. I do so very much which I do not allow. I do not allow forgetfulness of the things which belong to God, but I forget Him and His people. I do not allow forgetfulness of prayer, but O how often I forget to pray! I do not allow forgetfulness in reading, but how often it becomes a bore, a tiresomeness creeps over me, indifference steps in even when reading the Word of God! "O wretched man that I am!" Sometimes I forget to read at all. I do not allow forgetfulness in meditation; sometimes my meditation of Him is sweet; but how often is He out of mind! How often foolishness creeps in and swallows up the mind, so that instead of meditation there are vain thoughts. I do not allow foolish jesting, but how often, ere I am aware, am I carried away by a jest, by guile, by a light and foolish saying, so that I know a little of the apostle's meaning when he says, "That which I do I allow not." And O that I could!

I would sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and learn of Him, and be like Him, meek and lowly, and would find rest for my otherwise weary and heavy-laden soul; but alas! I do it not. I would be with Him in the hour of His temptations; for I think no one is tempted like me. I would sympathise with Him in His troubles, and have Him to console me in my troubles. But alas! I do it not. I would be with Him in His midnight prayer, and hear His sighs and groans, and behold His tears. The psalmist personated Him when he said, "But I am a worm, and no man." O I would be with Him in His humiliation! I would behold Him in His Gethsemane-travail of soul. Ah, I would ask Him, why such agony? O I would hear Him, in the sweetest words of mercy, say (for grace is poured into His lips), "I was bruised for thine iniquities; thy sin caused Me to sweat blood; and it is by My stripes thou art healed."

I would be continually with Him. Then I would behold Him entering into His glory, taking His eternal seat of honour at the right hand of the Father. And how sweet were His words at that time: "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." But if ever these things are done, they must be done by the Holy Ghost in us. The language of my heart is,

"And now Thou in Thy kingdom art,
Dear Lord, remember me!"

No more at present, lest I should tire you, or else there is to come
"what I hate, that do I." Affectionately yours in love,

James Newman

Luton, November 6th, 1886

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Works of Thomas Goodwin, 12 Volumes; paperback; 6600 pages; price \$350; published by and obtainable from Reformation Heritage Books, 2919 Leonard St., N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525, U.S.A.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) – not to be confused with Thomas Godwin of Godmanchester – was one of the most eminent Puritan divines. It is well-known that he was very much liked by J.C. Philpot, who believed that “Goodwin on some of the higher points of our most holy faith, such as the eternal union of the church with Christ, and the blessings of the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, had, we think, deeper and clearer views than Owen,” – though he felt there was not the same power and unction.

We are delighted to find that the complete set of Goodwin’s works is now republished and made available to the Christian reader. We were just a little surprised that it is done in paperback.

To quote Philpot again:

“There are two points in which Dr. Goodwin pre-eminently shines: 1, as an expositor of the Word; 2, as gifted with a clear and penetrating insight into the deep mysteries and fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith We can speak from experience, as the more we read his writings, the fuller do they seem to be of heavenly truth He is not only most sound, deep and clear in opening up the mysteries of election, sovereign grace, salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, but, being a man of choice experience, he so blends with it the work of the Spirit, in all its various branches, as to enrich his exposition with a heavenly savour and unction which carries with it great force, and commends itself in a very sensible and profitable manner to the conscience.”

No mean recommendation – especially from one who was so careful in anything that he commended! The extracts are taken from J.C. Philpot’s review of *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D.* in the 1863 *Gospel Standard*.

We do not know if these works are obtainable in the United Kingdom or what the price would be in sterling.

The Experimental Knowledge of Christ: Sermons of John Elias; paperback; 164 pages; price \$16; published by Reformation Heritage Books.

We believe that no minister in Wales was ever more blessed than John Elias (1774-1841). Following in the tradition of Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland and Thomas Charles, the Lord wonderfully used his itinerant ministry in the principality, and he was highly honoured and dearly loved. It is no wonder that there were 10,000 people present at his funeral.

The Experimental Knowledge of Christ consists of eleven sermons by John Elias, the title of the book being taken from one of them (on Philippians 3. 10). The title is apt as Elias had clear views of the doctrines of grace, and insisted on a vital, personal experience. He himself stated:

“There is a great scarcity of experimental knowledge of Christ. Knowledge of Him through the revelation of the Spirit is hardly to be found anywhere and is rarer than any other branch of knowledge.”

“An experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum and substance of true religion This is the only religion worth possessing; it is the only religion profitable for living and dying.”

Dr. Tudor Jones is quoted as saying:

“There was an intense seriousness in his preaching, and never a suggestion of humour. His voice was haunting and powerful; his finger stretched in accusation or raised in warning brought mockers to their knees. In theology he was an unreserved Calvinist and opposed with great determination the tendency to flirt with ‘Modern Calvinism,’ still less with Arminianism.”

We strongly recommended the republication of *John Elias, Letters and Essays*, by Edward Morgan (G.S. July 2004), and gave a few profitable extracts (pages 226-227). We were therefore most interested to receive a book of the sermons of John Elias. Of course, the vitality with which the sermons were first preached cannot come through in print (as John Gadsby used to emphasise concerning his father’s sermons) and also it must be remembered that the sermons are translated from the Welsh language in which they were preached.

We are sure our readers will find these sermons interesting and profitable. They will obviously realise that because most were originally preached in the open air to vast multitudes, they differ widely in style from, say, J.C. Philpot.

At the beginning there is a most interesting short biography, written by Iain Murray.

The Ministry, by Charles J. Brown; paperback; 112 pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Charles J. Brown (1806-1884) was an eminent preacher in the Free Church of Scotland following the Disruption of 1843. This book consists of addresses (or extracts from addresses) that he gave, and there are some very useful and gracious thoughts concerning preachers and preaching; also some very helpful comments on pulpit prayers.

Two interesting points he makes. One is a suggestion that as there are roughly the same number of Rutherford’s published letters as days in the year, a minister could do worse than read one for meditation each morning. The other: the effect of the hearers’ faces on the preacher. The covenanter John Livingstone stated he could not help preaching when he saw “the longing eyes” of the people.

Obviously this book has a Scottish Presbyterian background; but we were rather amazed that Brown has to insist so much that ministers must be converted men!

A sermon by C.J. Brown is included at the end – a very good one on Genesis 3. 24: “So He drove out the man.”

The Mother’s Companion, Vols. I and II; C.D’s, price £10.50 each (£5.50 for families with an income under £30,000) including postage; available from Mother’s Companion, Hen Benygroes, Penrhyndeudraeth, Gwynedd, LL48 6BT (cheques to C.A. Eastwood).

These C.D’s are intended as a complete curriculum for home schooling for small children, forming “the basis of a traditional classical Christian education, using the best tried and tested materials from the past.” Described as “unashamedly old-fashioned.”

JESUS ONLY

When I of sinners felt the chief,
And thus was overwhelmed with grief,
What was it gave my heart relief?

A sight of Jesus.

When at the throne I wept in prayer,
And waited for deliverance there,
What was it saved me from despair?

A hope in Jesus.

When I, defiled throughout by sin,
Mourned o'er the malady within,
What was it made me whole and clean?

The blood of Jesus.

When I forget redeeming love,
And often so ungrateful prove,
What is it then my heart can move?

A look from Jesus.

When trouble is approaching near,
And darker still the clouds appear,
What is it calms my rising fear?

A word from Jesus.

When earthly friends appear unkind,
And I in them no comfort find,
What is it then supports my mind?

A smile from Jesus.

When I am called a cross to bear,
And persecution is severe,
What is it checks the gathering tear?

A thought of Jesus.

When Christians meet for prayer and praise,
And wait for fresh supplies of grace,
What is it makes me choose their ways?

A love to Jesus.

When I my heavenly home perceive,
If still to earth my soul should cleave,
What then will make me glad to leave?

A call from Jesus.

When I have left this wilderness,
And reached the shores of perfect peace,
What then will constitute my bliss?

A heaven in Jesus.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2006

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

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

*Sermon preached at the Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Societies at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on September 9th, 2006*

Text: "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1. 11).

Last Lord's day we received into church membership a lady who, up to about three years ago, had never heard that there were such people as Strict Baptists. In receiving her I mentioned that word of Boaz to Ruth, "Thou art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore," and I made this remark – that she would find that we have many sins, and many faults, and many failures, but she would find two things: that we have a good God, and we have a good gospel.

Do you ever have to thank the Lord for the gospel of the grace of God? Didn't the Apostle Paul love it! Didn't he realise what it meant to him! Didn't he speak exalted language of it: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"! Ashamed of self, but "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." You will find all the saints in the New Testament and all the saints down the ages have been marked by this: they have all been lovers of the gospel. I feel it is a great point in the life of a young person or an older person when for the first time they find a sweet attraction in the gospel. It is something that they need. It is what they want; nothing else will do. Well I am sure of one thing, the Apostle Paul never exaggerated. But what sublime language is this: "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," and Paul knew what he meant. It is a glorious gospel.

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God." This glorious gospel had its eternal origin in the covenant of grace in the plan of salvation. The eternal Father viewing the whole human race ruined through sin, ruined through the Fall, choosing a people, ordaining them to eternal life, giving them into the hands of His beloved Son, setting Him up as their Surety, their Saviour, their everlasting All. Everything decreed, everything sure, salvation planned. Now that is the everlasting origin of this glorious gospel. Apart from God's eternal purposes in the covenant of grace there would be no gospel. If man had never fallen there would have been no need of a gospel. O but to see the mercy of God in it! To see the aboundings of grace in it. To see God's glory bound up in it. A way of

salvation provided through the glorious Person and glorious work of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now perhaps some of you will say: You cannot really say that the covenant of grace is the gospel. Well, the gospel is the glorious proclamation of what was planned in it, those eternal covenant purposes, those purposes fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, those eternal covenant purposes applied by the Spirit of God to sinners' hearts. Now it is a "glorious gospel."

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God." Beloved friends, its glory lies here: that it sets forth a salvation in which God does everything and the poor sinner nothing. Now that is the glory of it. The wonder is that it works in two ways, and these two ways are completely united, completely harmonious. The gospel plan is all for the honour and glory of God, and it is all for the good of poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinners. And the wonder of it that those two things flow together. Those two things can never be separated: God's glory and His people's salvation. O this glorious gospel!

It is a glorious gospel to sinners who feel their need of it. It is not a glorious gospel to the world. It is not a glorious gospel to someone who is just a formal Christian. It is not a glorious gospel to a person who week by week sits in a Strict Baptist chapel and never once feels his need of a Saviour. But to those who by the Spirit are brought to feel their need – sinners condemned, the judgment day before, eternity before, lost, ruined, guilty, unable to save themselves, unable to help themselves – what a glorious gospel it is when it comes with these tidings of salvation so full, so free, for the worst of sinners, on mercy's ground, through the Saviour's precious blood! Tell me, has the gospel ever been made glorious to you? And especially that glorious Person, Jesus the Son of God, who is the sum and substance of the gospel.

You see, the psalmist put it like this: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Not the people that hear it. "Blessed is the people that *know* the joyful sound." Gadsby says, "The soul that knows it lives." And you see, this glorious gospel of the grace of God was sweetly prefigured when the year of jubilee came and when the jubilee trumpet was blown. And never forget that the Holy Ghost has specially mentioned that the jubilee trumpet had to be blown on the day of atonement. No gospel, no trumpet. No jubilee apart from the atonement. And what did the jubilee trumpet mean, what did it signify? Well, if there was a slave, he was freed. If there was a person in prison, he could come forth. If there was one in debt, his debt was cancelled. O what a glorious sound it was – that jubilee trumpet – to those in debt, to those who were slaves, to those in prison! If a man had no need, if he was not a slave, if he was a master, if he never owed a penny in his life, if the

thought of being in prison was laughable to him, he might have heard the jubilee trumpet with interest, he might have understood what it meant – but it was not glorious to him, friends, was it? But to that poor slave, and to that poor captive, that glorious sound, the jubilee trumpet “proclaiming liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” And then Isaiah said that one day Messiah would come and He would fulfil this: the opening of the prison to the captives, the paying of the debt; debts cancelled, prison doors opened, slaves set free.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” This glorious gospel entirely suits the sinner’s need; that sinner who has nothing to pay, that sinner who feels he is guilty, that sinner who has no ability to save himself. And the gospel, under the power of the Holy Spirit, is a glorious gospel when it comes to him right where he is: when it points to a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, when it speaks of a debt cancelled in the atonement, when it speaks of an almighty Saviour able to save even unto the uttermost, and willing, when it speaks of a perfect righteousness for those that have none, when it speaks of mercy for the chief of sinners, when it speaks of everlasting love. O you see there is a glory in the gospel. Tell me, has the gospel ever been made glorious to you? You will not contradict Paul on this.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It is something like the good Samaritan, you know. That poor, wounded man was lying there helpless. Now the priest, the Levite, they passed by on the other side. “A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.” And that is the glory of the gospel, it comes right where you are, it finds you out. Like the child in Ezekiel 16, cast out in loathsomeness and blood in the day of its nativity, but the Lord says, “I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee ... Live; yea, I said unto thee ... Live.” The gospel, like the good Samaritan, came right where he was and did everything for him.

I remember a quaint old Lancashire preacher speaking on this. He said, “Have you ever thought, it was not just that the priest and the Levite were unwilling, but the Samaritan had the oil with him, and he had the wine, and he had the bandages, and he had the beast to put the poor man on, and he had the two pence to pay for him.” And he quaintly spoke of how the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He comes where a lost, ruined, guilty sinner is, has got everything that he needs. Now that is the glory of the gospel. But it was this with the good Samaritan and the wounded man: he poured it right into his wounds. It is that application by the Holy Spirit of God to your needy soul that makes this gospel of the blessed God glorious.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” Well, the wonder of wonders is this, that it completely meets the needy sinner’s case, it is all

for the honour and glory of God. It glorifies His mercy, it glorifies His love, it glorifies His compassion, it glorifies His justice as that is satisfied in the atonement. Every attribute glorified in the gospel of the grace of God. "The glorious gospel of the blessed God." And it centres in Christ. That is where it is glorious. A glorious Person, Jesus the Son of God, a glorious work, the work of redemption, bringing in an everlasting righteousness and then laying down His life a sacrifice; dying, rising again. O, the glories of the Lamb before the Father's throne! The glory of that everlasting salvation. Then all these things bound up with the Lord Jesus, the glory of His ability to save, the glory of His willingness to save. And what glory in those sweet invitations of the gospel, how glorious they are! And what glory in the promises, how glorious they are!

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God." The wonderful thing is it satisfies. So you have all those beautiful comparisons: the green pastures, to which the Good Shepherd leads His little flock and causes them to lie down. These green pastures of the glorious gospel. All the precious truths of the gospel, all the precious doctrines of the gospel, so many green pastures. They satisfy; that is the glory. The world does not satisfy, Satan does not satisfy, religion does not satisfy, self does not satisfy; all these things disappoint. But the glory of the gospel is that it satisfies, however deep your need, however great your want. O these green pastures of the gospel that satisfy the hungry sheep of Christ's fold! You see, green pastures; the sheep have been feeding in these green pastures ever since Adam fell, but they are still green, they have not yet withered, they never will. They are not brown, dry, arid. Green pastures. And the sheep of Christ's fold do not want any different pastures. "My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord." O this glorious gospel of the blessed God, how it satisfies! "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of My house; and I shall make them to drink of the river of My pleasures." So, you see, the water of eternal life, that is the glory of the gospel, "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," flowing from the smitten rock to living souls, thirsty souls, longing souls. And these streams of living water that flow in this glorious gospel satisfy. "Drink and for ever live."

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God." And then the bread of eternal life. The feast of grace. O how this glorious gospel satisfies! Salvation for the chief of sinners.

"A feast is now prepared for thee,
In spite of all thy unbelief;
A feast of mercy, sweetly free
For sinners and the sinners' chief."

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” This glorious gospel has opened up a new and living way even to heaven for the chief of sinners, on mercy’s ground without money, without price. Grace is free, and the work begun is carried on, and the Lord who began carries on and continues and completes it. And the sinner shall be brought safely through and landed safe in heaven. You see, the eternal safety of the people of God, that is part of this glorious gospel. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus,” this is part of the glorious gospel. That wonderful fulness of grace in Christ for empty sinners, this is part of this glorious gospel.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” And this glorious gospel has a transforming effect when it is applied by the Holy Spirit. It can take a Manasseh, it can take a Mary Magdalene, and it can make them eminent saints of God. There is no power on earth can do that. The best of men cannot accomplish that. There have been some mighty kings, but with the best desires they could not do that with their subjects. O but the transforming power of the gospel, to change lions into lambs! Surely, surely some of you can bear witness to that transforming power in your heart and in your life. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” But to think of Manasseh, the chief of sinners, making the streets of Jerusalem run with blood. And to think of Mary Magdalene possessed of seven devils. And what hope can there be, what help can there be, what deliverance can there be? Do you believe it?

“That sacred flood, from Jesus’ veins,
Was free to take away
A Mary’s or Manasseh’s stains,
Or sins more vile than they.”

O that is the glory of the “gospel of the blessed God,” that,

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

And the same power, the same value, the same efficacy as when the dear Saviour hung bleeding, dying on the cross. I take it that is what that word means when John says, “I beheld a Lamb as it had been slain.” For Christ is the glory of the gospel. Without Christ there would be no gospel.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” Now, beloved friends, over the ages this has been the glory of our churches – this “glorious gospel of the blessed God.” That has been the glory of our churches, you know. That is why people come sometimes and they cannot understand the plainness of our services and the plainness of our chapel buildings –

where is the glory? The glory is in the “gospel of the blessed God.” That is why it has always been the custom in our chapels to have the large pulpit Bible central to our worship. And there is the glory there that has never faded and never will fail. You see there was a time when covenant love, covenant faithfulness, covenant blood, covenant salvation were the glory of our pulpits and preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Now my burden at present, beloved friends, is this: how few seem to be raised up to preach this glorious gospel. It is a glorious gospel we have to preach. I understand Mr. J.K. Popham sometimes used to say at the end of the Lord’s day, “I think that I have preached you a poor sermon but it is not a poor gospel.” But there seem to be so few being raised up to preach this glorious gospel. If the Lord withdraws the gift of the gospel ministry from any church, any people, any denomination, then everything withers up and everything dies, and then it is Ichabod. May there be that burden, that concern that there might be able, godly, faithful men raised up by the Lord to preach. O may this be the burden that what they preach might be “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” Mind you if the Lord does the work, if the Lord raises them, if the Lord teaches them, if the Lord equips them, then it *will* be “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”

I want to speak very carefully, lovingly and affectionately. It is very seldom I hear anyone preach but sometimes I hear sad reports about the preaching, that it could not really be described as “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” Now I am not sitting in judgment, and I want to speak lovingly and carefully and advisedly. Paul said. “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now that is the “glorious gospel of the blessed God”; it all centres there. I know, beloved friends, there are other things, different things, incidental things, but that is the glorious gospel and that is the glory of the gospel. In a word it is this:

“Point out the place where grace abounds;
Direct us to the bleeding wounds
Of our incarnate God.”

It is only this glorious gospel that can ever really meet the guilty sinner’s need. It is only this glorious gospel that the Lord will bless. It is only this glorious gospel which will bring any true reviving in the professing church of God.

“No news can suit a ruined race,
But sovereign, free, eternal grace;
No other gospel can impart
Life, peace and pardon to the heart.”

“The only gospel we can own
Sets Jesus Christ upon the throne;
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtained on Calvary’s rugged tree.”

Now, as I understand it, as I trust it has been burnt in my heart, that is “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” And the Lord has promised to own it and to honour it. He said, “And I, if I be lifted up,” on the cross, in the resurrection, in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It is to speak of divine certainties. John Kent, speaking of this glorious river that flows in the gospel, says, “There’s not one *if* or *but* to foul the waters there.” We do not want *ifs* and *buts* in our preaching. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God,” these divine certainties, these covenant realities, these things that cannot be shaken, which shall remain. Not a yea and nay gospel. The gospel preached, says Paul, “by me and Silvanus and Timotheus” – in other words they all preached the same glorious gospel – “was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea ... and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” How the apostle opens it up in Hebrews chapter 6, “these immutable things”! These things that can never change, can never be shaken. And what is the effect of the preaching of them and of the application of the Holy Ghost? Listen, “strong consolation.” That is what the gospel gives under the power of the Spirit, “strong consolation, to them who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.”

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” But if I may come to another point, gently and carefully and tenderly; what about the hearing of the gospel? Is there as much of the love for this glorious gospel there once was? Is there the same desire for this glorious gospel that there once was? I would speak in the fear of the Lord. You know there has been a spirit growing up, and perhaps in older persons rather than younger persons; the great point, praying in going to the house of God, “Let the minister quote that favourite hymn, or may he quote that favourite text that was blessed to me many years ago.” If he does, it is a good day and if he does not, it is disappointment. That is not feeding on the glorious gospel, that is not the sinner panting for salvation, and that is not that longing for the blood. Well, how would such hearers have followed one of those sermons by such a minister as Mr. Philpot or Mr. Gadsby?

The Lord said the time would come when there would be “a famine of hearing” of the Word of God, that is, a famine of hearing this glorious gospel. Not so much a famine of God’s Word (there are more Bibles

than ever) but a famine of hearing. We need preachers of this glorious gospel; but we need a people prepared by the Spirit of God to hear this glorious gospel, and to love this glorious gospel, and to value this glorious gospel. Otherwise a hearer can be satisfied with anything. Good gospel hearers make good gospel preachers. I came across a thing recently which that eminent Scottish covenanter preacher, John Livingstone, said. I think he was the man who in 1630 was so abundantly blessed when that wonderful reviving of vital godliness broke out in Scotland. But Livingstone said this, "It is those longing eyes of the hearers that make me preach." He said, "I can't help but preach when I stand there and I see those longing, hungering eyes of my hearers."

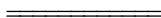
Beloved friends, I leave the question with you. People complain about our preachers today. Have we got hearers coming to the sanctuary with those longing, hungering eyes?

"I must have Christ as All in all,
Or sink in ruin, guilt, and thrall."

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God." Well, you have heard my burden, my exercise, that the Lord will bless us with preachers of this glorious gospel; and that the Lord will bless us with hearers of this glorious gospel. Above all, that the Holy Spirit will use this glorious gospel and bless it and apply it and seal it home to the good of the people and to the honour and glory of His name. You know what our hymnwriter says,

"Then shall I love Thy gospel more,
And ne'er forget Thy word,
When I have felt its quickening power,
To draw me near the Lord."

Beloved friends, may we know more of that in our churches and in our hearts. "The glorious gospel of the blessed God."



O the great things that private prayer has done with God! (Psa. 31. 22). O the great mercies that have been obtained by private prayer! (Psa. 38. 8, 9). And O the great threatenings that have been diverted by private prayer! And O the great judgments that have been removed by private prayer! And O the great judgments that have been prevented by private prayer!

Thomas Brooks

The best riches and the sweetest mercies God usually gives to His people when they are in their closets upon their knees.

Thomas Brooks

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETIES NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester
on Saturday, September 9th, 2006*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. N.H. Roe read Ephesians chapter 4 and then spoke as follows:

I will just make, as helped, a few comments, particularly from Ephesians 5 verses 1 and 2: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

It is very evident, as the apostle writes this epistle to the brethren in Ephesus, that he was writing from imprisonment in Rome. He refers a number of times to himself as “the prisoner of the Lord,” incarcerated there, not for evil doing but for the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ – and as the apostle both preached and testified of the glorious truths of the gospel, not only by word but also in his life.

One point I just want to notice is this as we see it evident in the very opening of this epistle. Though Paul was undoubtedly subject to the many privations that his imprisonment must have incurred, yet see how he expresses both his love for and his delight in those things that he had received through the riches of divine grace. As he expresses in the opening verses of the first chapter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” O how the very heart of the apostle was thus warmed and moved with the realisation of the wonders of redeeming love and mercy, of the preciousness of his Lord and Saviour! How also he evidences his very real concern for the glory of his triune God and for the real, spiritual welfare of the people of God! May that indeed be our concern in our gatherings here today.

Particularly this morning may we have, in all that we request, that single eye to the honour and glory of our God and Saviour, and as well in our petitions, seeking for the Lord’s blessing indeed to rest upon the company of the churches which we represent. Yes, there are many things obviously in our day that do trouble and distress us, in regard to the nation as a whole, but surely we cannot be unconcerned with regard to what the situation is amongst us as companies of the Lord’s people. We have seen over the years a very great decline in the numbers that gather with us. O we would not for one moment despise the day of small things, but may our eyes and hearts be up unto the Lord, as expressed in the language of the psalmist: “Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.” And with regard to our

prayers this morning, and as we look at what is not only in these words I have read by way of a text, but in the whole context of the chapter that I have just read to you, how we are reminded not only with respect to our hearing, but also to our attending to these blessed instructions and these gospel exhortations!

How essential for us is the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit of God! I believe, though there are many things with and amongst us which we have cause to mourn over, yet we cannot surely deny that which the Lord spoke to that remnant of His people in the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest through His servant Haggai – that “My spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” O may that ever be increasingly our concern, that we may know for ourselves personally, and amongst us as companies of the Lord’s people, that gracious abiding, that blessed presence of the Holy Spirit. How essential it is for all that pertains to the worship and service of our God!

As we just look briefly this morning at what is set before us, there are these exhortations of the gospel to the people of God. Remember that all the exhortations of the gospel are ever accompanied with direction to seek divine strength and help, and not to trust in ourselves in human weakness. Ah, what a mercy it is that all the fulness of grace and truth is found and treasured up in our Lord Jesus Christ! May we know indeed that grace so to seek unto Him for the realisation more and more of that blessed indwelling of the gracious presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus, through His enabling grace, in the outwalking and the outworking in our lives of those things that pertain to the honour and the glory of our God.

Just three points, then, I want here to mention and to leave with you in these exhortations of the gospel set before us in this fourth chapter and in these words in the opening verses of chapter five. “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” O notice essentially, and how the apostle dwells upon it, the blessed reality through divine grace of this relationship not only as the children of God, but as the “*dear children*” of God, and these being born “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” It is into that relationship (and O the wonder of it!) that sinners saved by grace are brought to that oneness and union with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle also underlines.

Now then, to these dear children of God he says, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love.” And in respect to the same, there is the gospel exhortation to both unity in the spirit and to holiness; that is to a walk and conversation as it becometh the gospel, and to that real and genuine love, obviously to our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the outworking of it, in love one to another, remembering that we are

brethren. And O is not this the glory of those that are the children of God, not that we are righteous in ourselves, but that we are redeemed sinners; and not that we have no sin or that there is nothing which we have to mourn over and confess daily before our God, but that through the riches of grace, as sinners saved by grace, our sins are forgiven for His own great name's sake. O may we know what it is increasingly to live and to walk in both the light and the consolation of the same! "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."

Just referring again to a remark I made a little earlier, in respect to how in all the exhortations of the gospel, we are ever directed to seek divine assistance and not to trust in human weakness. And is not this that which surely characterises those that are the children of God? Can we not speak of the same, I trust, from our own experience, that as the dear children of God, if there is one thing we are brought to realise, it is our utter helplessness and our complete dependence upon Jesus Christ for all things, and that surely, increasingly realised the further we go on in the Christian life. Surely those of us that may have been many years in the way, are we any less dependent upon the Lord, any less indebted to Him?

You will remember how our Lord Jesus Christ testified of this fact on that occasion when those mothers brought their infants to Him that He might bless them, and His disciples were for turning them away. He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." And He went on to emphasise that "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Now it is not childishness that we are directed to there. What is the characteristic that the Lord is emphasising? Look at those infants their mothers brought. Each one of them was utterly helpless. They were wholly dependent upon their parent for all things. So it is with us, I verily believe, and increasingly realise: if thus through grace we are amongst the living family of God, we are brought to realise our helplessness, our utter dependence upon the Lord for all things, for all that pertains to life and to godliness. What the apostle exhorts here, should not these be the things that exercise and concern us as it applies to our personal lives, to our family situations, and to our walk with and amongst the companies of the Lord's people collectively?

He says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He exhorts us to a walk and conversation as becometh the gospel, to what end and purpose? That we might "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." And one thing here especially is emphasised in these words before us. He says, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Ah friends, is that not a most important and vital thing as it concerns not only our spiritual welfare personally, but with respect to the glory of our Lord, and

the welfare of the churches amongst us. You know, it was said of brethren of old, how they loved one another. O remember the emphasis that is placed upon it, in all that the Apostle Paul sets forth. Read again what Peter has to say, and go also to the Epistles of John himself, and does it not all emanate from the very words of our Lord Jesus Himself? What did He say to His disciples there in that upper room? He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The law required that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. The blessed teaching of the gospel of God's grace is not loving our neighbour merely as ourselves, but loving one another as our Lord Jesus Christ has loved us.

And friends, can we begin to fathom the wonder and the depth of that love of the Lord Jesus? See where all that pertains to life and godliness in respect to the people of God, according to the blessed teaching of the Word of God, of the truth of the gospel, directs us. It is not, friends, to Sinai. It is to Calvary, as the apostle says here, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." O what a wondrous savour is that offering and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ! There in heaven itself, it is upon this ground that we ever have access and acceptance with the Father. Remember our Lord Jesus Christ has entered into heaven itself, "there to appear in the presence of God for us." O may we know the savour, the sanctifying influence of these things more and more in our own hearts and lives, and amongst us as companies of churches.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

But I will leave those remarks there. May the Lord add His blessing.

Hymns 383, 531 and 609 were sung during the meeting. Mr. Roe opened the meeting with prayer, and the following prayed: Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone), Mr. T. Abbott (Ossett), Mr. D.W. Kerley (Swavesey), Mr. P. Hill (Manchester), Mr. D.J. Christian (Luton, Bethel) and Mr. F.A. Ince (Fitzwilliam). Mr. Roe closed the meeting with prayer.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 516, Mr. Richard Field (Croydon) asked God's blessing on the meeting.

Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Societies) read 1 Samuel 7, verses 5 to 12, and then spoke as follows:

There is just one point I would make from those few words we have read out of God's sacred and holy Word and that is this. In the previous chapters of Samuel you will remember how the children of Israel fell very grievously in the days of Eli and of his sons; how they took the ark of the Lord on to the battlefield, thinking the ark would save them. But now we come to the days of repentance and turning back, by God's grace, to God. Now it is not the ark they look to but the God of the ark. So when the Philistines came against them on this occasion, sanctifying grace had begun to work in the heart of the nation, and it was to the God of the ark they prayed, and the Lord heard them. How careful we should be lest we substitute anything, whatever it may be, for the God of the ark. It is as one has just reminded us in prayer, that it is not for our sakes that prayer is answered, but for His name's sake. That is the ground of prayer, it is the plea of prayer, it is the reason for the answers of prayer in the church, for His name's sake. When the Lord answers for His name's sake then there are the Ebenezers raised as Samuel could raise his, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

CHAIRMAN: Now it is my pleasure to welcome you to this business meeting. We are thankful to be in the North again with our dear friends up here. We desire your continued prayerful interest in the work of the Societies.

The Secretary of the Societies, Mr. H. Mercer, then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD AID AND POOR RELIEF SOCIETIES

Mr. Chairman and dear friends,

We look back over the last twelve months with mixed feelings. There has been much to cast us down, both as we view our own spiritual condition and also the low state of our churches. Despite this we are thankful once more to record the faithfulness of our God who has maintained us through the year. We are under the Lord's chastening hand for our sins. May we be humbled and brought to real repentance for our sins and know the return among us of the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord is taking home to Himself some who have been pillars in Zion, and we earnestly pray that as sheep are removed from our midst, lambs may appear in the fold. There are evidences here and there that we have not been completely forsaken, although we fear at times that this is the case. May the Lord give us a spirit of wrestling prayer for a truly spiritual reviving and to "turn again our captivity, as the streams in the south."

At the Annual Meetings held in London earlier this year, considerable changes to the Committee were announced. At this time last year there were eleven Committee members, and of these, five either resigned or did not seek re-election at the Annual Meetings. Five new members were nominated by the Committee and these nominees were all appointed by the subscribers. Representations were made about the method of appointment to the Committee and whether the Committee was really representative of our churches as a whole.

The feelings of the subscribers were noted, and the Committee has invited a friend from the North to serve.

The burdens borne by the Committee are numerous and often bring it into distress because of the nature of the issues that it has to consider. There are many concerns about our churches, and the Committee seeks to defend the truths that are dear to us and are the principles upon which we stand. May we each as brethren dwell together in unity.

Progress is being made with the Charity Commission scheme which is intended to bring together the Gospel Standard Aid Society, the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Society and the Gospel Standard Convalescent Fund. The second draft of the scheme is being considered by the sub-committee appointed to examine it, and their observations will be discussed at a Committee meeting to be held shortly. It is expected that our subscribers will be asked to approve the new constitution after discussion at a meeting called for that purpose early next year. This, of course, assumes that the Charity Commission will approve the revisions to the draft document. The scheme will incorporate rules for the election of Committee members, the qualification of subscribers and the general governance of the Societies.

The financial state of the various funds is satisfactory. The Gospel Standard Aid Society has income which exceeds its expenditure, largely because under the rules of the Society distribution can only be made to ministers and their dependants. The number of needy cases has declined in recent years. The income of the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Society is not sufficient to meet its expenditure, being less in total than the income of the Aid Society, and more grants are paid from this fund. Bringing the two funds together will be financially beneficial. The funds of these two Societies have been enhanced by the proceeds of the sale of Ebenezer Chapel, Worthing, which amounted to £185,000 to be divided equally between the two Societies. The Gospel Standard Convalescent Fund is dormant, any needs of our friends being met from the Poor Relief Society. The Committee will be pleased to hear from our friends of any needy cases that may be discovered who are eligible for financial help from the Societies.

The Gadsby Memorial Fund is, as you know, a most useful fund, not being restricted by the same rules that apply to the two main Societies. A wider distribution of benefit is permissible and this takes place annually in November. The Secretary awaits completed forms from chapel correspondents who are asked to inform the Committee of this fund of any who attend their chapel who are in need. Please remember this fund when considering the beneficiaries of chapel collections. We would thank our friends and supporters for their continuing financial help and support of the funds.

The Magazine Fund, which is the distributor of the *Gospel Standard and Friendly Companion*, has been in surplus for the last two years because the production costs have reduced through the introduction of modern technology. The saving has been realised by a reduction in printing costs. The Gospel Standard Trust has for a number of years generously supported the Magazine Fund, but, in view of the surplus that has arisen, the Trust Committee has asked that the grant that they make be used to reduce the heavy cost of postage on magazines dispatched to the United States and to Australia. The Committee has not yet approved the magazine prices for 2007, but no increase in the cost to

subscribers here at home appears to be necessary. It is expected that the cost to subscribers in the United States and in Australia will be reduced by about 25% overall on account of reduced postage costs.

We are thankful that our Editors have been enabled to continue their labours and seek that the Lord will bless the content of the magazines to our readers. A few subscriptions to the magazines are cancelled each year, mostly because of readers having failing eyesight or passing away. The number of magazines sent out each month remains roughly the same as younger friends take their own copies.

Following the retirement from the Committee of two Funding Trustees, it is necessary to appoint two more. At the Annual General Meeting in London in April Mr. D.J. Christian was appointed, and the Committee has nominated Mr. R.D.G. Field to fill the second vacancy. The resolution will be put to the subscribers at this meeting to confirm Mr. Field's appointment.

Mention has been made on previous occasions that the Committee welcomes new subscribers who wholeheartedly hold to our distinct position, and there are forms in the chapel lobby by which to apply.

Once again we sincerely thank our friends here at Manchester for their kindness in making the chapel available for this meeting. We are not unmindful of all the work that precedes today and it is much appreciated.

The Committee sends its prayerful good wishes to our friends overseas, and value the prayerful support that they receive from friends both far and near. May the Lord be pleased to revive us again. "Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee."

May there be a real spirit of prayer given to us earnestly to seek an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Zion that in these last days there may be a clear manifestation of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit among us.

The Chairman said that if any friends had any questions to ask Mr. Mercer, he would be pleased to attend to those during the interval. He also thanked Mr. Mercer for all the work he does on behalf of the Societies.

The Chairman then put forward the resolution appointing Mr. R.D.G. Field (Pastor, The Dicker) a Funding Trustee. It was proposed by Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) and seconded by Mr. D.W. Kerley (Swavesey) and carried *nem con*.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends,

Once more we are pleased to have the opportunity to give a short report on the work of Bethesda.

We wish to begin by paying tribute to the hard work and loyalty shown by the Bethesda staff through another year. It is perhaps easily forgotten that care work can be extremely demanding physically, and often much patience is needed in dealing with the elderly. There continue to be tokens of true thankfulness shown by the residents for the care they receive, and so it is good to have an

opportunity to thank publicly those who work so hard, in whatever capacity. All of our staff Job Descriptions contain the statement that “in Bethesda we endeavour to work together as a family, helping each other whenever we can, to promote a happy and contented working environment.” This is certainly our aim.

Since we met on this occasion last year, twelve Bethesda residents have passed away, many having reached a good age. Some years ago, at a staff training day, our now-retired Home Manager, Miss Marion Hyde, in speaking to some of the younger staff, emphasised the importance of not becoming hardened to dying and death. To nurse a resident through their last days, and to be with them when they are finally taken, is a solemn thing, and can be a sad time in the Home when a resident has been known and loved, sometimes for many years.

At these meetings last year we said that we wished to share with you, our friends and supporters, our anxiety over the large number of vacancies in the Homes, higher than ever before in the history of Bethesda. We went on to say that the Committee would, of necessity, have to take early action to contain this serious position.

As a result of these deep concerns, a few weeks later we announced the decision that the Tunbridge Wells Home would close as soon as satisfactory arrangements had been made for the accommodation of the residents, either in one of the other Bethesda Homes, or in another Home of their choice.

The difficulties that arose locally and elsewhere are well known to you and do not need to be repeated again today. However, the Committee was given strength and unity to pursue the course they felt the Lord had laid upon them, and after many frustrating months the Home finally closed two weeks ago, on August 25th. The whole event has, of course, been an extremely sad one. The Committee would far rather be opening Homes, not closing them, but the solemn state of Zion we know, with declining congregations, and fewer seeking admission to residential care – not that this is a problem peculiar to our own denomination. Care homes, particularly smaller homes, are closing all over the country as the government sees residential care as a last resort, preferring to fund extra care in a person’s own home, which in many cases is a much cheaper option.

Of the fourteen residents at Tunbridge Wells at the time the closure announcement was made, eight transferred to the Brighton Home, two moved to other Homes of their choice, two were assessed as now needing nursing or EMI care, and two have passed away.

We recognise the difficult conditions under which the Tunbridge Wells staff have worked over the past few months. Many remained cheerful for the sake of the residents and this we appreciate. Some of the staff had worked at the Home for many years, in one case twenty years. The Home Manager, Miss Kathleen Jakeman, had worked at the Home for nineteen years, eleven years of which she was Manager. We sincerely thank all members of staff for their years of service to Bethesda. We do not forget those who have served on the Home Committee, and the ministers and others who have regularly visited the Home, and in particular the local pastor, Mr. Harold Jempson, for his ministry and pastoral concern towards the Home.

No decisions have yet been taken regarding the future of the property. The Committee is seeking to examine all the options, and consultants have been engaged to advise. As a general rule, a charity wishing to dispose of a property

has a duty, to quote, “to secure the best terms reasonably obtainable.” In exceptional circumstances the Charities Act permits a sale on more favourable terms if the disposal may be of benefit to the charity or to help in the advancement of its objectives. There have already been several expressions of interest in purchasing the property, including local interest in establishing a Christian home. The Committee will need to examine any approaches in the light of the current legislation, but it must at all times do what is best for Bethesda.

At the Annual Meetings held at Westminster Chapel in April, I mentioned that the Bethesda Fund Committee was undertaking a review of the way in which committee members were appointed and re-elected, and to examine whether a membership charity might be more appropriate. Detailed proposals have now been submitted to the Committee of the Gospel Standard Societies and we are awaiting their comments on what we have drawn up. We undertook to keep subscribers and Bethesda supporters informed of progress and will do so as soon as we have the Societies’ response.

During the year, we have had heavy expenditure in the Homes, particularly at Brighton and Harpenden. During the last month or so, the boiler at the Brighton Home has been replaced with twin condensing boilers at a cost of over £17,000. At Harpenden, extensive work has been necessary to the electrical wiring to meet the Electricity at Work Regulations, and the total cost has been around £30,000. There was considerable disruption in the day-to-day life of the Home while the work was carried out, but the staff and residents coped extremely well in spite of the difficulties.

We are thankful to report that three major legacies have been received, one for the Brighton Home and two for the Harpenden Home. We desire to use these legacies for the improvement of the Homes’ facilities, rather than general revenue to meet running costs. At Brighton we are hoping to improve the parking facilities, and we are also examining the possibility of providing a visitors’ toilet near the entrance to the Home. At Harpenden, we have drawn up preliminary plans for the provision of a dedicated short-stay room large enough for couples wishing to come into care for short periods. We have found that existing rooms which have become vacant, and could be used for short stays, are frequently awaiting redecoration or other work, or are not suitably furnished. There seems to be a real demand for a facility of this kind, although it is unlikely that work could start before next spring.

Since the earliest days Bethesda has always maintained a list of names known as the Waiting List. This has sometimes led to misunderstanding as it sounds as though those people on the list are actually waiting to enter a Home pending a suitable vacancy. This is not usually the case as some people remain on the list for many years, and some never do enter a Home. The list has therefore been renamed as the List of Approved Applicants. At the moment there are fifty-three names on the list. We would encourage anyone who feels that care in a Bethesda Home may be appropriate in the not too distant future to make application now, so that the formalities can be completed before an urgent need for care arises.

At the Brighton Home there is still one remaining vacancy following the transfer of the residents from Tunbridge Wells; there are seven vacancies at Harpenden and three at Studley.

The Bethesda Flatlets at Harpenden and Redhill continue to fill a real need for those not yet ready to come into care. The vacant flatlet at Harpenden which

had been unoccupied for some time, was again occupied at the beginning of the year. Interest has also been shown in the vacant flatlet at Redhill. At Harpenden the proximity of the Bethesda Home enables the flatlets' residents to participate in the life of the Home. At Redhill we do thank Mr. and Mrs. Hayden and all the chapel friends for the interest taken in the Flatlets and the time given to seeing to the welfare of the residents.

We appreciate that our northern friends still miss the Haydock Home which closed in June 2000. Haydock was always a pleasure to visit and the staff always gave a warm welcome. At the present time, in the Harpenden Home we have our friends Miss Rhoda Kershaw and Mr. Sam Biggs from the North, and also Mrs. Chrys Roe, who transferred from Haydock at the time of closure. We know they appreciate the visits made from time to time by those they used to know. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Grimshaw have also been into the Harpenden Home for a short stay.

Although it has been a difficult twelve months, we believe: "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble." Although we may see many changes, He is One that "changeth not." May the Lord Himself be with us still, to guide, direct and overrule all the affairs of Bethesda according to His eternal will.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for all he does for Bethesda and said Mr. Scott would be pleased to answer any questions during the interval.

CHAIRMAN: The Publications Manager of the Gospel Standard Trust has asked me to tell you that there are three new publications to be available very shortly. First, *Christ as Revealed in the Old Testament* by Mr. S.F. Paul. Secondly, 100 Gadsby's hymns bound together with suitable tunes – this is a new venture. Thirdly, we have republished part of the work on justification by Dr. John Gill which is a very excellent treatise on that very precious doctrine. The Gospel Standard Trust hopes to publish more on a doctrinal basis to reinforce the doctrines we know and love and on which our holy faith is built. We appreciate all that is done by the Gospel Standard Trust in that way and other ways too.

I would reiterate what our Secretary said about the subscribers. Compared with the numbers in our congregations, the subscribers we have to our Societies are really very small. We do welcome those who love the truths that we love, and seek to uphold the things that our forefathers were enabled to set down as a basis for the foundation of the group of churches that we love. We believe it to be a scriptural basis, and we believe that the Lord has honoured it over many years. Even in these days of decline it is a mercy that there are still one or two who are able to acknowledge their support, and we hope that many more will yet feel so moved by the Spirit to also support us.

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 1010, and prayer by the Chairman.

RUTH CLEAVING TO NAOMI

By John Macgowan (1726-1780)

Let us note the difference between these two sisters: Orpah kissed her mother-in-law as an honoured relation; Ruth clave to her with the attachment of a saint. Orpah came along with Naomi to the borders of Moab and went back sorrowing for having lost her. Ruth would not be entreated to go back with her sister, but resolved to cleave to her mother to the loss of all; to cleave to her even amidst the bitterness which the Almighty had brought upon her. Orpah is soon persuaded to depart; all persuasions served only to strengthen Ruth's resolution of following her whithersoever she went and cleaving to her till the latest moments, even in death itself.

When that scribe understood that Jesus had not where to lay His head, he soon dropped his purpose of following Him as his master; but the blind man who was forbidden to cry after Jesus because, truly, his crying was troublesome to the disciples, would not be dissuaded from pursuing his suit and cried out "so much the more" for the opposition he met with. Where the heart is indeed influenced by sovereign grace and drawn by the eternal Father, opposition will only serve to inflame our love and zeal, as oil cast into the fire serves only to increase its ardour, instead of extinguishing the flame; but if the convictions are merely natural, a small matter of opposition will be sufficient to send us back, that we follow no more with Jesus. Only those who are cleansed by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost will cleave to Jesus and His believing church in the dark and clouded day of adversity.

"Intreat me not to leave thee," says amiable Ruth; it was painful to her to hear her mother's entreaties. She knew not how to disobey, yet in the present case she deemed disobedience even a virtue. Her soul clave to her with a warm, an indissoluble attachment; she could do anything with greater readiness than part with her beloved mother-in-law. What a censure is this history upon such persons of that mutual relation, of mothers and daughters-in-law, who are so far from cleaving to one another that they are scarce able to live in the same town, much less under the same roof with one another. I would recommend this pleasing, sacred history to the attentive regard of all who stand in that endearing relation.

How little of the maxims of the world is here discovered in the conduct of this godly Moabitess! How little of that false, that hollow-hearted friendship so disgracing to mankind! The rich man hath friends enow. But how nobly opposite to the custom of men to cleave to Naomi in her deepest adversity! How like is this to the friendship of the

heavenly Friend of sinners, who loveth at all times, was born for adversity, and sticketh closer than a brother!

Ruth clave to her mother-in-law. To come at the force of the word, used by the divine historian to set forth her warm and close attachment, we may a little note the sense in which it is used in some other places of inspired writ. That great master of sacred diction, the royal prophet, the princely singer in God's Israel, twice useth the same word as here in the text to signify his own affinity with the dust. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust" (Psa. 119. 25). "For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth" (Psa. 44. 25). Those who are acquainted with themselves cannot be at a loss to know how close their connection is with that dust from whence they were taken and to which they shall return.

In Psalm 63. 8, the same word is rendered, "followeth hard." "My soul followeth hard after Thee." What he means by following hard, you see in Psalm 42. 1: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." This shows the intense longing of the psalmist's soul for the pleasing enjoyment of his Maker's presence, that he could no more live without it than the hunted hart could comfortably endure without the cooling stream. So godly Ruth "followed hard" to share in her mother's concerns, whether they should prove favourable or adverse; which naturally supposes that there was a suitableness of temper and interests, and that she had a perfect union with her in hopes and views.

To follow Christ consistently in His ordinances, such a union in heart and affection with His believing church is necessary. They are but unfruitful vines, unprofitable members of gospel churches, who have interests and views separate from or opposite unto the common views and interest of Christ in His church. Yet we shall find many who most evidently give the concerns of the Redeemer's kingdom, at farthest, but a second place in their care and assiduity. Can it with any propriety be said of such that they are crucified to the world and the world to them, that they deny themselves and take up their cross daily, that they love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart, with all their souls and with all their minds? Look to it, my brethren, that your first and principal concern be the welfare of the church, the honour of Jesus and His mediatorial kingdom. If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things shall be added to you, and you shall never have it to say that you have served God for nothing.

That was a well-chosen petition of the royal Hebrew, that he might dwell for ever in the house of the Lord and enquire in His temple. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (Psa. 27. 4). "One thing," as if

there had been no other thing worthy of his notice, much less that had the possession of his heart. He had a kingdom to govern, all the tribes of Israel to direct; but one thing, unconnected with kingly rule, lay warmest on his heart. This one thing was that he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, see the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in His temple. He had all the brilliance of a regal court to attract his attention and allure his desire, but regal magnificence and courtly parade were by no means the objects of David's supreme regard. He had the beauty of kingly majesty every day in his palace to soothe his wishes, but the ultimatum of his desires was to behold the beauty of the Lord; not barely to have a glimpse of it in a transient manner, but to behold it with steady eye; to behold the beauty of the Lord, so that the eye shall be satisfied with seeing. Might I have this "one thing," I think that heaven and earth might reserve all their other beauties to themselves.

This "one thing" he "desired of the Lord." He well knew it was not in man in general, nor in himself in particular, to command the precious, the much-desired blessing; that it was not to be found in the horrid din of noisy war, nor in the tinselled grandeur of kingly levees. He sought it of the Lord. His heart was resolutely set upon obtaining it, therefore he would seek after it: "that will I seek after." The near and interesting concerns of my numerous family, the softest endearments and nearest attachments of consanguinity [blood relationship], shall never divert me from seeking after this, as my chief, my superlative good. Not all the weighty, the important and arduous concerns of government, nor the deep machinations of war, shall prevent me from seeking Thy face, my God and Father, from beholding Thy face, O blessed Immanuel.

In the church, only in the believing church, are the brightest glories of our gracious God, the pure and illustrious beauties of sovereign grace, conspicuous and manifest. There, O believer, thou mayest inquire, and there shalt thou behold His ineffable beauty beaming forth through the Manhood of Jesus.

We often have to keep praying and crying on without any testimony that the Lord hears. This is very discouraging, and seems at times as if it would, if not stop, at least damp all the prayer of the soul. But it will be our mercy if we still call upon His name and seek His face, and a greater mercy still, yea the greatest of all mercies, if He bow down His ear and give a manifest answer.

J.C. Philpot

One rose upon a bush, though a little one, and though not yet blown, proves that which bears it to be a true rose tree.

Burgess

THE TENDER BLADE OF GRACE

A letter from J.C. Philpot to John Grace of Brighton following the death of Mr. Grace's daughter, Lydia, at the age of 18. This letter has appeared before, but we feel it so beautifully and graciously sets out what "the tender blade of grace" is. We believe it is one of the finest things that Mr. Philpot wrote.

My dear friend,

I sincerely desire to sympathise with you and Mrs. Grace in the trying affliction and painful bereavement which you have just sustained in the removal of your beloved daughter. From what you have named of her experience, particularly toward the last, I think there is every ground for a good hope that she was amongst the number of those favoured souls who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and made alive unto God by regenerating grace. Considering her age, mode of bringing up and natural disposition, there was hardly reason to expect a very marked and conspicuous work of grace upon her soul. We hardly know how feeble and faint may be the measure of saving grace in a truly quickened soul, especially if there be great fears of making an insincere profession. It was not as if she had the way of truth to learn for the first time, or any self-righteous profession which had to be pulled down with a strong hand. There could hardly be, therefore, that clear, marked and decided work which we see in persons who have been brought out of the world by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; nor was there, so to speak, that necessity of being taught terrible things in righteousness, which in some cases seem to be almost necessary to burn up the wood, hay and stubble of a legal righteousness. She was evidently sensible of her danger, had often heard the way of salvation pointed out, and the blessed Lord ever held up as the only hope and help for the people of God. We cannot say then how secretly or mysteriously the Lord might have begun or carried on the work of grace upon her soul.

Last evening I happened to open the Bible in the chapel upon Mark 4. 26 and following. I just glanced my eye over the parable, and as I saw something sweet and experimental in it, I expounded it before prayer and preaching. While doing so, I was struck with the expression of a man sleeping and rising night and day, and the seed springing and growing up he knoweth not how. Whether "a man" be a minister, the sower who soweth the seed, or whether he be a believer in general, it seems plain that the lesson which the Lord meant to teach was that man had nothing to do with the matter, and that whether he slept or whether he awoke, he could not contribute one atom to the germination of the seed or the growth of the plant. The earth, by which I presume is meant the heart of man, or rather, the new heart promised, bringeth forth fruit of herself,

independent of the care of man, but wholly dependent upon the rain and sun which come from God. But the blessed Lord goes on to tell us that the work of grace upon the heart resembles the growth of wheat in having first the tender blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

Now I am not going to give you a sermon upon that text, or even to say what I understand by it, but the parable strikes my mind as having some bearing upon poor Lydia's case. You could hardly tell when the seed was first sown in her heart. Most probably it was sown by your own hand. But you slept, and you rose night and day, and the seed sprang and grew up you knew not how. You might and did supplicate the Lord on her behalf, and many others did the same, but neither you nor they could contribute one mite to the germination of the seed or the growth of the plant. Her heart, made honest and sincere, we hope, by the grace of God, brought forth fruit of itself. You were watching to see the seed spring up and grow, and in due time you saw a little, tender blade which grew up you knew not how. I much love tenderness in the things of God. Josiah's heart was tender, and the Lord took blessed notice of it. From all I have heard about poor Lydia, there was a tenderness in her religious feelings. She was afraid of presumption, hypocrisy and making a profession without the power. All this looked well as far as it went. But as long as there is only the blade, you can scarcely tell a wheat field from a grass field. Something more is wanted to prove it to be corn and not grass. There is the ear, which seems to be some formation of Christ in the heart; for, as in the literal figure, the corn is formed in the ear, though still green and milky, so in grace, when the blessed Lord is in any measure revealed to the soul and embraced by faith, He is then in substance all He ever will be. It is true the corn has to be ripened, but this has little to do with the shape of the grain.

So I trust your poor, dear girl had a sufficient discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ to give her a saving faith in His blood, and obedience, and a love to His name. I like what she said to her mamma about the passage from Micah, and we would hope that as the Lord "delighteth in mercy," and she "delighted in mercy" too, her will was melted into the Lord's, and that being joined to Him, through faith in the promise, she was one spirit. I think also that the words which were made sweet to her at the beginning of her illness were very suitable, and we know if they came from the Lord He will be faithful to His own word of promise.

It must have been a very painful trial to you both, and the care, labour and anxiety of nursing must have fallen very heavily upon your poor, dear wife. If you have travailed more for her in soul, your wife had to bear the heavier burden in ministering to her poor afflicted body. But it is an unspeakable mercy for the saints and servants of God that by these things they are instructed. A fool (I use the words in a Scripture sense) learns wisdom from nothing, but a wise man learns wisdom from

everything. The beauty and blessedness of the grace of God is that it is always sufficient for the state and case of the soul that is a partaker of it, and generally speaking, the deeper the trial, the greater is the strength communicated under it, and the more profitable the lesson learnt from it. A minister without trials soon becomes a dry breast to the tried and tempted family of God. Thus I trust that your heavy trial will be blessedly sanctified, not only to your own soul, but to the spiritual profit of your people also.

Yours very affectionately,

J.C. Philpot

Stamford, January 10th, 1862

A LOVING ANSWER TO AN ENQUIRY

Gospel Standard, July 1871

The enquiry, signed "E.S." signified that "she is anxious to unite herself to the Lord's people, but hesitates as to so doing because afraid she is unfit and would not be received, the two difficulties in her experience being the impossibility in her case of discovering a distinct beginning and also her inability to say as great things as some others."

We conclude E.S. wishes to enter into outward church fellowship in an orderly manner by being baptized, and we will endeavour to make a few remarks to assist her in understanding her own case, reminding her that the Holy Ghost is the only true and perfect Sealer of His own work on the soul.

1. As to the *beginning*. We must here cleave closely to the Word of God. Our friend says she cannot remember a time when she was without anxieties about her soul and fears of the wrath to come. Very possibly; but is this a fatal objection? Certainly not. John the Baptist was sanctified in the womb, and leapt at the salutation of Mary. The Lord, too, compares the beginning of the kingdom in the heart to the planting of a grain of mustard seed. These things show us that the commencement of the real work in the heart, though of God, may be very imperceptible; and many of the Lord's people, brought up in religious families, find it exceedingly difficult to time the beginning of the work in their souls. Well then, what seems the wise course? Why, to see whether the work itself has the characteristics of a genuine work of grace. If we see a tree, we know it was planted. Is, then, religion the main thing with the soul? Is the Bible as the Word of God to it, speaking to the heart and conscience with a divine authority and power? Are there such convictions of sin and a lost estate by nature that the soul is helpless

and hopeless without Christ, and is obliged to renounce all hope of standing before God in any merits of its own, and therefore flies to Jesus for a full and free salvation? Is the power of the Holy Spirit felt to be needed, to enable the soul thus to go to Jesus? And is salvation heartily owned to be of the Lord? In short, is the cry of the heart, "Give me Christ, or else I die"? If all this gracious work is found in a person, who need question for a moment whether the beginning was of God?

2. As to the *not being able to speak* of such things as some others can, what again of that? We must not measure ourselves by one another, but by the Word of God. Can we say what Scripture requires? Have we been given repentance towards God and faith towards Jesus Christ? Have we turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven, even for Jesus? Does the grace of God, which brings salvation, teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this world, looking for a better? Do we feel the plague of our own hearts, and groan under it, crying, "O wretched, wretched!" yet looking to Christ to deliver? These are things common to the saints, while some things are special. The right use of the experiences of others is for consolation and stirring up of desires after greater attainments, and also in some cases enquiries as to whether we have attained to essential things, but not to cast us down because they are *men* of God and we can only say of ourselves we are little *children*. It is of the greatest importance that we cleave to the Word of God, looking to the light and grace of the Holy Spirit in determining our states as to eternity and the final judgment of God; and when still perplexed, our best course is to lay ourselves down before the Lord, begging Him, as "the Greater than Solomon," to solve our hard questions for us. We think we can encourage our friend to trust and go forward.

Probably written by John Gadsby

All here is labour and sorrow. Our own sins and the sins of others will always make it a scene of trouble. "O thou hideous monster, sin," etc. What a mighty power it has – a power which grace alone can subdue. It seems sometimes subdued, and then rises up worse than before. Well may we cry out, "O wretched man that I am."

J.C. Philpot

We may expect as we advance onwards, if our lives be spared, to be ever meeting with new trials and afflictions; but the Lord has promised that His grace shall be sufficient for us, and to this alone can we ever look as able to support us under them, and to bring us off eventually more than conquerors.

J.C. Philpot

A SOFT HEART

A few jottings by Mrs. Mercy Sturgess (see May and June G.S.)

Written – 1976

Another time of exercise and blessing was in the year 1974, on October 10th. My Pastor preached from Psalm 51. 1-3 one Thursday evening. I had felt for a few months before how I longed to feel that broken and contrite heart before the Lord, and sought for it. Also to feel the Lord's felt presence in my soul. But after hearing of David's confessions, I could go with him in measure, but when I came home I was troubled. I felt tempted I had never had that true repentance or godly sorrow and that I was all wrong. When on my knees before getting in bed, all I could say was, "Lord, I feel to have nothing, know nothing, am nothing and am empty of all that is good. Have mercy upon me." And the words came to me: "When they had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both." It was a little relief, but I could not lay hold of it as I would like to.

Then on the Sunday evening following, Pastor's text was from Psalm 51. 10-13. Then on October 20th he took Psalm 51. 16-18 in the evening – what I felt to need. When I got home, I talked to a friend how I felt on that Thursday evening about feeling I had nothing, and the words that came to me, and my spirit became so soft. As I went to bed, before the Lord I picked up my Bible and opened on Isaiah 57 and read verse 15. I felt my heart broken down. "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." It was the *I dwell*. How I lay and wept, and then dropped off to sleep!

When I awoke in the morning the words came again. How I lay and wept for two hours or more, feeling the Lord's presence in my soul! I cannot describe it. I felt I was on holy ground. I thought of Moses at the burning bush, and also of Polycarp saying, "I am the God-bearer"; I felt I was. O how humbled I felt! And the lines came, "Weep o'er His pierced hands and feet, and view His wounded side."

I read Philpot's portion for that morning; it was 1 Corinthians 3. 21-23. I felt it: "all are yours." Then I read chapter 6, verses 19-20. How I wept, feeling I was the temple of the Holy Ghost! Never before have I wept so much, and that such a poor ignorant sinner should be so blessed! I felt I would have liked to have stayed in bed all day, but I got up about ten o'clock to do a few duties in the house but had no mind for it. I felt that week that I wanted to be alone.

Then on the following Sunday the text was 2 Samuel 23. 5, on the everlasting covenant. I felt confirmed that I was in it, felt it to be "well while life endure, and well when called to die." But I have got into some sad states or places since.

A BRIEF MEMORIAL OF JAMES NEWMAN

By his widow, Ann Newman
(Concluded from page 317)

For some little time previous to the death of my dear husband, his friends at Redbourne noticed that almost every Sunday, in some way, he introduced in his discourse the doctrine of the resurrection, and he spoke upon it in a marked, sweet manner, noticeable to the friends. His remarks thereon were very pointed, striking and decisive, but not one of them suspected that it was in this clear and blessed way he was fulfilling his ministerial course.

The last time he preached at Redbourne was on December 23rd, 1888. On that occasion he dwelt with remarkable emphasis upon the doctrine of the resurrection, and as he advanced with his subject, his heart appeared to warm with the matter; his whole soul seemed, by his manner, and the fresh, striking ideas with which he in some measure opened up that glorious mystery, absorbed with it. When, in the midst of his delightful work and theme, with extended arms and elevated voice, he exclaimed in a rapturous manner, "If you see me a corpse, don't say he is dead, but that he sleepeth"; these remarks made a solemn impression on the minds of his friends. This closed his public work at Redbourne.

It was the particular wish of the church at Bethel, Luton,* that my husband should, on the fifth Lord's day, break bread to them, and preach on Wednesday evening. This he did up to the time of his death. The last time he preached at Bethel he had a special time. His soul was in the work; he felt the liberty and sweetness of the precious gospel. The word was a word in season to the friends; it was indeed a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

I said to him when we returned home after the service, "We have had a good time. I felt it good to be there." He said, "Yes, we have; the matter flowed in without previous meditation; that will do in a dying moment."

He was then in his usual health, and we could discern nothing to indicate his end was so near. On Christmas Day he seemed comfortable, but on Thursday, December 27th, 1888, he was taken with a fit, became unconscious, and remained so until Saturday 29th. His last words were, "O lift upon me the light of Thy countenance! O wash me, O wash me, O wash me!" Thus to the last, and in the last moment, his soul was after the Saviour; thus he endured to the end as seeing Him who is invisible. He has now entered into the joy of his Lord. Of Him he loved to talk, of Him he loved to read, of Him he loved to preach, and to Him he

* What James Newman's position was at Bethel is not clear. Originally he was described as "the regular, stated minister," but at no time appears to have preached regularly as pastor.

committed his soul; and as the reward of grace, not of debt, he is present with the Lord.

He was buried in Luton cemetery on Wednesday, January 2nd, 1889. Before going to the cemetery, the corpse was taken into the chapel, Bethel. Mr. Warburton gave out hymn 466, "Why do we mourn departed friends?" and also read a portion of the Word, and then addressed the friends present in an affectionate, solemn manner. He commenced, "My dear friends, the solemn, but unerring providence of God has called us together. It has pleased the Lord to take to Himself the soul of our dear friend, James Newman." Mr. Warburton then spoke of the many years he had had uninterrupted acquaintance with him, and on some other things connected with the demise of my husband, during which many of the friends were in tears. He then asked Mr. Oldfield to engage in prayer, which he did in a most solemn and impressive manner; some of the friends have to this day a lively remembrance of it, and sometimes speak of it. This brought the services at the chapel to a close.

Many of his beloved friends followed the hearse which bore his mortal remains to their last resting-place.

Mr. Warburton officiated at the grave. After the corpse had been lowered into the grave, Mr. Warburton was led to speak in a very solemn manner, addressing those around the grave, a large number of persons having collected together to witness the interment. He said, "Dear friends, the all-ruling hand of divine Providence has by death taken away a beloved husband, a sincere friend, an honest tradesman, and an affectionate minister. We are now present to witness, as you have seen, his mortality deposited in that grave. My dear friend James Newman is no more; the place which once knew him shall never more know him. The great Judge of all said, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.' That which we have now sown in weakness shall be raised in power. The resurrection of the dead is clearly spoken of in the Word of God. The Lord of life and glory when He rose from the dead swallowed up death in victory. Believers were chosen in Christ; they believe in Him, and by regeneration they are engrafted into Him; they die in Him, and they shall rise in Him and reign with Him. The sleeping dust of our esteemed friend just lowered into the grave will, at the last grand sounding of the trumpet, enter into honour; corrupt it now is; it will be raised in incorruption." Mr. Warburton then addressed a few remarks to believers, assuring them that notwithstanding all their fears, darkness and distress of mind, that death to them would be an eternal gain. "The Saviour came to 'deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' The voice from the tomb of the risen Redeemer is, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.'"

He next addressed in a very solemn manner any present who might be destitute of the grace of God. "Death," he said, "sinner, is on the road

to meet thee; and it may be he is just at the door. May God give thee grace to flee unto the Redeemer, the only sure place of refuge from the eternal storm of divine wrath." He then concluded in a most impressive manner with prayer, and thus the funeral services were brought to a close.

In the evening Mr. Warburton preached from Psalm 46. 10, "Be still, and know that I am God." The sermon is published in the *Gospel Standard* for September 1889. Many friends have expressed pleasure, comfort and profit in reading as well as hearing it.

My husband wrote several articles, published in *Gospel Truths* in 1877, 1878 and 1879, bearing the signature of "Wayfarer" and "James." The "Address to our Readers" in Vol. 8. was written by him. Also the following: "Being Crowned with Thorns," "Glory," "Gold," "Prayer," "Grace, Grace," and "Calvin's Calvinism." He also wrote an obituary of his mother, who was a member with the late Mr. Godwin.

"The memory of the just is blessed."

I would thank all my many kind friends for the sympathising letters I have received from them; they were at the time a solace to my mind in the bereavement of my dear husband, which came so sudden, so unlooked for, that it seemed as if I had lost everything. One remark Mr. Warburton made when preaching in the evening laid fast hold of my spirit: "Though our dear friend James Newman is dead, God lives still."* This has often comforted me since; also the 64th hymn, Gadsby's Selection, which was sung at the time.

I have been induced to send forth the foregoing account for the gratification of his immediate friends to whom my husband was so much attached.

We have thought it best to leave John Warburton's preface to the end.

Jonathan loved David (1 Sam. 18. 1), his soul was knit to him, and David loved Jonathan. They were both bound up in the bundle of life, and David remembered the kindness of Jonathan to him after his death, and enquired if there were any left of the house of Saul, that he might show kindness unto them for Jonathan's sake (2 Sam. 9. 1).

It is a feature of grace to remember acts of kindness. Thus Elisha gratefully acknowledged the kindness of the Shunammite woman, in providing for him a comfortable lodging (2 Kings 4. 8-10). I remember the kindness of my late dear friend James Newman, the subject of this memoir. Many years since, the first time I went to Luton to speak publicly, he cheerfully received me into his house and lodged me

* The old people at Bethel, Luton, who either were present or who had heard their parents speak of this, often spoke of the tremendous effect this one sentence had on the mourning congregation.

courteously; from that time we were attached to each other, and when I went to Luton, as I did annually to speak, there was the same hearty welcome, and I never passed a night in Luton in any other house. For many years I have been intimately acquainted with him, and ever found him a faithful, warm-hearted, honest, kind and affectionate friend.

On all essential points of faith, both in doctrine and experience, we were of one heart, and being thus agreed in spiritual matters, we walked together, during the many years I was acquainted with him, in union and communion. We sometimes differed in our opinion upon things of no importance, and when such was the case, we still opened our minds freely one to the other, without being offensive, or lessening our mutual feeling of friendship. We spent many hours together, travelled together, preached together, conversed together, prayed together, the leading topic of our conversation, preaching and prayer being the wonderful love of God in choosing His people, redeeming them, quickening them, and teaching them their total helplessness, constraining them to submit themselves to the merciful wisdom of God.

The thread of this doctrine, the reader will perceive, runs through the whole of the memoir, published by the affectionate widow as a memorial of her late dear husband. Should the reader be one of that class who have never been stripped of their righteousness, wisdom, conceit and self-importance, he will esteem the subject-matter of these pages foolishness, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2. 14). But if the reader be one of those into whose heart the light of life has shined, bringing to view the deadly evils of corrupt nature, which can only be seen and known by the light of truth, which shineth into the dark places of the heart (2 Pet. 1. 19), bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, the horrible dungeon and wickedness of the carnal heart, he will, as he reads, discover somewhat of his own experience; for all who are taught of God in spiritual experience speak the same things as to matter, differing only in degree and depth.

The salutation of Ananias, on entering the house in which Saul the broken-in-heart, Saul the convinced, Saul the astonished, Saul the trembling, Saul the sinner, to whom he was sent, was, "Brother Saul." When we take up a book in which are depicted some of the trials, fears, temptations and gloomy thoughts, together with expressions of hope, faith, love and spiritual desires and longings which commend it to the conscience as the language of one taught of God, in our feelings, as we read, we say, "Brother mourner, brother weeper, brother trembler, brother fearer, brother hoper." If it be written by one yet living, we say, "The Lord hath done great things for thee." If by one since departed, we

repeat, "He being dead yet speaketh." Or if an obituary, we say, "Happy soul, thy sorrows are ended."

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." When I peruse any manuscript or book purporting to describe the experience of a believer, I look for that teaching which humbles the soul into the dust of self-abasement, and that tends to lift up the Redeemer as the one thing needful. Every spiritual reader will have an eye to the same; and in the few pages to which this directs, he will find this matter, and reflected in the water of that experience will discover in some measure the features of his own experience.

I have good authority for saying my friend was made especially useful to the few he laboured amongst at Redbourne; they esteemed him highly, they loved him dearly, and his heart was knit to them.

The last time I saw and conversed with him was on Thursday, December 13th, 1888. He walked, as was his usual custom, with me to the station. When waiting and walking on the platform, he remarked, "Well, it will not be long before we meet again," alluding to a meeting arranged to be held at Redbourne, on Tuesday, January 8th, 1889, to introduce Gadsby's Selection of Hymns to be sung in the public worship at Redbourne – but that meeting he never was permitted to attend. [Today Redbourn is spelled without the "e."]

That the Lord of the harvest may be graciously pleased to condescend to bless the reading of these gleanings to the refreshing and consolation of the intimate friends of the late James Newman who in the days of his ministry, with much pleasure, heard him exalt the Lord of life and glory, as revealed in the consciences of those who fear the Lord, by the Holy Ghost, is the prayer of his surviving, affectionate, but unworthy friend,

Southill, Biggleswade

John Warburton

"THE WELL IS DEEP"

(*John 4. 11*)

"The well is deep."
Look back into the purposes of God,
And scan eternity. Trace to their source
His wisdom, and His power. Fathom if thou canst
His everlasting mercy. Should thy brain
Grow dizzy, and refuse to sound such depths,
Confess thy feebleness, and meekly say,
"The well is deep."

"The well is deep." Take for thy longest line
The cords of vanity, the rope of sins

Unnumbered. Choose then the heaviest weight;
 Take thee thine own poor, hardened heart of stone.
 Now plumb the depths of God's unbounded love,
 Thy lead seems light – thy lengthened line run out;
 E'en with such instruments thou hast but plunged
 Beneath the surface of the tide. Below,
 Far, far below, in depths unfathomable,
 Springs undisturbed the ceaseless flow of love,
 Embosomed in eternity. Here rest,
 And humbly bend the knee, and own again,
 "The well is deep."

"The well is deep." Mark now the wounded side
 Of Him that hung upon the tree. Haste thee
 To hide within that cleft, and as the springs
 Of living water from the riven Rock
 Gush freely forth, ponder the depths of woe
 From whence they rise. Behold that broken heart!
 Say, canst thou find the measure of His grief?
 Hear that loud, bitter cry from off the cross,
 "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"
 Think of those awful words, "I thirst!" when He
 The mighty God, tasted the serpent's food,
 And ate the dust of death. Search this His depths
 Of woes profound, and worship and exclaim,
 "The well is deep."

Thus bursts the well of life from these three springs:
 God's infinite decree; His boundless love;
 And all those deep, unuttered woes of Christ.
 Drink, stranger, drink, and quench thy thirsty soul.
 From out of depths which ceaselessly abound.
 The more thy need, the fuller still the fount;
 The more thy thirst, the deeper still the spring.
 No sealed fountain this, no spring shut up;
 But, flowing forth to every child of want,
 It cries, "Come unto Me and drink"; invites
 The heavy laden to repose; cleanses
 Whilst giving life, and gladdens whilst it heals.
 The thoughtless sinner, who at Jacob's well
 Tasted the living waters fresh from God,
 Has yet to learn through all eternity
 The truth of words she ignorantly spake,
 Touching Samaria's failing earthly spring –
 "The well is deep."

The London Messenger, November 6th, 1863
 (Printed in the *Gospel Standard*, July 1907)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2006

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

THE SON OF GOD TAKING OUR FLESH

By John Bunyan

I come to show you how Jesus Christ addressed Himself to the work of man's redemption.

The Scripture saith, "He became poor," that He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, that He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross. But particularly, He took upon Him our flesh.*

He took upon Him our flesh. He came in our flesh, and now I must show you the reason of it – namely, because that was the way to address Himself to the work of our redemption.

Wherefore, when the apostle treated of the incarnation of Christ, he added withal the reason – to wit, that He might be capable to work out the redemption of men.

There are three things to be considered in this first head.

I. That He took our flesh for this reason – that He might be a Saviour.

II. How He took flesh, that He might be our Saviour.

III. That it was necessary that He should take our flesh, if indeed He will be our Saviour.

I. *He took our flesh, that He might be a Saviour.*

For the first. *That He took our flesh for this reason – that He might be a Saviour:* "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8. 3).

The sum of the words is, Forasmuch as the law could do us no good, by reason of the inability that is in our flesh to do it – for the law can do

* "Lost souls to recover, and form them afresh,
Our wonderful Lover took flesh of our flesh;
From sin to release us – that yoke so long worn,
The holy Child Jesus of Mary was born."

(Joseph Hart)

"Tell how He took our flesh,
To take away our guilt."

(Isaac Watts)

us no good until it be fulfilled – and because God had a desire that good should come to us, therefore did He send His Son in our likeness, clothed with flesh, to destroy, by His doing the law, the tendency of the sin that dwells in our flesh. He therefore took our flesh that our sin, with its effects, might by Him be condemned and overcome.

The reason, therefore, why He took flesh is because He would be our Saviour. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2. 14, 15).

In these words it is asserted that He took our flesh for certain reasons.

1. Because the children, the heirs of heaven, are partakers of flesh and blood: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” Had the children, the heirs, been without flesh, He Himself had not taken it upon Him. Had the children been angels, He had taken upon Him the nature of angels. But because the children were partakers of flesh, therefore leaving angels, or refusing to take hold of angels, He took flesh and blood, the nature of the children, that He might put Himself into a capacity to save and deliver the children. Therefore it follows that, “through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

2. This, therefore, was another reason – that He might destroy the devil.

The devil had bent himself against the children; he is their adversary, and goeth forth to make war with them. “Your adversary the devil.” And he “went to make war with the remnant of her seed” (1 Pet. 5. 8; Rev 12. 17). Now the children could not destroy him, because he had already cast them into sin, denied their nature and laid them under the wrath of God. Therefore Christ puts Himself among the children and into the nature of the children that He might, by means of His dying in their flesh, destroy the devil – that is, take away sin, his [the devil’s] work, that He might destroy the works of the devil; for sin is the great engine of hell, by which he overthroweth all that perish. Now this did Christ destroy by taking on Him the similitude of sinful flesh, of which more anon.

3. “That He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them.” This was the thing in chief intended, that He might deliver the children, that He might deliver them from death, the fruit of their sin, and from sin, the sting of that death. “That He might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

He took flesh, therefore, because the children had it; He took it that He might die for the children; He took it that He might deliver the children from the works of the devil – “that He might deliver them.” No deliverance had come to the children if the Son of God had not taken their flesh and blood; therefore He took our flesh, that He might be our Saviour.

Again, in a Saviour there must be not only merit, but compassion and sympathy, because the children are yet to live by faith, are not yet come to the inheritance. “Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2. 17).

Two reasons are rendered in this text why He must take flesh – namely, that He might be their Priest to offer sacrifice, to wit, His body and blood for them; and that He might be merciful and faithful, to pity and preserve them unto the kingdom appointed for them.

Mark you, therefore, how the apostle, when he asserteth that the Lord Jesus took our flesh, urgeth the reason why He took our flesh – that He might destroy the devil and death, that He might deliver them. It behoveth Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be merciful and faithful, that He might make reconciliation for the sins of the people. The reason, therefore, why He took our flesh is declared – to wit, that He might be our Saviour. And hence you find it so often recorded. He hath “abolished in His flesh the enmity.” He hath “slain the enmity” by His flesh. “And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable in His sight” (Eph. 2. 15, 16; Col. 1. 21, 22).

II. *How He took flesh.*

Second. I come now to the second question, to wit. *How He took our flesh.* This must be inquired into; for His taking flesh was not after the common way; never any took man’s flesh upon him as He since the foundation of the world.

1. He took not our flesh like Adam, who was formed out of the ground, who was made “of the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2. 7; 3. 19).

2. He took not our flesh as we do, by carnal generation. Joseph knew not his wife, neither did Mary know any man, till she had brought forth her firstborn Son (Matt. 1. 25, Luke 1. 34).

3. He took flesh, then, by the immediate working and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. And hence it is said expressly, “She was found with child of the Holy Ghost.” “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost”

(Mat. 1. 18). And hence again, when Joseph doubted of her honesty, for he perceived she was with child and knew he had not touched her, the angel of God himself comes down to resolve his doubt, and said, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. 1. 20).

But again, though the Holy Ghost was that by which the Child Jesus was formed in the womb so as to be without carnal generation, yet was He not formed in her without, but by, her conception. "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS" (Luke 1. 31). Wherefore He took flesh not only *in*, but *of*, the virgin. Hence He is called her Son, the seed of the woman; and hence it is also that He is called the seed of Abraham, the seed of David; their seed according to the flesh (Gen. 12; 13. 15; 22; Luke 1. 31; 2. 7; Rom. 1. 3; 9. 5; Gal 3. 16; 4. 4).

And this, the work He undertook, required:

- i. It required that He should take our flesh.
- ii. It required that He should take our flesh without sin, which could not be had He taken it by reason of a carnal generation; for so all children are conceived in and polluted with sin (Psa. 51). And the least pollution, either of flesh or spirit, had utterly disabled Him for the work, which to do, He came down from heaven. Therefore, "such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7. 26).

This mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God was thus completed, I say, that He might be in all points like as we are, yet without sin; for sin in the flesh disableth and maketh incapable to do the commandment. Therefore was He thus made, thus made of a woman; and this the angel assigneth as the reason of this His marvellous incarnation. "The Holy Ghost," saith he, "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" (Luke 1. 35).

The overshadowing of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Highest – the Father and the Holy Ghost – brought this wonderful thing to pass, for Jesus is a wonderful One in His conception and birth. This mystery is that next to the mystery of three Persons in one God; it is a great mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

The conclusion is that Jesus Christ took our flesh that He might be our Saviour; and that He might be our Saviour indeed, He thus took our flesh.

III. *That it was necessary that He should take our flesh, if He will be our Saviour.*

Third. I come now to the third thing – namely, *that it was necessary that He should take our flesh, if He will be our Saviour.*

1. And that first, from the nature of the work; His work was to save, to save man, sinking man, man that was “going down to the pit” (Job 33. 24). Now, he that will save him that is sinking must take hold on him. And since He was not to save a man, but men, therefore it was necessary that He should take hold, not of one person, but of the common nature, clothing Himself with part of the same. He took not hold of angels, “but He took on Him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2. 16). For that flesh was the same with the whole lump of the children to whom the promise was made, and comprehended in it the body of them that shall be saved, even as in Adam was comprehended the whole world at first (Rom. 5. 12-19).

Hence we are said to be chosen in Him, to be gathered, being in Him, to be dead by Him, to be risen with Him, and to be set with Him, or in Him, in heavenly places already (Rom. 7. 4; Eph. 1. 4, 10; Col. 2. 12, 13; 3. 1-3). This, then, was the wisdom of the great God, that the eternal Son of His love should take hold of and so secure the sinking souls of perishing sinners by assuming their flesh.

2. The manner of His doing the work of a Saviour did call for His taking of our flesh.

He must do the work by dying. “Ought not Christ to have suffered?” “Christ must needs have suffered,” or else no glory follows (Luke 24. 26; Acts 17. 3). The prophets “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1. 11). Yea, they did it by the Spirit, even by the Spirit of Christ Himself. This Spirit, then, did bid them tell the world, yea, testify, that Christ must suffer, or no man be blest with glory; for the threatening of death and the curse of the law lay in the way between heaven gates and the souls of the children, for their sins; wherefore he that will save them must answer divine justice, or God must lie, in saving them without inflicting the punishment threatened. Christ, then, must needs have suffered; the manner of the work laid a necessity upon Him to take our flesh upon Him; He must die, He must die for us, He must die for our sins. And this was effectually foretold by all the bloody sacrifices that were offered under the law – the blood of bulls, the blood of lambs, the blood of rams, the blood of calves and the blood of goats and birds. These bloody sacrifices, what did they signify, what were they figures of, but of the bloody sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ? Their blood being a shadow of His blood, and their flesh being a shadow of His flesh.

Therefore, when God declared that He took no pleasure in them because they could not make the worshippers perfect as pertaining to the conscience, then comes Jesus Christ to offer His sinless body and soul

for the sin of the people. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God." Since burnt offerings cannot do Thy will, My body shall. Since the blood of bulls and goats cannot do Thy will, My blood shall. Then follows, By the will of God "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10. 4-10).

3. The end of the work required that Christ, if He will be our Saviour, should take upon Him our flesh.

The end of our salvation is that we might enjoy God, and that He by us might be glorified for ever and ever.

i. That we might enjoy God. "I will dwell in them ... and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." This indwelling of God, and consequently our enjoyment of Him, begins first in its eminency by His possessing our flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. Hence His name is called, "Immanuel, God with us"; and, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The flesh of Christ is the tabernacle which the Lord pitched, according to that saying, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21. 3). Here God beginneth to discover His glory and to be desirable to the sons of men.

God could not communicate Himself to us, nor take us into the enjoyment of Himself, but with respect to that flesh which His Son took of the virgin, because sin stood betwixt. Now this flesh only was the holy lump, in this flesh God could dwell; and forasmuch as this flesh is the same with ours, and was taken up with intent that what was done in and by that should be communicated to all the children; therefore through that doth God communicate of Himself unto His people. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5. 19). And, "I am the way," saith Christ; "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14. 6).

That passage to the Hebrews is greatly to our purpose. We have boldness, brethren, "to enter into the holiest," the place where God is, "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb 10. 19, 20).

Wherefore by the flesh and blood of Christ we enter into the holiest; "through the veil," saith he, "that is to say, His flesh."

ii. As the end of our salvation is that we might enjoy God, so also it is that He by us might be glorified for ever. "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Here indeed will the mystery of His grace, wisdom, justice, power, holiness and glory inhabit eternal praise, while we that are counted worthy of the kingdom of God shall admire the mystery, and see ourselves, without ourselves, even by the flesh and blood of Christ through faith therein, effectually and eternally saved. O this will be the burden of our eternal joy – God loved us and gave His Son for us; Christ loved us and gave His flesh for our life and His blood for our eternal redemption and salvation!

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD

By J.C. Philpot

It was the eternal purpose of God to manifest His dear Son. But how could He be manifested? Can God be seen? Is He not invisible, “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto”? We can no more see the Son of God in His eternal Deity than we can see God the Father Himself; for no man can see God and live. Therefore, that He might be manifested, He took a nature in which He could be seen; and that nature was a nature like our own; for, “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” Thus was accomplished the manifestation of the Son of God.

But He was still the Son of God. He never laid aside His Deity or Sonship: He could not do so without ceasing to exist. He ever was what He ever had been; He ever is what He ever must be – the eternal Son of God. But to be manifested, brought to light, made known, revealed; to be seen, touched, handled, embraced and realised, it was needful for Him to assume a nature that could be touched, handled, realised and looked upon. As John speaks in the beginning of his epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness.” In order, then, that the Son of God might be manifested, He took our nature into union with His own eternal Deity, and thus God and man were united in one glorious Person as God-Man, Immanuel, God with us.

He was manifested in the first instance as a Babe, born at Bethlehem and laid in a manger, for there was no room for Him at the inn. He was born of a virgin, for He was not conceived by natural generation as we are. Had it been so, His human nature must have been involved in all the consequences of the first transgression: it must have been stained and tainted with original sin as ours is; for wherever there is natural

conception, there must be sin attending it. "In sin hath my mother conceived me." But being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary under the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, the blessed Lord assumed of the flesh of the virgin a nature in all points identical with ours, yet preserved in the very moment of its conception from all speck or spot of sin.

When that Babe was born at Bethlehem, when He was presented to the eyes of the wise men from the East, when the shepherds looked upon Him as He lay in His mother's lap, there was the Son of God manifested. O the mystery, that the Son of God, He who fills all heaven with His glory – by whom the world was created and by whom it stands – the great, glorious and eternal Jehovah, for such He is – then dwelt in that holy Babe lying in infantile weakness upon the lap of the virgin Mary!

PREACHING CHRIST

By J.K. Popham

What is preaching? It is declaring, opening, alleging; declaring who God is, what His purposes, in whom they are expressed, and who preaches them. Preaching to whom? To sinners; preaching to sinners, penitent and impenitent. I think some of us here, ministers, are accused today of not preaching Christ to sinners. Well, what I would say for myself, and I believe my brethren in the ministry would say it with me, "I don't know any other sort of people to preach to." Two sorts of people there are, generally speaking, in a promiscuous congregation – living and dead, quickened and unquickened; sinners concerned about their souls and their standing with regard to their eternal condition before God. What is the subject? Here it is – Christ.

Two living themes will ever be in preaching. First, as you see the apostles and others taught in the Scriptures, the fall of man. What preacher of the gospel could ever stand up to preach the gospel and leave sin out of the question? Some people do not like to hear much about sin today, but I venture to assert that every sent minister of God, anointed to preach, must and will necessarily preach about sin, the fall of man, the effacement from man's soul of the image of God in which he was created; the fall of man, the ruin of all his faculties with respect to God. The utter ruin of his understanding, so that it is true, as Paul teaches in the Corinthians, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." A minister must preach of sin for two reasons. First, the Scripture teaches it. It is sad and sinful to omit teaching that which the Bible teaches. And second, from his own bitter,

painful, degrading sense of his own sin. Ah, it is a mercy we are not required to tell our neighbour, nay the nearest we have to us in this world, what passes in our hearts. Sin, filthy, mighty, black, guilty, degrading, shameful sin, I say again, we must preach, and that not occasionally and incidentally, the defacement of God's image in which He created man. If one who talks about Christ and who, if it were put to him, "What do you know about sin?" should answer, "O Christ died for sin, and I have nothing to do with it," I would doubt his religion.

But that is not all. You have a hole dug, a place made empty, a conscience sore, a soul burdened with dead works, a man feeling that, if God were to deal with him as he deserves, he would not be out of hell – then preach Jesus to him and compel him to come to the supper. O what a hell he deserves, what confessions of sin he makes! Now what does the preacher say? He comes, knows nothing about the cases in the chapel, and he begins to preach about the Surety for sinners, the divine, divinely-appointed Surety, the Substitute, the God-Man, that is the Son of God incarnate, made under the law, and that God took sin from sinners and imputed it to His Son. And the minister says, So-and-So is a true character; he has forsaken his sin; he confesses his sin; he is sick of himself; his endeavours have all failed; he cannot get better; he cannot make anything better of his very, very bad case; he is before God without a scrap of religion. Perhaps the preaching of Christ would be the power of God to such a sinner setting him at liberty, causing him to "go forth in the dances of them that make merry," with a heavenly merry-making.

What is Christ preached for? To give "beauty for ashes." Ashes say, "There has been a fire here." Do you know what these ashes are? It is solemn to have the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning; but the eternal Spirit is given to accomplish that heavy, solemn work in the soul. To such, Christ is preached and the Holy Ghost takes of the preacher's simple words and gives "beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He also brings to the sick the balm in Gilead, brings to the view of faith the good Physician; how wonderful the healing! Then there is a match made between the healed sinner and the Lord Jesus; Christ embraces the sinner, and the sinner embraces Him, and they become one. No minister sent of God, however ashamed he may be of his preaching, need ever feel a blush when he preaches the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. I have had some happy moments in the pulpit, and among them the moments when I have been able to say feelingly,

"Christ is the Friend of sinners,
Be that forgotten never;
A wounded soul, and not a whole,
Becomes a true believer;

To see sin smarts but slightly;
To own, with lip confession,
Is easier still; but O to feel
Cuts deep beyond expression”

Ministers must preach forgiveness. Christ had power on earth to forgive sins. He exercises that power now, and He is exalted in heaven to be “a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Nothing matters if your sins are forgiven. Everything else will come right if your sins are forgiven. “Preaching peace by Jesus Christ,” that is the peace of God, the peace that God gives, the peace that God has, the peace that nobody knows until it be given to him by the Lord. Ah sinner, may the Lord grant that, if you are in trouble about your sins and your soul, you may never lose that trouble till you lose it in the blood of Christ. If you lose it so, you will be truly happy.

“The blood of Christ, a precious blood,
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
And reconciles the soul to God,
From every folly, every fault.”

Ministers must preach justification. Justification is God’s sentence on a sinner, taking away from his conscience the sin that Christ took away from him when He died. Justification is a law term. It means an action. It means a Judge, an accusation, an accuser. It means the presence of the accused person before the Judge, and the accusation is read. O how his ears tingle when the culprit hears the accusation! And he says, “I am guilty. I am guilty; I have nothing to say why I should not be damned, nothing to say why God should not consign me to eternal perdition.” And then the Lord says to those who stand by, “Take away his filthy garments.” To him He gives a place among His people. His filthy garments are gone. A robe of pure righteousness is imputed to him; his faith receives it and puts it on. He is a justified person, and Christ is that justification, that pure, sufficient, glorious righteousness. He is that, none else, nothing else.

God-sent ministers must preach peace by Jesus Christ, not patching up a peace between two sinners. That may be done by a human mediator. When two sinners quarrel this can be, ought always to be, said: the fault is not absolutely on one side. That is in passing. Here we have God and a sinner, and the wrong is all on one side, all on the sinner’s side. God never gave any of us an occasion to sin. When a man is tempted, he is not tempted of God. God tempteth not any man. And the saints are taught to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” But here is a sinner standing before God. He says, “The law is holy, just, and good; He never gave me an occasion to sin. His holy providence, His wise and

good dealings, giving me daily bread and comforts, everything I had from Him was good. I sinned; I abused His goodness; I despised His justice; I despised His holiness; I trampled on the law – that good, and holy, and just law; therefore I alone am guilty.” Now here is a case, a case for God. To the troubled soul He speaks peace by the blood of the everlasting covenant, holds no quarrel with him, does not mention one of his sins to him. And when the poor, now broken-hearted sinner begins to wonder, and object his sins as briers and thorns, the Lord goes through them and burns them up, and says, “Let him take hold of My Strength” – which is Christ – “that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.”

Thus He speaks comfortably to the heart, and shows His well-pleased face, and all is well. Godly people, when they become acquainted with this miracle of mercy, will be glad, as the psalmist said, “They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me.” You look at your life and say, “It is all a blotch; all black, all filthy, all wrong”; and God says, “There is no spot in you”; and when He says it with power, you cannot dispute it with Him. It is His business alone, and yours. Nobody else has anything to do with it. It is God’s transaction on your soul: “All fair.” Peace by the cross of Christ is one of the main points, a fundamental, of our holy religion.

Christ is the mystery of this, and the mystery of all the mysteries that the Bible reveals – the mystery of His Person, the mystery of His work, the mystery of His mediation, the mystery of His intercession, the mystery of His glorious High Priestly Person at the right hand of the glorious Majesty on high.

A PASTOR’S GREETINGS TO HIS CONGREGATION

Dear Friends,

Once more it is my sacred pleasure to greet you in the name of the Lord. Yes, that Lord who brought us into being, and who from that day till now hath provided for us, watched over us and prevented us with the blessings of His goodness in His kind and merciful providences, so that when rightly viewed we are constrained to say, despite all our undeservings, that He has been not only faithful to His Word, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure,” but has daily loaded us with benefits, and to many who read this letter how true are the words of the poet:

“’Tis sovereign mercy finds us food,
And we are clothed with love;
While grace stands pointing out the road
That leads our souls above!”

Yes, grace in covenant, grace in Jesus, the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the mind and drawing the affections up to the God-Man, Christ Jesus who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich, as the partakers of the riches of His grace, as faith views Him leaving heaven, coming in our nature (the sin of that nature excepted) that He might finish transgression, make an end of sin and become eternal righteousness to an innumerable number of sinners, that they might be the children of God by faith in Him now and to all eternity, and that until they reach that happy place where sin no more defiles, He stands engaged to support them in all their sorrows, comfort them in all their afflictions, shield them in the hour of temptation, yea, to make all things work together for their good by the communication of His grace which shall be sufficient for them, that they might be to the praise and glory of His grace, and sing the glorious theme for ever.

That the Lord may be pleased to bless us with such a sense of His goodness which has passed before us in the way, and a realisation of His powerful, efficacious and unchangeable faithfulness and mercy; that we may

“Praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come”

is the desire of

Yours to serve in the gospel,

George Whitbread

Thornlea, Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, Christmas 1927

Dear Friends,

Once more the Lord in His kind and merciful providence has brought us to the season when it is our pleasure to greet you in His name, and to wish you all needful blessings for time and eternity. And as Israel of old were exhorted to remember all the way that the Lord had led them, and the goodness He had made to pass before them, so I feel that we have great cause to remember with gratitude His faithfulness and mercy toward us, as in all the varied circumstances and experiences of our lives, have we not proved, and that in spite of many fears, failings and changes, that “He faileth not; He changeth not”? May this be a means of gracious support, both at the present time and in the future, as we are helped to realise that, “All our times are in His hand,” and that His ordering of every event is for the purpose of teaching us increasingly the all-sufficiency of Him who hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

May our minds be sweetly led to meditate upon the unspeakable love of Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became

poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, and that having loved His own which are in the world, He will love them to the end.

May these truths be so real to us as to enable us to cast all our care upon Him, and the knowledge that He careth for us bring forth a realised confidence in, and thanksgiving to His great name.

With every good wish to you and yours for the approaching season, and at all times, in which my dear wife joins.

Yours to serve in the gospel,

George Whitbread, pastor
Thornlea, Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, Christmas 1929

JESUS AND LAZARUS

*Prayer Meeting Address by J. Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
on July 16th, 1951*

Reading: John 11.

This eleventh of John is a very remarkable chapter, revealing, apart from other considerations, the depths of human sympathy, devotion and affection, as well as that spiritual bond that was evidently felt between the Lord and His three devoted disciples.

One rather striking point about it is the way the message was worded, when the messenger came to the Lord with this message, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Not, There is someone ill this way; but it was put in such a way as to move the Lord's feelings toward them to come to their immediate relief. "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." It was, as it were, an appeal to the tender affections of His nature, to move Him in compassion to come at once to the case, because every moment was so precious. But instead of that, the Lord delayed two days, remaining in the same place, affirming that the sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

This remaining two days in the same place is very significant. What anxious hours they must have been, the fever gaining rapidly, the body wasting, death becoming imminent, and yet still the Lord remaining in the same place, apparently taking no notice of a case so extremely urgent! But He makes no mistake, and the Lord knew well enough that Lazarus would die, but that he was to be raised again, so that the death was but comparable to a sleep. He remained two days in the same place, and then said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judæa again," a place where He had suffered much persecution, and where they had threatened to stone Him.

How mysterious are the Lord's ways! And yet I believe that every instance in the Scriptures shows that where there was a delay, there was a purpose in that delay, a gracious purpose, not to bring despair and to disappoint the hopes of those who looked to Him, but to test their faith and to show that the Lord had power over death and the grave, and that nothing was too hard for Him.

Lazarus died, but after a time the Lord went to the place, and Martha came to meet Him. Here are striking words spoken by both Martha and Mary. Martha goes to meet Him and says, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" – Thou couldst have spared him if only Thou hadst come before, but now he is dead and buried. And the point was put by Mary, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." All very natural, yet putting, in a sense, a limit on the Lord's power – if only He had come before.

So some may feel with regard to the Lord's coming. He may, according to your view, delay so long that the case appears hopeless in consequence; but it is never hopeless to God, never. And the more apparently impossible the thing is, the more He manifests His power, for with God nothing is impossible.

But how confirmingly the Lord addresses Martha! She says, "If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But, says the Lord, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Do you think you can believe this, believe that the Lord has power over life and death and hell, and that nothing is too hard for Him?

Eventually they go to the grave, and it was this I wanted just to bring before you, that although indeed Lazarus was literally raised from the dead in such a striking manner, so impressive to all that were gathered there, there is yet a spiritual signification in it, a teaching very confirming to the children of God. Lazarus was dead and buried. Does not that describe the condition of all by nature? Were we not all dead in trespasses and sins, in a hopeless case, dead, and as it were buried in our sins? That is one phase.

But the second is that of Lazarus living, but bound hand and foot. Is not this descriptive of one born again, quickened, brought under the law sensibly and in legal bondage, bound hand and foot? Some of you here may know what that is in the spiritual teaching of it, under the sentence of death and yet living, quickened, conscience-awakened, conscious of your condition, held under legal fetters, like Lazarus bound hand and foot, unable, as it were, to use his limbs, unable to work, unable to walk. So it is with the poor soul in legal bondage, and yet the life of God is there but not the liberty. O this bondage, and O the different

exercises that are known and felt when one is under this bondage! He cannot free himself.

Then in the third place we see Lazarus a free man. "Loose him, and let him go," was the word. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go." Remove everything that bound him, that held him, that fettered him, and free him of it all. "Loose him, and let him go." This is what the gospel does, and nothing but the gospel, and according to the measure in which the liberating power of it is felt in our souls, so is the liberty. And when the voice of the Son of God is heard thus in substance, "Loose him and let him go," when that is spoken in the conscience, no fetters, no devil, no law, no not even the claims of Justice, can hold that sinner. O what a wonderful mercy it is to have Christ made precious, to feel a little of that breaking of the bonds, and of the sweet freedom that Christ reveals, enabling one to walk and to work, not legally, but to bring forth the fruits of His grace, and to walk in His ways!

RUTH'S RESOLVE

Ruth 1. 16-18

By John Macgowan (1726-1780)

An old London Particular Baptist minister, Macgowan has been esteemed by the godly over the years. We hope our readers are not put off by the florid, eighteenth century style (e.g. calling birds "feathered songsters," etc.).

See in the person and disposition of Ruth the Moabitess the believer's firm attachment to the gospel church. Hear her endearing and resolved words, "Where thou goest, I will go," through smiling fields or gloomy fens, through verdant meadows or howling deserts, whether in prosperous or adverse circumstances, I am resolved to cast in my lot with thine. If thy way should lie through the land of Beulah, and the voice of the feathered songsters animate thee for thy journey; if thou mayest happily emerge out of the ocean of afflictions, which long has overwhelmed thee, and the candle of the Lord be rekindled on thy tabernacle; I shall account myself blessed to behold thine enlargement. But although thy way should be more dismal than the shadow of death itself, and the future part of thy life be more afflicting than that part elapsed, I can have no pleasure, no other joy, besides what ariseth from assiduously ministering to thy distress, and sharing in, if I cannot alleviate, thy sorrow.

"Where thou goest, I will go," will be the language of every truly converted soul to the gospel church. The society of the wicked is held

abominable, as the synagogue of Satan, and the maxims of the world as an unclean disease. Even when there is not a full persuasion of interest in Israel's portion and sharing with the church in her future felicity, you will find a settled, unalterable resolution of seeking her advantage and sharing in her adversities whilst here, whatever may happen in that world which is to come. This is a noble evidence of Christian affection, and a signal display of the conquest of grace upon the heart; and I may boldly assert that he who is willing to cast in his lot with the people of God here shall not be excluded from their enjoyments hereafter.

No man ever did forsake all in this world for the sake of Christ, His gospel and church, but he found the Lord to be as good as His word, and received eternal life according to the full tenor of the promise.

"Where thou lodgest, I will lodge." Here was no proviso made for its safety and delicacy. Ruth might have made this resolution conditionally. "Where thou lodgest, I will lodge," provided thy lodging is safe, easy and commodious. Like that scribe who, it is probable, would have followed Christ provided he had been assured of agreeable accommodations in the way, but finding great reason to apprehend a deficiency in this respect, in point of worldly prudence, laid aside his design. It has not in any age been common for the greatest of saints to have the softest beds and most comfortable lodgings; and yet in every age God has had His followers and witnesses, and the church her unfeigned lovers.

That resplendent cloud of witnesses, of whom the world was not worthy, wandered about in sheepskins and in goatskins; were destitute of house and home; lodged in dens and caves of the earth, notwithstanding they were the chosen heirs of the kingdom of glory. Nor was the Lord from heaven, the only-begotten of the Father Himself, better provided in His sojourning below; for although the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Notwithstanding which penury, His faithful disciples forsook Him not, but were contented with such lodgings as their Lord had for Himself, deeming it sufficient that the servants should fare as their Lord and Master.

"Thy people shall be my people." The forsaking of her own kindred, kingdom and household gods is followed by an adherence to the kindred of Mahlon and Elimelech. "Thy people shall be my people." "Hereby," says the inspired divine, "do 'we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.'" Without such a love to the brethren as will cause us to cleave to them in every situation, we give no adequate evidence of our having passed from a state of nature into the kingdom of the loving Jesus. Wherever this love to the brethren does discover itself, it evidently shows the soul to be born from above.

The reason why you love the brethren is because they love and follow the blessed Jesus, because in their spirit and temper you see the image or likeness of the amiable spirit by which His whole conduct was influenced. Thus it is that the love of Christ, and only the love of Christ, constraineth you to pay a distinguished regard to those who worship the immaculate Redeemer. Wherever the heart is right with God, as enlivened by the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, it will discover itself by this unfeigned love to the brethren. The saints of God will be esteemed the excellent ones upon the earth, in whom is all your delight, the only people with whom you choose to associate.

"Thy God shall be my God." This is indeed the foundation of Ruth's attachment to Naomi, and from this it appears she had seen that in the spirit and conduct of her mother-in-law which endeared the God of Israel to her affection and supreme regard. That she had seen in her what she had never met with amongst her own kindred and people, therefore this becomes her cool and determinate resolution: "Thy God shall be my God." What a noble and encouraging incentive is this to stimulate us to an observance of the spirit and laws of Christianity, that thereby we may win dark and benighted heathens, our unconverted fellow-sinners, to the love of Jesus and worship of the Father through Him! What an honourable, what an illustrious figure does this mother in Israel make in the annals of heaven, as by her godly and endearing conduct, having allured Ruth the Moabitess to the love of the true and living God!

This exalted instance of genuine godliness is inserted in records subject to no future erasement, and to Naomi's honour, shall be made venerable mention of when fleeting time shall have run his destined race, and all shall be immense, unspeakable, inconceivable eternity. O my soul, may this be the highest point of thine ambition in this life, to be enabled by grace to draw the attention of young and thoughtless Moabites to the love and worship of thy holy, thine adorable Redeemer, the perfection of beauty, and centre of heavenly excellency! Mayest thou sojourn here below no longer than this shall be thy ardent wish and daily study!

"Thy God shall be my God," will be the language in which every true convert shall address the believing church. "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Because the presence of the incarnate God is in a peculiar manner with the believing church, her assemblies will ever attract the Christian's attention.

“Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried.” In life and in death, she fully cast in her lot with her mother-in-law. She would not so much as have her body carried back to her native country for interment. With thee will I be buried, and repose my dust in thy hallowed tomb. That affinity and union which hold out for the full term of life must be strong; but stronger still that which holds good in life and death. Such only is the Christian union. In life, in death, at judgment and to eternity, it is indissoluble. Those who come to Jesus for life and salvation consider their bodies as well as their souls as bought with a price, and therefore commit them to Him even in death, and in hope lay them down to slumber in the grave, till awakened by that awful voice, compared to which the loudest thunder is but as the softest whisper, and the ruffling hurricane as the breathings of zephyr.

Ruth, being inclined and enabled to forsake all, met with a suitable and encouraging reward for her godly attachment to the seed of the promise. She was married to an honourable Israelite. “That no man shall serve God for nought,” is a good maxim, notwithstanding laid down by the parent of error, and was exactly fulfilled in the case of this illustrious Moabitess. She was honoured with becoming the ancestor of the man after God’s own heart and, through him, the mother of a race of monarchs; not only so, but she became the mother of the glorious Immanuel, that only and blessed Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is possessed of all power in earth and in heaven. This bounty of divine providence towards Ruth beautifully confirms the truth of our Lord’s words where He says, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

You, therefore, to whom the world is crucified by the cross of Christ and who resolve to follow your Redeemer conscientiously, even if it should cost you your earthly *all*, you see the good set before you in the promise: “Even in this life ye shall have a hundredfold”; not always in kind indeed, but you shall be sure of it in value. Riches, honour, ease and pleasure, such as this world boasteth the power to give, are no parts of the good included in the promise. But you shall receive righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and thus have the kingdom of God set up within you. Such a righteousness as shall render you all holy and complete, lovely and beautiful even in the eye of infinite holiness; righteousness, that for its splendour, shall be as a mirror, to reflect the illustrious excellence of every divine perfection; peace, which only God can bestow, which can be obtained only in Christ; peace, which none but the children of sorrow and sons of warfare are capable of receiving. This is the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” bequeathed to

thee by thy departing Redeemer, and such as an unregenerated heart never experienced. This is the portion of your souls, O ye who fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel, "joy in the Holy Ghost."

Little of heavenly joy is experienced before you are brought down to the very margin of destruction. It is impossible to know the joys of pardoned sin before the sentence of the law has been denounced in the conscience, and we are brought as guilty criminals to Jesus for a free pardon, none besides the condemned being capable of receiving pardon. But when sin is set before you in all its aggravations, and threatens your ruin by its formidable "terrors"; when the law has denounced the condemnation due to it, and instead of the execution of the sentence, you receive redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins; how sweet is the joy, how transporting the pleasure from thence resulting! Such righteousness, peace and holy joy are connected with a forsaking of all for the sake of Christ and His great salvation.

Is it then your holy resolution to part with all, to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? May grace strengthen your resolution. You will find your account in the wisdom of your choice, and have cause to bless God for the gift of this wisdom. You renounce your unlawful gains and ungodly pleasures, and lo, there is before you an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, a kingdom that shall never have an end, and a crown that is not liable to be tarnished. Dost thou forsake thy carnal companions, in whose society thy heart can no longer take delight? Behold the saints of the Lord, the excellent ones of the earth, are appointed the companions of thy warfare, whilst here, under the guardianship and protection of holy angels in the days of thy pilgrimage, and the sharers of thy joy when thy warfare is accomplished.

Hast thou lost the good will of thy relatives? Have father and mother forsaken thee because thou wilt worship the Lord God of thy fathers after the manner which the world account heresy? Be not concerned at it; for when father and mother forsake thee, the Lord will take thee up. Thou hast made a goodly exchange. Thou lovest indeed thy natural parents, but the everlasting Father Himself becomes thy All. The Father of Jesus and thy Father are now identically the same. Blessed, O Lord, are the people whose God Thou art, and whom Thou hast chosen for Thine own inheritance.

I cannot set before my hearers the extent and glory of the privileges provided for those who by grace forsake their native all for the sake of Jesus and His great salvation; but the reapers are commanded to drop handfuls on purpose for them, and bring forth all the treasures of the gospel for their relief. How happy, how truly blessed is your lot, if ye be indeed the followers of Jesus!

Would you follow the Lord Jesus whithersoever He goeth, but for that unworthiness and sin that cleaveth to you? Learn then a profitable lesson from amiable Ruth. You have many objections against yourself, and so might she have had if grace had not prevented, objections in all respects equal to your own. She was a descendant of Moab, the son of incest, and therefore, instead of blessing, might have expected cursing for her father's sake. She had been brought up an idolatress and an enemy to the Lord God of Israel, had always been a follower of the customs disapproved by the law of the Hebrews, and a stranger to the constitution of the kingdom of Messiah; but notwithstanding all her objections, she was determined to worship the God of heaven and trust in the portion of Israel. Therefore she expresseth her resolution: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried."

It is a happy thing to be brought to resolve to cleave to the people of God in this life, whatever become of you in the future world; to resolve to die and be buried with the people of God whether you have the assurance of rising with them on the morning of the great day or not; to walk in the ways of Immanuel now, if you should even be spurned from His presence hereafter. Never were there any brought to this resolution but who found it to terminate according to their highest wishes, and who were admitted into that felicity for which they dared not to encourage even the faintest hope in the drooping days of their gloomy despondency.

Are you convinced that Jesus, our Redeemer, is the true God and eternal life? Are you satisfied in your own mind that His ways are the right ways of life and salvation? Would you desire to be worshippers of Him, to worship Him in His own appointed way? Worship Him then in His own way, and leave the issue entirely to Him. He will certainly deal as favourably with you as He did with Ruth the Moabitess, for He is no respecter of persons. We may very safely challenge Satan and unbelief, with their united counsel, to produce a single instance of any poor, penitent, humbled, desirous soul following Jesus, cleaving at all events to His people, and at last becoming a castaway. An instance cannot be produced; no! perish who may at the libertine's gate, entreating for the crumbs which drop from the voluptuous table, none ever perished at the gates of Immanuel, for He, only He, is the Friend of sinners; and of none else besides sinners.

Did Christ spend whole nights in private prayer to save our souls; and shall we think it much to spend an hour or two in the day for the furtherance of the internal and eternal welfare of our souls? (Luke 21. 37).

Thomas Brooks

THE VALUE OF REPETITION

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

writing on the Lord's repetition in John 17. 14 and 16.

Observe that repetitions of the same point are sometimes necessary. "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3. 1). Repetition of the same things is tedious and irksome to nature, but profitable to grace. It is tedious to nature, partly out of an itch of novelty. Most men have but an adulterous love to truth; they love it while it is new and fresh; there is a satiety that groweth by acquaintedness; the Israelites grew weary of manna, though angels' food.

Partly out of the impatience of guilt, sores cannot endure to be rubbed again and again; frequency of reproof and admonition is like the rubbing of a sore, grievous to a galled conscience. Peter was grieved that the Lord should say to him the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" (John 21. 17), as reviving his apostasy, bringing to remembrance his threefold denying of Christ, questioning his fidelity. Sinners do not love to be suspected or urged much; it reviveth guilt, and maketh it fly in the face of conscience. None are weary but they that cannot endure to be reminded of their duty. But it is profitable to grace:

- I. To cure weakness;
- II. To further duties.

First, To cure weakness. Our knowledge is little, our affections changeable, our memories weak, our attention slight.

1. Our knowledge is little. Narrow-mouthed vessels take in liquor by drops, so do we divine truths, and therefore you have need to hear the same things often, that your understandings may grow familiar and acquainted with these notions: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28. 10). They must be taught as little children are wont to be taught when they learn to read and write, to know letter after letter, and to draw line after line. We must go over it again and again, that you may understand it more. Frequent inculcation maketh us to observe every part and point; you take it in by degrees.

2. Our attention is small. We do consider it when we understand it. Since the Fall, we have lost our settled and solemn thoughts; the roving vanity of our minds needeth this outward cure. When truth is again brought into the view of the understanding, the mind is set a-work; first we learn, and then we meditate. If Christians would observe their hearts, they would find it hard to go along with the preacher at first hearing; but when they go over it in their thoughts, then it worketh spiritually, and they consider it with affection upon a review. Mary "kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2. 51). We mind things but slightly,

there must be apprehension before musing; study findeth out a truth, meditation improveth it.

3. Our memories are weak. We have a short memory in the best things. A man needeth no remembrancer to put him in mind of worldly gain, and to revenge injuries; but as to good things, our memories are as a bag with holes, or as a grate or sink, that retaineth the mud and lets the running water go. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2. 1). We are as sandy ground or leaky vessels; we have much lost the practical memory, have few actual thoughts of truths in the season of them.

Men forget what we have told them of God's justice, His omnipresence, the day of judgment. When we are about to faint under afflictions, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Heb. 12. 5). It is a main office of the Spirit to remind us of truths in their season: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14. 26). It is one thing to know, another thing to remember. Seasonable thoughts are a great relief in temptation: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4. 2) We may press truths when there is no such express need of them, in season press them again; it is a great advantage.

4. Our wills are slow and averse. It is not enough for a slow and dull servant to hear the commands of his master, but they must be often told him. We must be urged again and again, as Christ doth Peter. The heart is averse and deceitful; we give a slight answer to the first demand, Will you do this for God? "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (2 Pet. 1. 12, 13).

Most men love to hear, as being greedy of novelty and speculation, expecting things that are rare and less known. It is our duty to press things that are more known, to urge the will: "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2. 21); not to acquaint them with new doctrine, but to urge them to steadfastness. All preaching is not to enlighten the understanding, but to gain the will, to stir you up again.

Our affections are changeable; heated water groweth cold again. We have need of the same truths to revive our frame. Our affections soon flag, as a bird cannot always keep upon the wing, and remembrance

worketh not so much as present excitement. It were an excellent work to put you into the same frame again. Our corruptions and temptations daily arise. We lose what we have wrought; we had need be quickened anew, put in mind again, that we may be kept in a good frame: "This second epistle .. I now write unto you: in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3. 1).

Secondly, It helpeth duties.

1. Meditation. The mind worketh freely upon such objects to which it is accustomed; in things rare and seldom heard of there is more need of study than meditation to search them out.

2. It helpeth application. We hear to do and practise, not only to know. We do not hear to store the head with notions, but that the life and heart might be bettered.

Use 1. Let it not be grievous to you to hear the same things pressed. Common truths are not too plain for our mouths, nor too stale for your ears. If you should hear the same sermon preached again, observe God's providence: "A sparrow doth not fall to the earth without our heavenly Father." Have I considered of this, meditated on it? Doth not my heart need it again? Sure there is somewhat in it that God directeth the minister to it again.

Usually we come to hear sermons with an unmortified ear, and bewray an itch of novelty, as the Athenians, who loved to hear of new things. And this puts preachers upon ungrounded subtleties, and so the gravity and sobriety of religion is lost. Or else there is pride in it, as if they were above these common helps; the most learned need a remembrancer.

Some will say, This I knew before; they can teach me no more than I know already. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Cor. 8. 2, 3). Dost thou practise what thou knowest? This is a new hint from God to humble thee, to quicken thee. God seeth that I do not live up to my knowledge, and therefore the same truth is returned.

Or else for want of affection. In music, if a man hear an excellent lesson, he would hear it again; the second hearing is sweetest to a gracious heart. If it be grievous to any, it is to us that do more deeply consider it, and weigh it before it is brought. If it be not grievous to us, it is safe to you. It is a great wantonness and gluttony when men cannot endure to eat twice of one dish.

Use 2. It serveth to encourage you in your private exercises of rehearsing and meditation. This is chewing the cud: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psa. 62. 11); it was often revolved in the mind. The meat is taken into the

mouth, and digestion is afterward. Repetition is the outward help, meditation the inward; conscience preacheth over the sermon again to the heart.

Use 3. To ministers, not only to study new things, but to inculcate those that are of a common use: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this" (Jude 5). We are not to content your curiosity, but to provide for your benefit; not to please the Athenian, but to profit the Christian. We are not cooks, but physicians. People do not remember half we preach, or they lose their affections. Christ often repeateth the same sentences; so do the apostles. You may repeat the same things, only with these cautions:

1. That it be in matters mainly necessary. There are some standing dishes at Christ's table.

2. That it be with variety of enforcement, to avoid tediousness. There are several notions to help us; every time we should have new thoughts, *adoro plenitudinem sacræ scripturæ* ["I adore the fulness of holy Scripture"], that all be subjected to profit, not a cover to laziness. There is much of God's providence to be observed in inclining the heart; not only the efficacy of the Spirit in quickening gifts is to be regarded, but the power of His providence in determining the thoughts. Much of God is to be seen in the choice of the subject.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

More jottings by Mrs. Mercy Sturgess of Barton-le-Clay Beds.

Sunday September 21st, and Thursday, 25th, 1975

Text: Psalm 73. 23-25. I felt that Sabbath morning very sad. I was very troubled about things and to know if the Lord was with me in it all. I lay awake early that Sunday morning begging of the Lord to lead His servant and make it manifest He was with me. We do not want to carry our troubles alone.

Pastor spoke in the morning from verse 23. Came out from chapel feeling a good hope He was with me and my God. When I came indoors, verse 24 came with power in my soul: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." I could only sit and weep for a while, but it was a word to me for some time afterwards. It was a great word to me and stay, but on Thursday evening I wanted it confirmed. Pastor's text was John 14. 27: "Peace I leave with you," etc. What peace I felt, I cannot describe it; felt my strength of body in some measure seemed to go. A friend helped me home. I felt if I died alone that night it would be well.

About twelve months after I felt very sad and tried. I said to the Lord after I got in bed, "Lord, I feel Thou didst say, 'I will guide thee with My counsel, and afterward receive me to glory!'" After a little while this came softly and sweetly, "The promise of this life, and that which is to come." It was so good, so suitable. It did me good.

Another time as I knelt by my bed after our Pastor's death, I confessed my barrenness, emptiness, felt I had felt nothing all day, was famished. After lying in bed a little while, it seemed as if the Lord said, "Children have you any meat?" I said, "No Lord, I have toiled all day and caught nothing." Then He said, "Come and dine." I said, "What is it, Lord, to come and dine?" He said, "Except ye eat My flesh, and drink My blood, ye have no life in you." "Lord," I said, "I have nothing else to look to but Thy blood and righteousness."

It was food for a little while to my soul; but I am still a helpless sinner, still prone to wander.

THE LIFE OF JAMES NEWMAN

Following the conclusion of A Brief Memorial of James Newman, by his wife, we thought our readers would be interested in some account of Mrs. Ann Newman herself. The account was written by J. Crawford Fookes.

Ann, widow of Mr. James Newman, of Luton, minister of the gospel, passed to her eternal rest on November 7th, 1916, aged 85 years.

It is regretted that no record can be found of the Lord's dealings with her. From her conversation, however, it appears that like good Obadiah she feared the Lord from her youth, and was baptized when she was but seventeen years of age. She was a member of the church at Bethel, Luton, from its formation in 1876. She had no family, had a fairly smooth pathway in providence, and being with her husband devoted to the Lord's cause and people, she spent much time and labour on their behalf, especially in ministering to the poor. It can truly be said that her generosity was only limited by her means, and I fear that she was sometimes imposed upon by some flesh-seekers, who knew the tenderness of her heart.

On the last occasion on which she heard her husband preach she was much blessed, the text being Psalm 61. 2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." From his death in 1889, she was a widow indeed. Her house was ever open to the people of God, especially to His

ministering servants, with whom she delighted to converse. Her godly conversation savoured of much communion with the Lord. She had her gloomy seasons, but at such times would say little, believing much in seeking in secret the lifting up of the Lord's countenance. Occasionally she would say, "I am cast down, but I am not dead."

In her last days, almost her only concern was spiritual things, and the prosperity of the Word preached at Bethel. She was deeply affected by the Lord's goodness to her, saying she had lacked no good thing, and frequently remarking,

"Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more."

After a wakeful night she would say, "I have had a restful, prayerful night." The last few times she sat down at the Lord's table she was much comforted. It was to her sweet communion.

In her weakness, the news of the departure of dear Mr. Oldfield [Joseph Oldfield, pastor at Godmanchester], with whom she had walked in Christian love and fellowship for more than thirty years, told greatly upon her. This was but a few days before her death, and she almost immediately took to her bed, bronchitis being the immediate cause. Three days before her decease, she said to her youngest brother, "When you go home, read to your afflicted wife the seventy-third Psalm." The last day but one, I called and asked what I should tell the friends from her. Her reply was: "Jesus, ONLY Jesus." She said at intervals, "Jesus is precious – on the Rock," and,

"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns,"

and quoted parts of the twenty-third Psalm and the fourteenth of John. I called again a few hours before she departed. She appeared to be but semi-conscious, but I caught the word, "Goodness." I quoted, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," and distinctly she repeated: "Goodness – goodness – mercy – mercy."

Her loss is felt by us. She left £250 towards the reduction of the debt upon our chapel, for which we are deeply grateful to the Lord, and to her memory. A very ungodly man once said in my hearing: "If there is a really Christian woman in Luton, it is Mrs. Newman"; and the words are upon her gravestone, and are not fulsome: "She hath done what she could."

The following is the account of Joseph Fookes, James Newman's deacon, who carried much of the responsibility of the church after

Mr. Newman's death. Again, the account is written by J. Crawford Fookes.

On May 31st, 1914, my dear father, Joseph Fookes, of Luton, passed from earth to the rest that remaineth. He was born at Bow Brickhill, a little Buckinghamshire village, on August 19th, 1832.

He was apprenticed to a bootmaker, and it was, I think, during this time that he became associated with youths and older persons who led him into worldly pleasures, more particularly card-playing and dancing. Although his conscience was sometimes pricked by reason of his profanity, he continued in this way for some time. To reach his home from the places of his sinful indulgences, it was necessary to pass late at night through a dense wood, and great fear sometimes came upon him in so doing. One particular occasion he never forgot. It was a moonlight night, but very dark in the wood, and at a certain spot he saw, as he thought, an apparition, but which was in reality only the bright shining of the moon through an opening amongst the trees. The evil of his ways was brought clearly before him, and terror reigned in his heart. After a time, however, he left these vain and sinful pleasures, became associated with the Wesleyans, and in due time married.

The wonderful providence of God was manifest in this first marriage. His wife habitually attended a Strict Baptist chapel, and he occasionally accompanied her; but such was his hatred against what the servants of God spake of the sovereignty of the Almighty, that he often wished they might be suddenly struck down whilst speaking. Yet at the appointed time the Spirit of the Lord entered into his soul with powerful conviction, whilst his wife was left to fall into the sin of drunkenness. This insobriety of his wife caused him great domestic trouble, and more than one strong temptation. Previous to the trouble last mentioned, his soul had been set at liberty. This was whilst reading the seventeenth of John; and often has he spoken of the blessedness of that time, and the tears that flowed by reason of the gratitude and love felt in his heart.

After residing at various towns in the Midlands, he settled at Luton, and became interested in the opening of Bethel chapel and the formation of a church there. A few years afterwards his wife died, leaving no children, and notwithstanding what is before stated, he had reason to hope in her end. In his second marriage he was favoured with a godly partner, and he felt very much the Lord's goodness in this matter.

He was chosen the first deacon of the church at Bethel, which office he honourably filled for nearly forty years until his death. The early days of the cause gave him much concern and anxiety, and matter for much prayer, such as only those connected with small and financially poor churches can fully understand; yet he continued stedfastly in the work. Especially did he contend for the necessity of prayer, and the meetings

for this purpose he rarely missed. He also took a great interest in the Sunday school for many years. It was to him a great pleasure to see a goodly measure of success attend the cause, the opening of the new chapel in 1906 being a time of much satisfaction.

After great exercise of mind, he was also led into the ministry by the application of the words, "Stand in the gap" (Ezek. 22. 30); and for many years spoke in the Lord's name, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. He would usually tell friends to whom he was speaking for the first time that he was but a gapstop, but there are doubtless at least a few of the readers of this short account who heard him to profit.

His quiet confidence in a God of providence in times of trial was remarkable, and only on one occasion is it remembered that he showed a rebellious spirit, and on that occasion he chided himself, for on going to chapel he gave out hymn 961:

"Be still, my heart, these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares."

But a few words of his last days. At the beginning of the month in which he died, one said, seeing his increasing frailty, "You are going to a good home," and he replied, "I am looking forward to it." My dear mother felt constrained to ask him a little before this whether, if he was removed suddenly, he thought it would be well with him; when he said that the Lord had assured him many years ago that all his sins were pardoned, and though he had had many changes and much darkness since, his interest in Christ had sometimes been confirmed, and he was persuaded that it would be well at the last. This has been a great comfort to her since his death.

He was at the prayer meeting on the evening of May 27th, and stayed to the church meeting that followed, although he was quite unfit to leave home. On the following day he was seized suddenly and never spoke again, though he several times stretched forth his hand, and tried hard to speak in answer to questions. Afterwards he became unconscious, and so passed away. A widow, two daughters and four sons are left to mourn the loss of one of an even and affectionate disposition, and who was much loved. He was "faithful over a few things," and his ransomed spirit has doubtless entered into the joy of his Lord, whilst his body, committed to the earth by Mr. A. White on June 6th, awaits that sure and wonderful day when "the dead in Christ shall rise"; for it shall be well with the righteous.

Both Mrs. Newman and Mr. Joseph Fookes are remembered by the oldest church member at Bethel, Luton.

BOOK REVIEW

Christ as Revealed in the Old Testament, by S.F. Paul; with biographical foreword by J.R. Broome; 206 pages; paperback; price £4.95; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the bookroom, or from agents.

This book opens up the Old Testament saints' ground of hope, as centred on the Lord Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit using types and ceremonies, enabling them to look forward in hope of His coming. It is compiled from Articles written by Mr. Paul in 1965/66 and 1970 when he was editor of the *Gospel Standard* magazine.

The book is divided into two parts, the first headed, "Personal Types and Shadows of Christ"; and the second, "Christ in All the Scriptures," the second part continuing the theme of the first but including several non-personal types. These meditations are well written and amply supported by Scripture references, shedding light on the Old Testament sacrifices and worship.

Mr. Broome has written an excellent biographical foreword giving in a concise form details of Mr. Paul's life and his spiritual exercises. The Gospel Standard Trust has also provided a useful addition to its range of books, doing the denomination a service by the publication of this book. The only reservation is that such a useful book should be printed as a paperback.

Should it be found necessary to print a second edition, attention is reluctantly drawn to two typographical errors. On page 45 the word "not" has been omitted from the quotation from John 12. 49, and on page 161 the word "yea" has been printed as "yet" in the quotation from Job 33. 14, etc.

We recommend this book to our readers.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

O come, Thou wounded Lamb of God,
Come, wash us in Thy cleansing blood;
Give us to know Thy love, then pain
Is sweet, and life or death is gain.

Take our poor hearts and let them be
For ever closed to all but Thee!
Seal Thou our breasts, and let us wear
Thy pledge of love for ever there.

How can it be, Thou heavenly King,
That Thou shouldst man to glory bring,
Make slaves the partners of Thy throne,
And deck them with a glorious crown?

Ah Lord, enlarge our scanty thought,
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongues to tell
Thy love immense, unsearchable.

Firstborn of many brethren Thou,
 To Thee both earth and heaven must bow;
 Help us to Thee our all to give,
 Thine may we die, Thine may we live.

Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and others

OBITUARY

Eva Mary Kelsall, (always known as Mary), member of the church at Bethel, Luton, for 24 years, and previously at Coventry, died in Harpenden Bethesda Home on May 29th, 2006, aged 92.

Our dear mother was born in Coventry and brought up to attend Rehoboth Chapel there. She had a most godly father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. William Stone, and to her dying day spoke of her happy childhood, and her gratitude to God for her upbringing. There were many gracious influences around her, and she specially remembered her old grandmother, her great-aunt, Mrs. Keevil (see *G.S.* 1875, p.338; 1948, p.108), her aunt, Mrs. Edith Denyer, Mr. Elsworth and Mr. Sam Burton, and the two Miss Jellies.

From a girl she used to pray, in providential things, and sometimes, "Lord, make me right and then, Lord, keep me right." When quite young she was in an isolation hospital for some weeks with scarlet fever, the only person allowed to visit her being the pastor, Mr. A.P. Brooke.

As she grew older, she had a dreadful trial, which she never forgot. The young man she loved and hoped to marry was not acceptable to her beloved mother, and she felt her mother was so godly and gracious, how could she go against her? Encouraged by her aunt, Mrs. Denyer, she had to wrestle with the Lord and commit it all to Him; but the trial became unbearable. Then in the middle of one night, her mother came into the bedroom where she was lying awake sorrowful, and said, "It's alright; we feel we cannot stand in your way," and she was able to be united to the dear husband to whom she was married for nearly sixty years. She never forgot that night.

There came a time in her early married life when she was staying in Canterbury, where she was taken exceedingly ill with virus pneumonia, so that it was thought she would not live. Later she wrote:

"I felt such a sinner, not outward sins so much, but sins of thought and omission. I lay in bed feeling ill, but more painful, I felt my sins a burden. One night I woke up and I shall never forget the feeling. I felt the Lord was looking down on me with much compassion and I felt so peaceful."

The hymn was blessed to her:

"How light, while supported by grace,
 Are all the afflictions I see,
 To those the dear Lord of my peace,
 My Jesus, has suffered for me!"

But especially this:

“Such was I when Jesus looked down,
When none but Himself could relieve;
What could I expect but a frown?
Yet kindly He smiled, and said, ‘Live!’”

Being reminded of this just before her death brought back happy, sacred memories. We can never understand why she did not openly profess the Lord's name following her recovery.

Years later, in 1966, she felt very “lonely and left out” when both her young daughters were going to be baptized. She said, “The whole house was a sacred place.” Her daughters were talking with their father about the things of God and the blessings they knew, and though she was so happy for them, she felt she was being passed by. Laying it before the Lord, she felt He had favoured her, and if only He would make it clear to her, she would make an open profession of His name.

A few weeks later the Lord blessedly spoke that word to her: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him,” and she felt she could venture. To her amazement and delight, her pastor, Dr. Peter Rowell, preached from that very word the following Lord's day evening. She felt such love to the Lord Jesus, and constrained by that love she came forward to be baptized.

Two years later she was visiting Luton at the time when Mr. John Watts had been abundantly blessed. Listening to Mr. Watts speaking of the blessings he was so greatly enjoying, she began to ask, “Well, am I right after all? Have I made a mistake?” It was then the Lord spoke that word which was perhaps her most powerful blessing, and which she quoted over and over again in her last days:

“Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine.”

That is good divinity. That night at Bethel chapel, the sermon closed with the two lines being quoted, and that was the closing hymn of the service.

In the providence of God, in the 1980s she and her husband moved to Luton. Of this she wrote:

“The first ordinance that we attended, I felt such a peace come over me, and I felt that we had come among godly people. We both got on so well Sunday after Sunday with the preaching. So after a few months we joined the church at Bethel, Luton.”

In later years there were various trials. On one occasion she had to go into hospital for a serious operation, a kneecap replacement, and she did hope the Lord would favour her then. She had always had a desire that the Lord would speak to her: “Daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee,” and she asked for it and she waited. Now the Lord did not give her that word, but He spoke another word: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” She wrote later:

“I was so broken down at the Lord's goodness towards me. I felt my heaven was secure, and there is nothing to be compared with that.”

In the year 2000 she lost her beloved husband (see *G.S.* 2000, page 387), which was a deep sorrow, a loss she felt to the end of her life. But some time

later she was able to say, "I have felt the Lord very near during these last sixteen months."

Now coming to her last days, she often said, "You know, I am happy, and I have a good hope," but she said, "I am nearly ninety-three. It keeps coming over me, it can't be long. I have got to die, and it is for ever and ever." It was not a take-it-for-granted religion; there was a living exercise. As her pastor I made the note:

"Whenever I went to see her, if I tried to cast the gospel net, I never failed to get a catch. There was always some gracious, right response, resting on the Lord and looking to Him and trusting in Him, and especially pleading the promise:

'Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine.'"

After I preached from, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' she thoughtfully said, 'I don't believe the Lord will. I don't believe He will leave me nor forsake me. He has been a good God to me all my life in providence and in grace, and I don't believe He will leave me or fail me at last.'"

Our mother left a good name behind for her children, her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren, for her brothers, and for the church of God. There were many things she was brought through and delivered from in her long life: as a tiny girl her father fighting in the trenches in France; the isolation in hospital with scarlet fever; the Great Depression; soon after she was married, her husband in a sanatorium with TB with fears he would die; having to give up her home and go back to her parents; the terrible bombing of Coventry. But the Lord brought her safely through. What a mercy to be safely landed!

At her funeral at Bethel chapel, as her pastor (and son-in-law) I spoke from: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." The readings and prayer were taken by her other son-in-law, Mr. Gerald Buss.

B.A.R. (on behalf of the family)



All here is labour and sorrow. Our own sins and the sins of others will always make it a scene of trouble. "O thou hideous monster, sin," etc. What a mighty power it has – a power which grace alone can subdue. It seems sometimes subdued, and then rises up worse than before. Well may we cry out, "O wretched man that I am."

J.C. Philpot

The fountain of mercy is God's love to us from eternity, which inclined to us when we were hateful; when He had determined to manifest this love unto us, then, according to mercy, He saved us. Grace and mercy, and His giving Christ, all is from hence. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Bain

